

WINDHAM BOARD OF EDUCATION
WILLIMANTIC, CONNECTICUT
SPECIAL BOARD OF EDUCATION WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES
October 26, 2011

BOARD PRESENT: Chair Mrs. Rayhall, Mr. Doyle, Dr. Switchenko, Mrs. Lambert, Mrs. Haney, Mrs. Collins, Dr. Sewall

BOARD ABSENT: Mr. Adamo

ADMINISTRATION

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

STUDENT

REPRESENTATIVES: Hossai Jabary, Katelynn Person

OTHERS PRESENT: Special Master Dr. Adamowski; Board of Education candidates Michael Desaulniers, John French, Mary Gallucci, Doug Lary, Luz Osuba, Nancy Tinker; general public; staff; administrators; news media

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Mrs. Rayhall called the October 26, 2011, Board of Education Workshop meeting, to order at 7:05 P.M. in the Windham High School Library Media Center. Dr. Sewall led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. Ortiz recognized outgoing Board members, Mrs. Rayhall, Mrs. Haney, Mr. Doyle and Mr. Folan who previously resigned. She commended them for their many years of service on the Board and thanked them for their hard work. Mrs. Collins also spoke and said that it has been an honor and privilege to work with the Board members who are leaving. She also thanked them for their sincere dedication and commitment.

WORKSHOP SESSION

Tonight's workshop will focus on Windham High School. Dr. Adamowski reviewed both positive and negative characteristics of the High School. A strategy for moving forward with high school change is the creation of two or more high performing high school choices in Windham while also providing more opportunities for Windham students to attend high performing high schools in the region. Dr. Adamowski reviewed how the world has changed which influences student learning. Research in three fundamental areas of school design of high performing secondary schools supports findings that are known as the three R's of high school reform. **Rigor** focuses on a college-ready curriculum for all students meeting the admission criteria of the state university system. **Relevance** addresses the organization of the school which focuses around a common purpose or theme. **Relationship** deals with the size of the academy so that every student has a close relationship with teachers and school leaders and every student is an integral part of the school program. There are several effective high school designs in existence that incorporate the common characteristics of rigor, relevance and relationship. Design specifications of the new school are detailed documents which will be developed by the planning committee. Dr. Adamowski told Board members that they should anticipate presentation of some of these in the spring for Board approval with plans for the new school to begin in the fall. Dr. Adamowski explained that creating a new school doesn't occur all at once

and is a building process, generally beginning with ninth and tenth grade. He answered Board members' questions following his introduction.

Ms. Ortiz provided some information on the background for establishing the high school redesign. Early on, discussion occurred about different models and ways to involve high school staff in the process. The advisory boards at the High School have also been discussing the issue. Work has taken place, as well, to make the High School's School Improvement Grant more relevant and robust. This year a planning group was established made up of High School staff from many areas. This team is charged with developing a model for the High School which is in the beginning stages. Ms. Ortiz said that Windham is working with the University of Connecticut and Eastern Connecticut State University to get both universities more involved with the district.

Mr. Harris thanked everyone involved in this ongoing process. He explained the vision which is *Windham High School is a high performing two academy campus focused on Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, and Arts and Humanities. Windham High School students will meet or exceed State of Connecticut standards. Each Student will be prepared for college and career.* The theory of action will create smaller learning communities of 400 students that provide a rigor and focused curriculum that prepares students for college and careers. The STEM Academy will focus on science, technology, engineering and math. The Arts and Humanities Academy will focus on visual and performing arts, writing, social science and world languages.

The program of study requirements in both academies will meet state requirements. A college ready core curriculum of twenty credits, plus five credits in the area of focus, and one credit for a capstone experience in the area of focus will be required for a total of twenty-six credits. Mr. Harris reviewed what would comprise the two academies and the number of credits necessary to move from one grade to another. Intervention support for literacy and numeracy will be available in ninth grade with additional support provided if necessary in tenth grade. An acceleration program will also be available to students. The Summer Bridge Program will continue for incoming ninth graders making transition smoother and assisting in the correct placement of students in the freshman year. For students who require additional time, a summer semester for credit recovery will be offered. Mr. Harris reviewed nine performance areas targeted for improvement over the next three years, which include increasing CAPT results; increasing PSAT scores; increasing the number of students taking the SAT exam; increasing SAT scores; increasing the graduation rate; increasing the number of students taking Advanced Placement courses; decreasing students receiving disciplinary suspensions; decreasing student absences; and increasing the number of students attending post-secondary education facilities. Throughout the presentation, there was discussion about changes at the High School and Mr. Harris answered Board members' questions.

ADJOURNMENT

(31)Motion by Mrs. Lambert, seconded by Mr. Doyle, that the Board adjourn its meeting at 9:20 P.M.
On the motion: Aye, 7-0; unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Rayhall, Chair