

WINDHAM BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES
WILLIMANTIC, CONNECTICUT
September 14, 2011

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

BOARD ABSENT: No one

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 Mrs. Rayhall called the September 14, 2011, Regular Board of Education meeting, to order at 7:05 P.M. in the Windham High School Library Media Center.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mrs. Lambert led the Board and the public in the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance.

BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES

August 24, 2011, Special Meeting (held in place of August 17, 2011, Regular Meeting) (Ref. 1)

(13) Motion of Mr. Doyle, seconded by Mrs. Lambert, that the Board of Education approve the August 24 2011, Regular Board of Education meeting minutes, Reference 1.

On the motion: Aye: Mrs. Rayhall, Mr. Adamo, Mrs. Haney, Mrs. Lambert, Mr. Doyle, Dr. Switchenko

Nay: No one

Abstained: Mrs. Collins, Dr. Sewall

The motion passes: 6-0-2

August 17, 2011, Special Board of Education meeting minutes (Ref. 1A)

(14) Motion of Mr. Adamo, seconded by Dr. Switchenko, that the Board of Education approve the August 17, 2011, Special Board of Education minutes, Reference 1A.

On the motion: Aye: Mrs. Rayhall, Mr. Adamo, Mrs. Haney, Mrs. Lambert, Mr. Doyle, Dr. Switchenko, Dr. Sewall

Nay: No one

Abstained: Mrs. Collins

The motion passes: 7-0-1

COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Ortiz shared an article printed in the September 3, 2011, Album section of the *Chronicle*, highlighting Food Services Director, Ernie Koschmieder and the work he has done incorporating fresh produce into food that is served by the Food Services Department. Eighty percent of the produce served to students is local.

To clarify concerns that social studies is no longer taught at Windham Middle School, Ms. Ortiz reviewed the regular schedule and explained that social studies is incorporated into literacy classes.

STUDENT COUNCIL

There was no report.

CITIZENS/DELEGATIONS

Joe McLaughlin, a provider of birth to three early intervention services in Windham and Willimantic as well as in eastern Connecticut, spoke about cuts in Windham's preschool program. He reviewed birth to three and preschool data regarding special education, literacy and ELL that indicated that these ages are the best for intervention. Mr. McLaughlin asked that research and data be reviewed so that the district can decide to put its money and efforts in the best place possible. He hoped that cutting the preschool program would be reconsidered.

Mary Gallucci, Willimantic, said that preschool should be included in the budget because there is nothing negative to say about preschool. She said that as a working parent she has complained about all of the early dismissal days in the calendar over the years. Ms. Gallucci also said that during the school year, there are only fifteen full weeks of instruction on the calendar. She compared Windham's school calendar to other area district calendars.

Henry Crane, Willimantic, stressed that parents need to get out and vote and continue to vote if they want politicians to listen to them. He also said that voting can be done by absentee ballot. He wished success to the parents who are advocating for reinstatement of the preschool program.

Thomas Martin, Willimantic, said that he graduated from Windham High School in June and has seen many budget cuts which have caused negative side effects. He said that more cuts cannot bring positive things to the district. He said that preschool prepares students to be ready and able learners by the time they enter Kindergarten and this preparation improves their literacy.

Catiria Delgado, Windham Heights, said that she wants her four year old son to get an education so he will have a better life. She said that the key to her son's success is his education. Ms. Delgado said that children in the community will suffer if there are cuts to the preschool program. She spoke about research and studies that indicate increased education achievement and long-term positive effects when inner city and disadvantaged youngsters participate in early education programs. She asked that the program not be cut.

Terence Epps, Windham, said that he is grateful that his two daughters went through the preschool program and are doing well. He said that he is convinced that we are failing our children as education programs continue to be cut. He said that educating our children is the most important thing that we can give them.

James Flores, Willimantic, stressed the importance of Windham Public Schools' staff getting out to vote to pass the budget. He said that everyone's vote counts and there is another education budget referendum in twelve days. Mr. Flores said that the way to make changes in the community is to get out and vote.

Susan Johnson, State Representative for Windham, thanked the Board and staff for all the good work that they do. She said that she understands that this budget season has been difficult. State Representative Johnson said that preschool is a time when there is a lot of growth and brain development for children and it is better if students can be evaluated as young as possible. She said that she would like all children in Windham to have access to preschool and hoped that a way can be found to keep the preschool program in place. She mentioned that there is a forum on storm stories tomorrow night in the Town Hall Ballroom from 5 to 7 PM.

Dennis Cronin, Willimantic, said education funding needs to be found in other areas besides property taxes and asked the Board of Education to ask legislators to look into alternate ways to fund education. He said that he does not want any cuts made to the preschool program.

Rosalva Garcia, has two children who attended the Early Childhood Center. She said that it is very important for her children to go to preschool and she asked that no cuts be made to the preschool program.

Catina Caban-Owen, Social Worker at North Windham School, said that she and Nusie Halpine attended a legislative meeting showing disparities of children in urban settings. They spoke with Dr. Coleman and State Representative Johnson following the meeting advocating for Windham's preschool. Dr. Caban-Owen suggested to Dr. Coleman that the money that is returned every year to the general fund could be appropriated to be used for the slots that have been lost in preschool this year. She said that over the years, ninety preschool spots in Windham have been lost. She and other social workers will lobby the legislature for mandated preschool for all Connecticut children.

Katiria DeJesus, said that her child has been affected by the budget cuts. She found out one week before school started that her daughter wouldn't be attending preschool even though she had received the letter with the orientation date and information. She said that she and her daughter are very disappointed and asked if they have to reapply for her daughter to be accepted again. She said that preschool programs in the area all have waiting lists and it is too late to get her daughter into another program. She said that losing thirty spots affects a lot of families and she hoped that no more cuts would be made.

John Fortunato, preschool teacher with 18 plus years' experience in Windham, said that the preschool program has been recognized just in the last year by the State Department of Education as the best kept secret in Connecticut; it received 100 plus on criteria by the National Association for Education of Young Children; the Head Start program is rated as excellent; and the Cambridge Study reported that the preschool program is an excellent program. Eastern Connecticut State University staff have tested children in the program and said that significant gains have been indicated. He said that thirty children cut from this program of excellence compounds the problem of the gap seen between high achieving students and other children. He said that it is no coincidence that gains are starting to be seen because everyone is working together including the preschool.

Chuck Pennewill, Windham and Board of Finance member, said that the preschool program helped his granddaughter. He said that it is important to begin interest in education as early as possible with children. He said that the preschool program in Windham already works and shouldn't be destroyed. When the budget passes, he asked that the Board of Finance be asked to find the money to reinstate the program.

Dr. Diane Tarricone, North Windham, spoke about her daughter who has autism and how excited she is to attend preschool. She asked that the program not be taken away from other children in the community and they be allowed the chance to take advantage of these opportunities. She said that it is an honor for her daughter to go to school every day and, as a parent, she is honored to have her daughter attend the preschool program.

Mary Lou DeVivo, Willimantic, spoke about the Natchaug Family Resource Center. She said that she was told that only twelve children would be accepted into the program this year even though funding has not been cut. She said that the Family Resource Centers have many programs for young children, including birth to three, where young children are evaluated. As in the past, she asked that the preschool program in Kramer be moved to a more safe location.

Ivan Maldonado, Willimantic, said that the legislation that calls for this is very greedy and it is sad to take away from the kids. He said that he was hoping that his four- year old daughter would get to go to preschool to learn about sharing. He said that if these first steps in education are eliminated, how will these children be expected to take the second and third steps to advance?

Mrs. Rayhall thanked everyone who attended tonight's meeting, as well as last week's Board of Finance meeting, to convey their concerns regarding cuts to the education budget.

At this time, Dr. Adamowski requested time to speak about the budget portion of his report. He clarified for the members of the public that the budget reductions were not the Board's decision but solely his decision as part of his statutory obligation and authority under the terms of the state supervision of the district to make financial decisions concerning the district. He explained that the majority of voters in the district did not approve a school budget in two referendums, resulting in a reduction of \$400,000 following the first referendum defeat and then most recently a \$300,000 reduction. He said that the district will be undergoing restructuring, improving programs, and the repurposing of resources which makes it difficult to make cuts across the board. He continued by providing information on exactly what was reduced and the implications of these reductions. Dr. Adamowski explained that the cuts that were made at the preschool level were consistent with the recommendations made in the comprehensive study of the early childhood center programs by Tim Nee. He said that data and state mandated assessments will be reviewed in October and going forward he hoped that decisions would be data based to a greater degree. At this time, however, due to time constraints, data could not be used in making these recent decisions. Dr. Adamowski also explained that due to declining enrollment at the high school, classes with less than fifteen students will not be offered. He continued by saying that there will be a lead teacher in each elementary school to take the place of the special education elementary coordinator which was a central office position that was eliminated. This follows the format at the high school and middle school. Dr. Adamowski indicated that special education will continue to be reviewed since Windham has the highest rate of special education students in the state. The high percentage rate suggests over identification of students and the lack of RTI (response to intervention) such as remedial and support programs for students prior to their referral to special education. Dr. Adamowski said that he hoped that as the school district improves, it will be viewed as deserving of the support of the majority of citizens in the community. He also said that if additional funding, beyond the \$700,000, needs to be cut, the types of reductions will be much more disruptive than those thus far. He urged everyone to refocus their attention on passing the district budget and said that it is very important to improve the district in various aspects.

Mrs. Rayhall asked for a motion to add the revised 2011-2012 school calendar to the agenda as an action item, Reference 3A.

(15) Motion of Dr. Sewall, seconded by Dr. Switchenko, that the Board of Education add the revised 2011-2012 school calendar to the agenda.

On the motion: Aye, 8-0; unanimous

Mrs. Rayhall reminded everyone that the education budget referendum is on September 27, 2011, and absentee ballots may be obtained at town hall.

SUMMARY ACTION

Personnel Action (Ref. 2)

(16) Motion of Mrs. Lambert, seconded by Dr. Switchenko, that the Board of Education approve Reference 2 and the addendum distributed at tonight's meeting.

Resignations

- . JuliaBeth Tomaselli-Nettleton, Math Teacher/Windham Middle School effective August 25, 2011.
- . Joanna Caserta, Guidance Counselor/Windham High School effective August 22, 2011.
- . Kathryn Ward, Spanish Teacher/Windham High School effective September 29, 2011.
- . Michelle Serrano, Paraprofessional/Windham Middle School effective August 25, 2011.
- . Kristina Borruso, Part Time Reading Tutor/Sweeney School effective August 30, 2011.

Resignations (addendum)

- . Stacia Wright, PDP Tutor/ERA effective August 19, 2011.

Nicole Potter, Crossing Guard/St Mary's School effective September 6, 2011.

Appointments

- Beth Ann Brunet, Director of Bilingual/ESOL & World Language effective September 19, 2011. Salary is \$104,230 prorated, to replace Ana Maria Olezza who retired.
- Brian Usher, ISS Tutor/Windham High School effective September 6, 2011. Hourly rate is \$17.02, to replace Nathan Bean who resigned.
- Curt Hayes, Reading Tutor/Natchaug School effective September 1, 2011. Hourly rate is \$15.00, SIG grant funded to replace Lauren Townley who resigned.
- Dennis Vazquez, ISS Tutor/Windham Middle School effective September 6, 2011. Hourly rate is \$15.58, to replace Alonzo Cherrington who resigned.
- Nicholas Chapman, Data Specialist/Central Office effective September 21, 2011. Salary is \$65,000 prorated to replace Aaron Fagan who resigned.
- Genessa Zickefoose, Instructional Consultant/North Windham School effective September 12, 2011. Salary is MA/5, \$44,173 prorated to replace Tracy Duenzl who resigned.
- Lisa Finkelman, Mathematics Teacher/Windham Middle School effective September 1, 2011. Salary is MA/3, \$41,245 to replace JuliaBeth Tomaselli-Nettleton who resigned.
- Tonja Kelly, Internal Literacy Facilitator/Natchaug School effective September 1, 2011. Salary is 6th Yr/14, \$76,836, SIG Grant Funded, New Position.
- Bonnie Quinn, 1:1 Paraprofessional/Windham Middle School effective September 6, 2011. Hourly rate is \$12.36, New Position.

Leaves of absence (addendum)

- Bethany DiManno, Job Coach/Windham High School, extension of unpaid leave of absence for medical reasons beginning September 6, 2011 through September 30, 2011.

Schedule A2 & A4 extra curricular appointments

- Carrie Coutinho, Grade 8 Team Leader/Windham Middle School, Stipend \$3,120.

Schedule A2 & A4 extra curricular appointments (addendum)

- Brittany Kimlingen, Head Volleyball Coach/Windham High School, Stipend \$3,332 pending certification.
- Lynn Coleman, Assistant Volleyball Coach/Windham High School, Stipend \$2,156.
- James Thompson, Cross Country Coach/Windham Middle School, Stipend \$1,372.
- Sheryl Fraser, Girls Soccer Coach/Windham Middle School, Stipend \$1,176.
- Jaime Valentin, Boys Soccer Coach/Windham Middle School, Stipend \$1,960.

There was no discussion.

On the motion: Aye, 8-0; unanimous

ACTION ITEMS

Authorized Signatures Change Form (Ref. 3)

(17)Motion of Mrs. Collins, seconded by Mr. Doyle, that the Board of Education approve the revision of the *Authorized Signers of the ED-099 Agreement for Child Nutrition Programs* and therefore authorizes Superintendent Ana V. Ortiz to sign the Connecticut State Department of Education Child Nutrition Programs agreement and related claims for reimbursement, and in her absence, Jeffrey I. Nelson, Director of Finance and Management, is authorized to sign claims for reimbursement. There was no discussion.

On the motion: Aye, 8-0; unanimous

Revised 2011-2012 School Calendar (Ref. 3A)

Ms. Ortiz distributed copies of the previously approved 2011-2012 school calendar along with copies of the revised calendar. She reviewed the calendar month by month and explained that many weeks weren't

full weeks of instruction; therefore, more hours of instruction were added to the revised calendar. She said that some half days will need to be incorporated into the calendar to continue with the professional development that has begun but this will be done after CMT and CAPT testing in March. Dr. Adamowski suggested that a possible model is to have one-hour early dismissals on professional development days to limit cutting into instructional time. He said that some assurance regarding funding for the continuation of the two professional development programs that were funded by the state is needed. There was some discussion by Board members that included time for teacher collaboration, adding professional development time to the calendar, and the Windham and Columbia calendars as they relate to high school students.

(18) Motion of Mr. Doyle, seconded by Dr. Switchenko, that the Board of Education approve the revised 2011-2012 calendar as presented.

On the motion: Aye, 8-0; unanimous

Reports and Discussion Items

Superintendent's Reports

2011 Summer School Programs (Ref. 4)

Mr. Stover introduced the two summer school coordinators, Ms. Kersten (first, second and third grade coordinator) and Ms. Krach (Extended School Year coordinator), who worked to bring aspects of both programs together. Ms. Kersten and Ms. Krach reviewed the objectives, resources and materials used, the many activities students participated in, how improvement was measured, the outcome and their reflection on the overall program. They explained that community involvement greatly contributed to this year's success. There was collaboration between the school district and the Windham Public Library and Resource Center and Eastern Connecticut State University's Summer Institute for Future Teachers (SIFT) which provided additional support to the students. Literacy was this year's focus and reading at home was encouraged throughout the program. One World, Many Stories was the theme for the program, which was the Governor's summer reading theme; and each week for four weeks a different continent was targeted for activities. Data that was collected and reviewed showed that a significant number of students made gains over the summer. Data will continue to be collected and reviewed and shared with the Board through presentations during the year. Teacher feedback of the program was positive with a few suggestions made for areas for improvement. Ms. Kersten and Ms. Krach shared their recommendations to improve the program for next summer as well. Mr. Koschmieder was thanked for the healthy foods that were provided. Mr. Stover introduced Professor Dr. Brandon Monroe from Eastern Connecticut State University (ECSU). He oversaw eleven graduate students studying to be reading specialists who did their clinical training at this year's summer school. The graduate students worked one-on-one with students assessing their skills and then designing instruction to address areas that required additional support. As part of their training, the graduate students wrote assessment reports on the children that they worked with and monitored their progress in oral reading fluency and critical skills throughout the session. Dr. Monroe said that he would like Windham schools and teachers to take advantage of programs offered at ECSU. Ms. Ortiz said that she is working with Dr. Nuñez to put something in place. Mr. Stover thanked Ms. Kersten and Ms. Krach for their work this summer, along with the custodial staff who helped make it all come together at the Middle School. Questions were answered throughout the presentation. Mr. Doyle said that he would like Ms. Kersten and Ms. Krach to make their presentation at a Town Council meeting highlighting the quality of the program and the depth of cooperation between the school district and town.

Windham High School Advisory (Ref. 5)

Mr. Harris spoke about the Windham High School Advisory program and explained that the focus is the development of a supportive relationship between student and faculty advisor to assist the student in thinking about available options following graduation from high school. Advisory is a requirement for each

student and the consistent contact each student has with an advisor throughout high school is very effective in improving student attendance, student attitudes, and student achievement.

Announcements/Information (Ref. 6)

The 2010-2011 Health Office report and fourth quarter Windham High School honor roll are included. There was no discussion.

Special Master's report

Dr. Adamowski reported that one of his statutory obligations is to require audits in areas where he feels there is evidence that the district may not be in compliance with state and federal law. He reviewed some of the evidence as it relates to ESL and ELL programs offered and parent choice. He said that the district will be hiring a new director to oversee these programs and an audit at this time by the State Department of Education would be beneficial. The audit would be used as a guide for new activities and potential restructuring of programs. He also spoke about restructuring the Board's business meetings to include greater focus on student achievement results. He said that he recently visited the middle school and will talk in greater detail about that next month. The next workshop session for the Board will focus on vision: the theory of action for change and improvement in the district and some essential elements of an improvement plan to provide the framework for a strategic plan for the next three years. He spoke about John Kotter's book, *Leading Change*, and the eight elements needed to bring about successful change. The most important element is vision; therefore, the development of a vision for the district will be the main focus. For the workshop meeting, he asked Board members to think about two or three sentences that describe the Windham school district currently; and in contrast, to think about two or three sentences to describe the education system Board members would like to achieve in the next three years. He requested the Chair to extend an invitation to the workshop session to Board candidates as well so that the Board will continue to move forward once new members are elected. The workshop will provide Board members with a sense of direction with regards to the development of a three-year strategic operating plan. He explained that the Superintendent will be charged with developing a three-year plan with the Board and this will be part of Dr. Adamowski's first report to the State Board of Education in January. Once the plan is in place, many issues in isolation will have a context, a form and a guide with priorities to raise student achievement. He also reported that the Superintendent and he met with legal counsel and this will be discussed in executive session since the information involves the advice of counsel and is related to contract negotiations.

Board of Education

Mrs. Rayhall announced the following assignments for the three Board of Education subcommittees:

- Executive Committee (Board officers) - Mrs. Rayhall (chair) and Mr. Adamo;
- Finance and Audit Committee - Mr. Doyle (chair), Mrs. Haney and Dr. Sewall; and
- School Planning and Design Committee - Dr. Switchenko (chair), Mrs. Collins and Mrs. Lambert.

Future Agenda Items

Mrs. Collins asked if someone at Eastern Connecticut State University (ECSU) could be contacted to check on the possibility of having high school students take some classes there since classes with less than fifteen students will not be offered at the high school. Ms. Ortiz said that she is working with Dr. Nuñez on this issue so that students might be able to take classes after school hours.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

(19)Motion of Mr. Adamo, seconded by Mrs. Lambert, that the Board of Education enter into executive session at 9:10 PM for the discussion of exempt documents pertaining to legal and personnel matters.

On the motion: Aye, 8-0; unanimous.

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

ADMINISTRATION

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

REGULAR SESSION RECONVENES

Chair Mrs. Rayhall reconvened regular session at 9:04 P.M.

ADJOURNMENT

(20)Motion by Mr. Adamo, seconded by Mrs. Lambert, that the Board adjourn its meeting at 9:04 P.M.

On the motion: Aye, 8-0; unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

John Adamo, Secretary