

WINDHAM BOARD OF EDUCATION
WILLIMANTIC, CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF EDUCATION WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES
May 22, 2013

BOARD PRESENT: Chair Dr. Sewall, Mrs. Osuba, Mr. Desaulniers, Mr. French, Ms. Tinker, Mrs. Lambert, Dr. Switchenko

BOARD ABSENT: Mrs. Collins, Mr. Adamo

ADMINISTRATION

PRESENT: Superintendent Ms. Ortiz, Assistant Superintendent Ms. Barker-Jones, Director Mrs. Banks, Communications Officer Ms. Markey

STUDENT

REPRESENTATIVES: No one

OTHERS PRESENT: Special Master Dr. Adamowski, general public, staff, administrators, news media

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Dr. Sewall called the May 22, 2013, Board of Education workshop meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. in the Windham High School Library Media Center.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Desaulniers led the Board and the public in the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance.

ACTION ITEM

Transportation Vendor (Ref. 1)

Motion by Mr. French, seconded by Mrs. Tinker, that the Board approve the recommendation from the Transportation Policy Ad Hoc Committee to approve M&J Bus, Inc., as the transportation vendor and to approve Bid Response Form Option B. Mr. French explained the two bid options provided by M&J Bus.

On the motion: Aye, unanimous.

Calendar Revisions (Ref. 2)

Motion by Mr. French, seconded by Mr. Desaulniers, that the Board approve changing the last day of school for the 2012-2013 school year and the last day of school for the 2013-2014 school year from a full day to an early dismissal day. Ms. Ortiz said that the last day of school on both school calendars were not marked as early release days which was an oversight. In the past, the last day of school has traditionally been an early dismissal day.

On the motion: Aye, unanimous.

Approval of appointments with addendum

Motion by Mr. French, seconded by Mrs. Lambert, that the Board approve the following appointments including an addendum presented at tonight's meeting.

1. Melissa Mishriky to the position of Principal at Natchaug School effective July 1, 2013. Replacement
2. Kristen Schmalbach to the position of Kindergarten Teacher at The Charles H. Barrows STEM Academy effective August 21, 2013. New Position

3. Christian Kollegger to the position of Special Education Teacher at The Charles H. Barrows STEM Academy effective August 21, 2013. New Position
4. Carolyn Wheeler to the position of Technology Teacher at The Charles H. Barrows STEM Academy effective August 21, 2013. New Position
5. Andrew Potts to the position of Music Teacher at Windham High School effective August 21, 2013. New Position
6. Brynden Mutch to the position of Library/Media Specialist at The Charles H. Barrows STEM Academy effective August 21, 2013. New Position

Addendum

7. Zhengjie Guo to the position of Mandarin Teacher at The Charles H. Barrows STEM Academy effective August 21, 2013. New Position
8. Heather Harkins to the position of Data Specialist at The Charles H. Barrows STEM Academy effective August 21, 2013. New Position
9. Jennifer Hoboth to the position of Grade 4 Teacher at Sweeney Elementary School effective August 21, 2013. New Position

Ms. Mishriky was introduced and she formally thanked the Board for her appointment. She said that she looks forward to many years of great success at Natchaug School.

On the motion: Aye, unanimous.

Mrs. Lambert reviewed plans for the upcoming Community Forum for the Facilities Master Plan and roll out for possible school choice options. There was some discussion.

Ms. Ortiz announced that notification has been received from the State Department of Education that consideration is being given to having a School Based Health Center located at the Charles H Barrows STEM Academy. She said that the next steps for this to happen will take place.

WORKSHOP SESSION

Charles H. Barrows STEM Academy staffing update

Mr. Wihbey provided an update on staffing at the Charles H. Barrows STEM Academy and explained the hiring process. He thanked Beth Brunet, Evie Velazquez and Jeff Forman for participating in interviews. He also thanked Betsy Fernandez and Angela Kiss and staff at North Windham and Sweeney schools for allowing candidates to teach sample lessons to students at their schools. Mr. Wihbey also spoke about the seven days of training required for certified staff which will take place at the Connecticut Science Center during the summer. He answered Board members' questions.

Sweeney School (extra time)

Ms. Barker-Jones, Mrs. Kiss, and Ms. Caraganis provided an overview of the proposal for the Sweeney Elementary School redesign as part of the Strategic Operating Plan. Under the Alliance Grant, extended learning time is an option for increasing student achievement. Models for extended learning time are designed to prevent summertime learning loss and increase student achievement. Models vary to include increased days per year, more contact hours and shorter vacation times. The benefits of extended learning time were reviewed. A Transition Kindergarten Program, funded with Alliance grant funds, for students in the current Pre-K class at Sweeney School was explained and will run from July 8 through August 1, 2013. Mandated Intervention Summer School for this summer will serve students in grades Kindergarten through grade three who are substantially deficient in reading according to the spring DRA II. New options to expand summer school are under consideration. The Sweeney School Governance Council will be involved in future plans for the school's redesign. Questions were answered throughout the presentation.

PUBLIC DIALOGUE

Annemarie Miller, Sweeney teacher and School Governance Council member, said the main purpose of the extended year is to make sure students continue learning. Her biggest concern going forward to close achievement gap, concern is for the students who have not had preschool experience and are not offered the summer school opportunity. The extended program is offered to students who have already had preschool and then will have opportunity to attend summer school. These students, she feels, will be more likely to be ready for Kindergarten and the gap will widen. She asked if it be more beneficial to offer the programming to students who did not have preschool experience. Ms. Miller said that the extended year is an excellent idea with great opportunity but would like to see the best opportunity for all students occur. There was some discussion with Board members.

Nicole Krassas, Willimantic, School Governance Council member, raised some issues with regard to what the School Governance Council saw regarding the program. She said that the Council wants to create a school that works for all of the students at Sweeney. With respect to the research, successful school reform is more contextual than a package that you use as a school model. There is no one formula that works for all schools. One of the biggest concerns is to create a tool that works for all the Sweeney students. Ms. Krassas also indicated that many of the parents on the School Governance Council believe that budgets are important. Members of the Council very much appreciate the opportunity to be part of the plan and hope that something can be created at Sweeney that can be as successful as possible for as many kids as possible.

John DeVivo, Willimantic, said that he believed that the School Governance Council would like to partake in this but members have only worked on school uniforms. He asked about where the money is going to go so that Sweeney School can be the best it can be and have the students excel. Mr. DeVivo said that if you start something, it has to become the way of Sweeney because it would be a shame to start something and not continue with it. He said that the history of Sweeney is important; community of support has already been built there; and it would nice to be involved and work to keep that going.

Motion by Ms. Tinker, seconded by Mr. French, that the Board of Education approves adding the charge of the Sweeney School Governance Council to tonight's agenda.

On the motion: Aye, unanimous.

Motion by Ms. Tinker, seconded by Mrs. Lambert, that the Board of Education charges the Sweeney School Principal to work with the Governance Council on the development of a re-design plan that includes extended learning time that approaches the recommended threshold of 300 extra hours of learning and to bring creative ideas and data back to the Board of Education.

On the motion: Aye, unanimous.

Mary Lou DeVivo, Willimantic, said that she is excited about the kindergarten transition program but felt that the students entering kindergarten at the magnet school should also have some kind of transition program this summer so that when they start in the fall, the students will be familiar with the school. Mrs. DeVivo said that other students in the district usually have already seen the classrooms before they begin school but don't have that opportunity at the new magnet school.

Dr. Adamowski said that the FF&E will be delivered during the month of August and there may be an orientation of several days to introduce students to their environment.

Mrs. Lambert asked when uniforms could be ordered for the magnet school. Mr. Wihbey said that he is working on setting up two dates in June, and there will be a link from the school's web page to order directly

from the vendor. Several onsite dates to order uniforms during the summer will also be available. Mr. Wihbey said there are plans to hold an open house for families prior to the school's opening.

Mr. Desaulniers asked about uniforms, as well. Mr. Wihbey explained that the curriculum development committee comprised of parents, teachers, and administrators decided on two different types of uniforms for students in Kindergarten through grade four and for students in grades five through eight.

Expansion of Dual-Language Program and Dual Language School

Ms. Brunet provided a presentation on the expansion of the Dual Language Program to include additional grades and a Dual Language School as part of the Strategic Operating Plan. The Turnaround Plan at the Middle School will include Dual Language Education as one of the choices within the school. Ms. Brunet explained that work has begun with Eastern Connecticut State University to form a partnership to create a dual language school which could become a second Windham Public Schools' magnet school. She spoke about the establishment of a PK-12 dual language pathway which currently includes Spanish and Mandarin. The creation of a pathway to TESOL/Bilingual Education teacher certification through the collaboration of WHS Arts & Humanities Academy, QVCC and ECSU is another related area in the Plan. Ms. Brunet reviewed additions to the Plan which have been made. She also reviewed challenges and solutions to help improve the program. Board members' questions were answered.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mrs. Lambert, seconded by Mr. French, that the Board of Education adjourn its meeting at 9:14 PM.

On the motion: Aye, unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Mrs. Luz Osuba, Secretary