

WINDHAM BOARD OF EDUCATION
WILLIMANTIC, CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF EDUCATION WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES
November 19, 2014

BOARD PRESENT: Chair Mrs. Lambert, Mr. Montalvo, Mrs. Osuba, Dr. Sewall, Mr. Kalajian, Dr. Gomez

BOARD ABSENT: Mr. Desaulniers, Mr. French, Mr. Quamme

ADMINISTRATION

PRESENT: Superintendent Dr. Garcia; Deputy Superintendent Dr. Gasper; Directors Mr. Cunha, Ms. Beghetto and Ms. Markey

STUDENT

REPRESENTATIVES: No one

OTHERS PRESENT: general public; staff; administrators; news media

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Mrs. Lambert called the November 19, 2014, Board of Education Workshop meeting to order at 7:07 P.M. in the Windham High School Library Media Center.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

Dr. Garcia asked the Board to add to the agenda, for discussion, 21 versus 24 credits for high school graduation.

Motion of Dr. Sewall, seconded by Mr. Montalvo, that the Board of Education add the discussion of high school credits for graduation to the agenda.

The motion is unanimously approved.

WORKSHOP TOPICS

Strategic Operating Plan

Dr. Garcia reviewed the status of the Strategic Operating Plan (SOP) and provided a brief overview of the accomplishments and plans for the future. The purpose of the plan is to align resources with priorities and goals. Each of the six goals of the plan, which are comprised of 35 strategies and 195 implementation steps, were assigned to a team of Cabinet members for review. The purpose of the review of the plan was to take a look at what has been accomplished and to see what remains to be completed. Also taken into consideration during the review was whether or not the goals and strategies were working and whether they should be part of a future plan. The teams also looked at what wasn't completed to see why and recommend whether or not they should remain on the list. The review of the present plan will also serve as a resource for a future strategic operating plan. Dr. Garcia thanked her Cabinet members for their work as they reviewed all aspects of the plan, and she asked the Board to review the plan for further discussion and review. There was discussion throughout the presentation and questions were answered.

Windham Early College Opportunity (WECO)

Dr. Garcia said that this initiative is not for all students but provides an outstanding opportunity for Windham students to obtain a college degree at no cost to them. In response to Board members' questions at the November 12, 2014, meeting, she explained that local, state and foundation funding will be used to fund the program and highlighted areas that would be funded by each source. Dr. Garcia said that a steering committee has been formed to look at scope and sequence and is made up of teams from Windham Public Schools, New London Schools, QVCC staff and industry representatives. This committee will work on designing a program specific for the High School. There was discussion and Dr. Garcia answered questions.

High School Credits for Graduation

Dr. Garcia explained that when this year's senior class entered the High School as ninth graders, twenty-one credits were required to graduate. However, when these students were in tenth grade, the requirement for graduation changed to twenty-four credits. Dr. Garcia said that these students should not be penalized and all students with twenty-one credits will graduate. The High School would like to offer students who have twenty-four credits a Diploma of Distinction, which will be a local award. Dr. Garcia explained that many of the students graduating this year have twenty-four credits.

Motion of Dr. Sewall, seconded by Mr. Kalajian, that the Board of Education add to the agenda that students in the Class of 2015 be allowed to graduate with 21 credits and students in the Class of 2015 who graduate with 24 credits receive a Diploma of Distinction.

The motion is unanimously approved.

Motion of Dr. Sewall, seconded by Mr. Kalajian, that the Board of Education approve that students in the Class of 2015 will graduate with 21 credits and students in the Class of 2015 with 24 credits will graduate with a Diploma of Distinction.

The motion is unanimously approved.

Motion of Mrs. Osuba, seconded by Mr. Kalajian, that the Board of Education add to the agenda the Board's authorization to have Dr. Garcia go forward with looking into bringing the Windham Early College Opportunity (WECO) program to Windham.

The motion is unanimously approved.

Motion of Mrs. Osuba, seconded by Mr. Kalajian, that the Board of Education approve the Board's authorization to have Dr. Garcia go forward with looking into bringing the Windham Early College Opportunity (WECO) program to Windham.

The motion is unanimously approved.

There was discussion about the program and the opportunity it provides for Windham students giving them another program choice in the district. Costs were discussed; however, funding was not being approved at this time.

Mr. Bob Fernandez, QVCC Willimantic Center Director, and State Representative Susan Johnson provided additional information about the Early College Opportunity program and answered questions. They spoke about the development of the program, its funding and college credits that can be earned.

PUBLIC DIALOGUE

Catherine Gregory, QVCC Associate Director of Willimantic Center, said she has been working on the Early College Opportunity project for over two years. She said that the companies involved are enthusiastic about the program and will be providing students with internships and a mentor. Ms. Gregory said that the summer program provides students with an opportunity to accelerate, as well as remediation for those

students who may need remediation. She said that one of the highlights of the visit to the Norwalk program was the opportunity to ask questions to students who have gone through the program. Students shared that they felt like regular high school students and participated in high school extracurricular activities. Research shows that programs around the country have an excellent retention rate with very few students dropping out of the program. Ms. Gregory said that this is an excellent opportunity for Windham students.

Mary Lou DeVivo, Willimantic, attended the coffee with the Superintendent at North Windham Elementary School and found it to be very informative. She said that at last week's Board meeting she asked about social promotion. *Dr. Garcia responded that she has the policy and information regarding social promotion.* Mrs. DeVivo said that she feels that the money spent on hiring a marketing firm would be better spent on hiring a remedial reading teacher. She said that she didn't think that the district needs to market itself to the people in Windham, and people want children reading on grade level. She also said that all of the small things that money is spent on should be looked at such as the bottled water when Willimantic has a terrific water system. She said that the children drink the tap water and it would save money if everyone used the tap water.

Bill Powers, Windham Center, said he also attended the coffee hour with the Superintendent and the quality of the interaction with parents was fantastic, as well as her visions. He said that there was a focus study done by the State Department of Education and a parent survey was done which most of the Board hadn't seen at that time. He said there was also a survey of all Windham Public Schools' staff last May which hadn't been seen by the Board either. Mr. Powers said that this data is invaluable when looking at evaluation and assessment and transparency. He also said that there are dramatic declines in positive attitudes as indicated in the parent survey recently done compared to the parent survey done six years before, and he would like to see that addressed if it hasn't already been done. Mr. Powers said that he has been trying to get data that should be available about other programs that Windham students attend outside the district. He has had a good response from the district but the information from other programs doesn't appear to be available. He has been unable to get the data about Windham students attending the program for college credits at UConn and hopes that the Board has seen the data. He said that many students are getting college credit but he is concerned about the quality of the program and isn't sure that the standards apply. He also has been unable to get the information from the Middle College. He pushed for that program and was glad to see it get established as there is a tremendous capacity for opportunities for our students there. However, Mr. Powers said that he is concerned about problems with the attendance and truancy rates of students that attend that program. He said that he is concerned about getting that data and is concerned that many of Board members that he has spoken with don't have the data either. He said that the Board might take a look at the data and see which programs are working and maybe there are some programs that Windham shouldn't continue to have students attend.

Board member comments:

Mrs. Lambert said that the seniors won the powder puff football game which will be now known as the Brian Crudden Bowl in honor of Coach Crudden being named the Coach of the Year. She said that Board members received an email from Neal Beets about a meeting that is being scheduled with Town Council, Board of Education, Board of Finance and state representatives. She asked Board members to forward to her any questions or concerns that they would like discussed at this meeting. She said that Board members will be receiving three dates and asked that they respond to that request so that the meeting can be scheduled.

Dr. Gomez asked if there will be someone available to translate at the meeting on the 24th. Dr. Garcia said that staff will be in attendance to translate.

Mr. Kalajian said he heard that there has been some delay in planning for the new wells at Windham Center School. Dr. Garcia said there is specific language required by the State for the application that comes from the Town Council and this issue has been addressed.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Kalajian, seconded by Mr. Montalvo, that the Board adjourn its meeting at 8:45 P.M.

Motion is unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Juan Montalvo, Secretary