

WINDHAM BOARD OF EDUCATION
WILLIMANTIC, CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF EDUCATION WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 24, 2016

BOARD PRESENT: Chair Mrs. Osuba, Vice-chair Dr. Sewall, Secretary Dr. Gomez, Mr. Kalajian, Mrs. Lambert, Mr. Montalvo

BOARD ABSENT: Mr. Flores-Alvarez, Mr. Quamme, Mr. French

ADMINISTRATION

PRESENT: Superintendent Dr. Garcia, Director Ms. Beghetto, Mr. Weathers

STUDENT

REPRESENTATIVES: None

OTHERS PRESENT: General public, staff, administrators, news media

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Mrs. Osuba called the February 24, 2016 Board of Education meeting to order at 7:00pm in the Windham High School Library Media Center.

PLEDGE OF ALLIEGIANCE

Mr. Kalajian led the Board and the Public in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

WORKSHOP TOPIC

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT DATA

Dr. Garcia and Mr. Weathers present student achievement data. There is positive movement in a majority of the grades. The benchmark programs being discussed are DIBELS and Riverside Interim Assessments. The tests are administered in grades 2 through 11, three times a year and reports are documented in performance bands.

The children in the lowest performance bands are moving forward. Instructional Coaches noted that grades 2 and 3 covered material already taught but the older grades are seeing the material for the first time. In ELA, the 11th grade was the only grade that did not have positive movement. There was discussion regarding the need to move from fiction to non-fiction reading.

Although there is positive movement, the challenge is to sustain the positive growth. Mrs. Lambert noted that the timing of the administration of the tests may have had an impact on the results since, at the high school, testing took place directly following exams. Dr. Garcia acknowledged that this was a good point and indicated that it would be addressed with the schools which actually schedule the testing during a testing window set by the District.

There was a discussion regarding the need for mid-terms. Dr. Sewall offered that the District is now testing 2% of the time and the question is whether the students are being over tested. Dr. Garcia said that mid-terms can be researched to see if they still have value since information on the status of the students' learning can be obtained through other tools provided by the District. Dr. Gomez questioned whether the students understood the significance of the benchmark testing. Dr. Garcia said this is another issue to be discussed at the school level although she is sure that the students are advised of the importance of the testing. Mrs. Lambert expressed concerns over having the benchmark testing tied to teacher performance since they do not have access to materials in advance. She also questioned whether the testing aligns with the curriculum MAPS. Dr. Garcia responded that indeed the testing does align.

The math benchmark proficiencies were presented. There was an issue with the 8th grade math that the District can identify. The next step is to focus on the classroom issues. This is where efforts will now be focused since the curriculum has now been aligned. The question is can we continued to implement effective instruction in the classrooms so students do not regress in future testing. Mrs. Lambert questioned some staff realignment that has left the high school without a math coach. Dr. Garcia indicated that the middle school was in need of a math teacher and there were other resources available to assist high school teachers. Algebra is being taught at the middle school so there needs to be a move to integrated math at the high school level.

Dr. Garcia indicated that overall this is good news and she congratulates the teachers and all others who have worked so hard to bring about these results.

There followed a presentation of the DIBELS results. A lot of effort is being put in place to create K-2 instruction that will give students a strong reading foundation. Research shows that it is essential for the students to have a strong foundation in literacy skills in order to have success in the higher grades. The tests are given 3 times a year and are administered one on one with students. There were composite scores for kindergarten and first grade. There is a clear shift in kindergarten scores for the winter tests and this is a major accomplishment. There was some historical data that indicates a 10% greater increase this year than 4 years ago.

Dr. Garcia said that this is hard work and there is a team that works to help students achieve the goals. Everyone is being held accountable to continue with the positive gains indicated in this round of testing.

PUBLIC DIALOGUE

Mike Lessard, history teacher at Windham High School, confirmed that the importance of benchmark testing is reviewed with the students. He does feel that there are many tests, including 4 or 5 in his discipline for their own classroom benchmarks. Homework and student effort for the 10 and 11 grades has not been up to par which does not help in the classroom. The state standards are asking history teachers to teach at a certain level but history instruction at the middle school level has been reduced resulting in the students not being prepared as they reach high school.

Henry Crane, Willimantic, said that he is happy that there was clarification regarding the testing scores so that student progress can be measured more effectively next year. This is effective education and he is very happy that there is an algebra teacher in all the classes. He feels this will help to keep more students out of summer school.

BOARD COMMENTS

Mrs. Lambert reminded everyone that the music department at the high school will hold a fundraiser on Friday evening. She requested that Dr. Garcia explain the issue regarding field trips. Dr. Garcia said that the testing window is April 2 to May 30 so if a class is testing during that time, they cannot go on the trip. If they have finished the testing they can go. This is to protect instructional time. Second Grade and Kindergarten is not testing so they can go on field trips. Also, once the testing is finished and field trips begin, it is difficult for the students to stay focused on learning. Mrs. Lambert indicated that there needs to be better communication so the students do not lose out on these opportunities and that money is not wasted on buses if the students cannot attend. Dr. Garcia indicated that the principals were well informed and this will be reinforced with the principals. Dr. Gomez expressed concern that since the math scores are so low, field trips should not be a priority. Dr. Garcia clarified that the low scores were due to the wrong test being administered. Dr. Sewall said that this is the first foray into this testing and some glitches should be expected but that the information being gathered is valuable.

There was further discussion regarding separating teacher assessment from benchmark testing and the limiting the amount of testing of students.

Mrs. Lambert asked that at a future workshop the PSAT scores be available so the Board can review and understand the data. Dr. Garcia agreed that this would be helpful.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Dr. Gomez, seconded by Dr. Sewall, that the Board adjourn its meeting at 8:32 P.M.

Motion is unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Jaime Gomez, Secretary