

WINDHAM BOARD OF EDUCATION
WILLIMANTIC, CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF EDUCATION WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES
October 24, 2012

BOARD PRESENT: Chair Dr. Sewall, Vice-chair Mrs. Collins, Mrs. Osuba, Mr. Adamo, Mr. French, Dr. Switchenko, Ms. Tinker, Mrs. Lambert

BOARD ABSENT: Mr. Desaulniers

ADMINISTRATION

PRESENT: Superintendent Ms. Ortiz, Assistant Superintendent Ms. Barker-Jones, Directors Mrs. Banks and Mr. Nelson

STUDENT

REPRESENTATIVES: No one

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

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Dr. Sewall called the October 24, 2012, Board of Education workshop meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. in the Windham High School Library Media Center.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Board and the public recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

WORKSHOP SESSION

Cohort Scores, School Performance Index (District and State), Overview of Cycle Assessments and Assessment Audit and Plan

Ms. Barker-Jones provided an in-depth report on cohort scores, school performance index (District and State), assessments and the assessment audit and plan. The vertical scale score has been designed to measure change or growth across grades in mathematics and reading and is divided into levels comprised of stages I through V with a range from 200 - 700. Unmatched cohort scores compare all students from one grade level to the next over time and matched cohort scores compare only students that remain in the cohort from one grade level to the next over time. Ms. Barker-Jones reviewed a variety of slides comparing scores in grades 3 through grade 8 from 2007 through 2012; as well as charts comparing schools and students from 2011 to 2012. Cohort proficiency scores are designed to follow the performance levels for a cohort of students across grade levels in math, reading and writing.

Ms. Barker-Jones also explained the State Calculated School Performance Index (SPI) and reviewed a chart showing the 2011 to 2012 placement for all Windham schools, as well as the three-year average for each school.

A district assessment audit was performed by Dr. Barbara Beaudin to provide a summary of the current status of assessments that are administered to students in the district. The audit also provided recommendations to ensure that the assessments support goals outlined in the Strategic Operating Plan. As a result of the assessment audit, an assessment plan has been developed for the district. Ms. Barker-Jones reviewed the purpose and focus of the plan. Professional practices will also be incorporated into the plan. She spoke about grade-level tests given to students, data warehousing and reporting. An assessment committee will be formed to review and continue to adjust aspects of the process.

There was discussion and questions were answered throughout Ms. Barker-Jones's presentation.

PUBLIC DIALOGUE

Mary Gallucci, Willimantic, asked how it is possible to give the number of tests to students and not take away from student instructional time. Her children have told her about some of the problems when tests are administered. She doesn't like students taking computerized tests. Ms. Barker-Jones indicated that the process is new and teachers will be meeting to discuss some of the issues. Eventually the process will be streamlined and over time less instruction time will be lost.

Kevin Hoxie, Willimantic, said that he has to pay for a math tutor for his son. In four weeks, there have been three substitutes in the class. In his son's other classes, he is doing well because he is being taught the same things that he learned last year. The money is not going to the classroom but to technology. He asked who is paying for all of the new technology. He said that children are losing time in class because teachers have to deal with discipline which is the biggest problem at the Middle School and administration has failed to do anything about it. Mr. Hoxie said that nothing has changed and something needs to get done.

Mary Lou DeVivo, Willimantic, said that Windham has lost students over the last few years and asked if an exit interview takes place to see why students leave the district. Ms. Ortiz said that most of the time a withdrawal is done and the majority of students leave the district to attend school in another district.

Tom Drewry, Willimantic, read a prepared statement regarding the increased focus on growth in student performance and data, the redesign efforts and the many changes in the district, budgetary issues, services for special education students and English Language Learners. He proposed that the Board of Education have an independent study done to show the immediate impact of school reform as it is perceived at the building level. He said that such a study would trace with reasonable certainty the contributions to success of each of the decisions that have been made regarding the district.

Ms. Ortiz said that she has been meeting with WFT representatives and is working on these concerns. There was discussion regarding the many changes taking place in the district in a short period of time.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Adamo, seconded by Mrs. Lambert, that the Board of Education adjourn its meeting at 9:21 PM.

On the motion: Aye, unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Mrs. Luz Osuba, Secretary