

WINDHAM BOARD OF EDUCATION
WILLIMANTIC, CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF EDUCATION WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES
October 22, 2014

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

BOARD ABSENT: Mr. French

ADMINISTRATION

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

STUDENT

REPRESENTATIVES: Kathy Oyola and Nathan Cusson

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

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Mrs. Lambert called the October 22, 2014, Board of Education Workshop meeting to order at 7:03 P.M. in the Windham High School Library Media Center.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

Dr. Garcia and the Board welcomed the students and their chaperone from Spain who are visiting as part of the exchange program with Windham High School.

ACTION ITEMS

Windham High School Field Trip (Ref. 1)

Motion of Mr. Desaulniers, seconded by Dr. Sewall, that the Board of Education approve the trip request to Washington, D.C., and Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, for Windham High School students from April 22, 2015, to April 25, 2015, in accordance with policy 6153. There was discussion and questions were answered by Dr. Garcia and Ms. Potter.

The motion is unanimously approved.

Natchaug School Field trip (Ref. 2)

Motion of Mr. Montalvo, seconded by Mr. Kalajian, that the Board of Education approve the trip request to the Schoodic Institute at Acadia National Park, in Winter Harbor, Maine, for Natchaug School students from November 17, 2014, to November 21, 2014, in accordance with policy 6153. It was explained that a parent meeting has been held to provide details of the trip, which is for fifth grade students, and to answer parents' questions. There was discussion and questions were answered by Dr. Garcia, Mrs. Cyr and fifth grade teacher Ms. Pulsipher.

The motion is unanimously approved.

WORKSHOP TOPICS

Teach for America (TFA) (change in order of agenda)

TFA representatives, Meredith Burdick and Ellie Webb, were in attendance to answer any questions and said that it has been a pleasure to work with Windham. Mr. Cunha provided an overview of the characteristics of TFA and how the program developed and has grown over the past twenty-four years. Windham is in the third year of its partnership with the TFA program, and one of the goals of Windham's Strategic Operating Plan is TFA related. Mr. Cunha reviewed retention rates for TFA corps members for 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15. He reviewed the cost comparison for TFAs and new hires, as well as support and training provided by TFA for its members. Mr. Cunha also spoke about the successes and challenges associated with the TFA program. Dr. Sewall said that he had hoped that data would be available regarding student achievement for the time that the district has had TFA teachers. Ms. Burdick said that NWEA data is a good growth measure and encourages the district to use its own data to measure the success rate of TFA teachers. Ms. Burdick, Ms. Webb and Mr. Cunha answered Board members' questions.

Student Success Plan (return to the order of the agenda)

Dr. Garcia thanked the High School and Middle School guidance teams and principals for their work on the Student Success Plan (SSP) and said that it is a work in progress. Guidance counselors from the Middle School and the High School, Jaclyn Tracy, Brennan McIntosh, and Dan Knoblauch, explained the plan, which uses twenty-first century skills, and begins in sixth grade and continues through twelfth grade and beyond for students. Examples were provided and information regarding electronic portfolios was provided. There was discussion and questions were answered.

PUBLIC DIALOGUE

Mary Gallucci, Willimantic, said that she feels that there is no respect for parents in this district, and Board members at meetings can be condescending to parents, teachers and students. Ms. Gallucci said that when people devote their time to present to the Board, it is not fair to ask them unrelated questions. She said that it is disrespectful that Board members don't take the time to read their packets and they ask questions that are answered in the packet. She said that it is upsetting and disappointing to be a parent of children that are not being served by this district. Ms. Gallucci said that Board members should go out to meet and talk with all teachers, not just TFA teachers as was stated at tonight's meeting. She said that there are some very nice things happening in the district that get buried and she was thrilled to see the Spanish students at tonight's meeting. Ms. Gallucci said that it sounded like Board members were accusing staff members of leaving students out by some of the questions that were asked about the field trip. She said that the Middle School only seems to take field trips to Lake Compounce. She suggested that the Board fundraise like it did for TFA or to use the money spent on TFA trainings for field trips. Ms. Gallucci said that the numbers used in the presentation for the cost comparison of salaries are grossly incorrect and need to be corrected.

Mary Lou DeVivo, Willimantic, suggested that students be told when they are freshmen about the trip to Washington, D.C. so they can start saving money if they want to attend. She said that is how it was done when she was a freshman and Windham wasn't any richer then.

Eliz Flores, Oakdale, coordinator for Parent SEE, said that she graduated from Windham High School and, in 2001, she asked her guidance counselor for an application to go to college and she is still waiting to receive that application. Ms. Flores said, at that time, there was no program like the one in place today. She said that she now is working and has a family and is attending college. She said that her first grader knows that he has to go to college. She said that the technology available should be used to the students' advantage. Ms. Flores said that she decided to be the coordinator for Parent SEE because she promised herself to teach parents to advocate for their children.

Motion by Dr. Sewall, seconded by Dr. Gomez, that the Board enter into executive session for the discussion of exempt documents pertaining to bargaining unit negotiations at 10:12 P.M.

Motion is unanimously approved.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

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

OTHERS PRESENT Superintendent Ortiz; Deputy Superintendent Dr. Gasper; Directors Mr. Cunha, Ms. Beghetto and Mr. Johnson

REGULAR SESSION RECONVENED

Mrs. Lambert reconvened regular session at 10:34 P.M.

Motion by Dr. Sewall, seconded by Dr. Gomez, that the Board add to the agenda the tentative agreement between the Board of Education and the Windham Association of Administrators.

Motion is unanimously approved.

Motion by Dr. Sewall, seconded by Dr. Gomez, that the Board of Education approve the tentative agreement between the Board of Education and the Windham Association of Administrators.

Motion is unanimously approved.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Desaulniers, seconded by Dr. Gomez, that the Board adjourn its meeting at 10:35 P.M.

Motion is unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Juan Montalvo, Secretary