

WEST HAVEN BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES
September 19, 2011
Regular Board Meeting
Harriet North Courtroom

The Regularly Scheduled Meeting of the Board of Education was held in the Harriet North Courtroom of the City Hall, 255 Main Street, West Haven, CT on September 19, 2011. The meeting was called to order by Howard Horvath, Chairman of the Board of Education at 7:02 p.m. The meeting opened with a pledge to the flag.

**BOARD MEMBERS
IN ATTENDANCE:**

Howard Horvath Jr., Chairman
Dorinda Borer
M. Toni Paine
Cebi Waterfield
Patrick Egolum
Mark Palmieri
Robert Saley

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Sean Maher, Vice Chairman
Eric Murillo, Secretary/Treasurer

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Neil Cavallaro, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Anne Druzolowski, Assistant Superintendent
Dave Cappetta, Director of Finance

CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

PRESENT:

Marum Majid

Chairman Horvath welcomed everyone to the meeting and said we will begin with the Public Session.

B. Public Portion

Tom Conroy, 265 Highland Avenue, West Haven stated he went to a fundraiser for Fisher House which is an organization that is similar to Ronald McDonald House but for Veterans and their families. They are trying to raise money for one to be built in West Haven on the VA property. It is a combination government/private kind of thing. They raise money and the Fisher family basically matches the funds they raise. They are trying to raise six million dollars and the Fisher House will also raise six million dollars. There are 47 in the country. The house is used for veterans that are recovering in West Haven and their parents are allowed stay for free and not worry about accommodations and things like that. The veterans themselves will be able to stay there after their care. We did a fundraiser at Shoprite and we had radio stations involved selling bricks that can go into the building. One of the fundraisers is called we band together and they go to the schools and have them sell little wristbands for \$2.00 a piece. Seeing that this is being built in our town we would like to do this in West Haven Schools. Other school systems have been doing this. The town of Hamden is doing this and selling them and Cheshire has just started. Basically they are trying to target more the middle school age kids who are that September 11th age and they understand a little bit about what went on. This is a worthy cause and I think raising money for veterans should be high on our list of things to do. Seeing that it is in our own town I think it would be embarrassing to us if we didn't get behind this like everybody else did. Mr. Conroy passed out some pamphlets giving information on Fisher House and asked the board to look at it and see what they want to do. The board gave thanks.

Howie said we will turn it over to Mr. Cavallaro. Immediately following the public portion Superintendent Cavallaro requested that Student Representative Marium Majid be allowed to make her presentation before the other reports as she has a lot of studying to do tonight. Howie thanked her for coming

C.1.b. Student Representatives

Marium Majid stated the following.

West Haven High School has seen a strong start to the school year. As a character counts School, we have seen an emphasis on "if it's mean, intervene" throughout the school building and are anxious to see it continue throughout the year.

Today, the freshmen were involved in orientation activities, designed to help them at WHHS. There were four stations: The Peer Advocates conducted a session on student expectations and making good choices; science teacher, Mr. Klink, presented a session on "If it's mean, intervene"; Officer Bennett's session was on sexting and cyberbullying, and the final session was getting involved, presented by the Senior Class Officers.

Organized by the senior class officers, there will be a mini-activity fair during period 1 on Wednesday for freshmen. In advisory, students will review the student activity handbook and select clubs and activities they are interested in.

8th Grade Open House is slated for Tuesday, September 27 at 6:00 PM in the café. We would love to see you there!

65 students auditioned to be a part of the fall production – Auntie Mame. We are very excited to see this much interest in our theatre program.

We are excited that the field was fixed and safe for use for the first football game last Friday.

Senior Abdul-Razak Zachariah has been selected to present his essay at the DTP recognition program at the Aquaturf banquet facility next week.

The College Fair will be held on Wednesday, October 5th

Juniors are currently applying for the two open positions on the Board of Education. All juniors were informed of this opportunity and over 380 juniors expressed interest. Tomorrow, students will submit their application and essays. The faculty will then be asked to rate these students based on the Six Pillars of character. The interview process follows. We hope to have our two new student representatives to the Board of Education in place by mid-October.

The board gave thanks.

C. REPORTS

C.1.a. Administration/Status of Schools

Neil said before getting into the presentation tonight for one of our more important meetings of the school year that will try to tell you what direction we are going in. There are a couple of announcements. As Marium mentioned we are very pleased that the football field was set in time to go for opening day and the kids are now back on the field utilizing it for gym class and it is in very good shape.

Both Eric and Sean sat in on the interviews for the Security Company last week. We did narrow it down to a company that we like and we are in the process of negotiating with the company now. The original goal as Mrs. Gardner said was to try to get a company in place by October 1st but that is probably not realistic because one of the things we need to do before they actually hire and assign guards to WHHS they would work with the administration to make sure we had the right fit. That would be the whole interview process based on our needs. We have come up with a budget that we need to work within so we need to sit down and work with the company. The good news about not starting by October 1st is if we get the company in place we will get them before the board and they

will tell you what the plan is and how they will implement it and that will be to everyone's advantage before they actually start. If questions come up about who are these people in the school you will have an answer. We do anticipate in moving forward and we did conduct the interviews and now it is a matter again of negotiating with the company and getting them here in front of the board to explain what the program would be. The administration at the high school was very excited as Eric, Sean and all the interviewers were. This is something that is long overdue.

The AYP results were not planned as being part of tonight's presentation as they were just released today at noon time. We did make copies and will pass them out after our report. We haven't had a chance to review them yet. It will show you every school district in the state of Connecticut and every school who did not make AYP. The information is available on line and you will see a lot of it on the news and in the newspaper.

Mr. Conroy spoke about The Fisher House during Public Session and it is a very worthy cause. Neil said he did some research on it himself. He has no issue with any of our clubs soliciting for it with a PTA his concern is that as a board of education to try to draw the line at what charities we should get involved with I felt that this was a major concern. Certainly we will get it out to the high school and see if there are any clubs there that are interested; Peer Advocates or some of the clubs that do that kind of charity work and are looking for community service. We have talked to Mrs. Gardner about this. Neil is concerned because where do you draw the line. Breast Cancer is another big charity in West Haven and if they were to come to us there is just so many times we can go to our people and send out things to the school. Certainly as Clubs, PTA's and as individual schools if they want to take up a cause I think that is the way we should handle it. Our kids and organizations within or school systems have been very generous in the past. Neil is sure someone at the high school will take this up.

Neil was asked if he had a problem with the middle school getting involved if it was just the one school. Neil said he would talk with Dr. Cordone and give him the information tomorrow.

Mark Palmieri said he runs a stand for the Homecoming Festival for the basketball team and he wouldn't have a problem if Mr. Conway would be willing he could stay at our booth on October 15th. Neil said great. He just thought for the board to promote one charity over another would put ourselves in a difficult position. Mark agreed.

Neil stated he is really pleased with the presentation that the board will see tonight. Our team did a lot of work on analyzing where we are as a school district and more importantly saying what are we going to do with the results and how are we going to move the district forward. We gave this presentation at a district wide data team meeting with the State of Connecticut. The members from the state of Connecticut last week are people who come from the state to assist us and the comments were very positive. One of the things a new member said to Neil was that they worked with a lot of school districts but has never seen a team work so well together as a team. So before you guys really

begin I'm going to put a little bit of pressure on you but you really did do your homework and did a great job with making it easy for us to understand and disseminate to our teachers and administrators. Neil asked that all questions be held until the end and said you will find this a very thorough presentation and you will be pleased with the work that we have done and are doing as a district.

Anne Druzolowski said tonight you will see the results of our working as a team. The presenters are part of our regular work team. Every week you see us working on a different topic and worked close to a month in a half on this presentation. These are the results of Mastery and the CMT but most importantly the direct link to the school The District Improvement Plan; which is more important than anything else right now. You need to see what we planned and that we are not changing what we planned over past years and that the results speak for themselves but that doesn't mean we change the course. What Anne wants you to walk away with is the sense that we haven't backed down, we haven't changed directions; we are going forward. In the next few years you will see the big results. As Doug Reeves has said it takes five years for a bamboo plant to finally go from seed to an initial plant and then it sprouts after five years to the height of nine feet. That is how he looks at change in schools and that is how we are looking at it too.

Neil said he has two quick points. The district improvement plan as well as this presentation will be on our website as of tomorrow.

We had advised the PTA at the council meeting last week that we were doing this presentation and if anyone who is part of the council has questions we will be at the PTA President's Tea next month to answer any questions at that meeting as well.

Joe Lucibello the Director of Pupil Services stated that tonight they will be presenting district wide student data as well as the plan for the current school year; we call it monitoring for improvement. Joe introduced his colleagues who put a lot of time and effort into this presentation.

Rafaella Fronc, Science and ELL Coordinator, Ann Valanzuolo, Language Arts Coordinator, Judy Drenzek, Early Childhood Coordinator, AJ Palermo, Math and Professional Development Coordinator, Stefania Izzo-Larry and Virginia Bauer are Assistant Directors of Pupil Personnel.

The discussion tonight included several areas. They discussed (AYP) Annual Yearly Progress, West Haven vs. District reference group which is our DRG, matched cohorts – same student analysis (apples to apples), and performance level; same grade analysis. Many other areas were discussed.

Patti Fusco has put tonight's entire presentation under District and also on the Board Minutes page on the website.

Questions

Ann Valanzuolo had stated that studies show that students from lower socio economic families come into first grade with about 5,000 words that they can use and students from more affluent families come in with 20,000 words so there is a 15,000 word deficit. By the time students are in 7th, 8th, 10th 11th and 12th grade it separates up to something like a 100,000 word deficit. That is one of the biggest problems because if students don't know the vocabulary they don't understand what they are reading. In high school they are struggling to understand their social studies or science text. They brought in a program called Worldly Wise which has been updated as a resource and other approaches to vocabulary are being taken as well to close that vocabulary gap.

Howie thought Ann had brought up a very interesting point and asked Ann Valanzuolo if she could equate the difference in the number of vocabulary words 5,000 vs. 20,000 to the number of years that somebody is behind. Ann is sure that there is that research but she doesn't have it now. Howie said that is OK he wasn't trying to put her on the spot. He asked what our free and reduced lunch number is. Neil stated around 60%. Howie said on an average this number is three to four years behind. There is the same kind of scenario with the vocabulary deficit which stays the same each year or gets worse; those are the kids that drop out. Howie said it sounds like we are but are we really identifying the kids that come in with 5,000 words? Yes that is why we have such an emphasis on oral language because the studies are showing that the three and four year olds from certain families are receiving only about 25% of the language and much of that is negative language too; negative comments versus conversational language that other families provide. Anne Druzolowski said they can predict that the gap will get larger and that is why our focus is in this area. That is why we revamped our kindergarten program to include a lot of the skills that a speech and language teacher would normally have that are not articulation issues but language development pieces. Speaking in complete sentences is something that we don't hear much any more so it is continually pushed in the classroom. You will see that this program is consistent and you will see it going on in any classroom you see and that is going to make a big difference because we are using a lot more vocabulary.

Rob asked when you look at the DRG is there any way to look at class size in each one of those DRGs compared to ours. You can look at their school qualifiers to see what the average class size is. Rob said the other thing would obviously be per pupil expenditure and looking at what each one of those municipalities does in their DRG. AJ said she believes that same information is available on the strategic school profile that Raffaella mentioned. She said all the districts that share our DRG are also in need of improvement in mathematics and reading. Thirty four districts were identified and all of our DRG partners are also in that group of 34 with West Haven being one of them.

Rob asked if they thought that a smaller class size would improve our test scores. Neil said that class size isn't really an issue as our average class size with the exception of about one or two grades is about 21. One area that is a little crowded but we see a decrease coming would be at Bailey. Their class sizes are pretty big. The high school class size is very good with the exception of Honors Classes. Rob said you don't think that is an issue for test scores? Neil didn't think it was an issue for West Haven right now.

Neil said in conversation with Doug Reeves at one time his theory is that as a parent if you had the opportunity to put your child in a class would you put him in a class of 30 kids with a great teacher or with an OK teacher and 15 kids. Where would you rather have your child? Sometimes class size can be a little bit over rated.

Rob said regarding matched cohorts, doesn't the state monitor how the kids do from another district? Don't they have achievement test scores from that other district and when they come to our district Anne Druzolowski interjected and said we don't get it. We are not privy to the other reports; we are only privy to West Haven's.

Rob stated he thought it was a great idea with the testing being done for the kindergarten students coming in. He said when you look at the kids coming in what is the percentage of those kids that actually need help. Neil said he thinks an answer could be found in some of the statistics we get from the kindergarten survey. In other words what percentage of our kids come in with pre-school experience or some of the other things that might be a better way to give Rob an idea of what the kids are coming in with. Rob said what he is saying is that when Raffaella talks about the ELL that has gone from 480 to 680 in four years, that makes it more difficult. Rob asked what is the percentage of remediation these kids need. Do they need a little help or a lot of help. Judy Drenzek said for the preschool experience we have possibly 300 kids that have preschool experience. Rob said that makes a big plus. Neil said maybe 60% have preschool experience. Judy Drenzek stated the best way to help your child with vocabulary is by talking with them. It you talk with your child while you are in the car rather than put on a movie for them that is time well spent. Many parents go on trips and turn the little TV on that is the thing we are talking about it has nothing to do with economics; it can come from any family. It is the amount of time you spend with your child talking with them and their experience in preschool that helps to develop vocabulary.

Rob asked if socio economics was the only criteria for being in certain DRGs. Ann Valanzuolo said no demographics too.

Cebi had a lot of elementary level teachers comment to her that their opinion of our graded assessment for social studies and science makes it hard for them to make time in the day for reading and math. Has there been any consideration to do more integrated learning like utilizing math in a science lesson or utilizing reading in social studies lessons instead of having to worry about graded assessments. Raffaella responded to this and Neil said he thinks Raffaella is right on the money but also along with that is the more real life experiences shown to the kids when you are teaching reading to make it more meaningful and integrating things like math with science those are the kind of things that make it real and make it stick for kids and make them more prepared.

Toni Paine had a question on the number of participating students for a DRG. On one of the early slides where you had the DRG up for 3rd or 4th grade she saw that it showed the number of students that participated. She found it hard to believe that one of them only had a double digit in it like 92 or 93. How does that happen isn't it the same % that should be participating. Someone responded that it was probably Derby or Ansonia. Toni

asked if there were that few in that DRG. Yes, that is your actual number of students. Are there that few in that grade? Yes. Toni thanked them and said she believes it was Derby. Anne Druzolowski said there is a big discrepancy in that DRG between populations. Anne said poverty really plays a big role but unfortunately I don't know if they really did a good job looking at it relative to the size of the community.

Howie asked if they would mind going back to the slide that shows the number of students that progressed and the number that went backwards. He said what we are looking at here said that 25 students in some way or another decreased but we really don't know how much so somebody could have decreased a point and somebody could have decreased a different amount. Even if you do have the data this chart doesn't really tell us the kind of... AJ said it does not tell us scale score. Yes that is what I am getting at fundamentally. AJ said this chart doesn't but we could certainly find it out. We would know if they were two points away from being in the next level or two points below. Howie thought this was a good chart he thinks the question he really has though is as I mentioned in the subcommittee meeting the idea that we look at kind of absolute numbers instead of the growth numbers. This troubles me because it really doesn't take into account the kind of things we are talking about when the child comes in three years behind or 15,000 words behind that is significant and A to know it is important and B to figure out OK given that in a system that is heterogeneous which says there are kids that are 20,000 more; they aren't all the same and you can't teach them all the same fundamentally. How do you catch them up. When you look at charters that seem to have a pretty good record of it that would strike me that they might have the advantage of more homogeneity which is to say although they are all 90/90 if everybody is focused on giving me extra whatever it is that they need to get there; it might be time or it might be days in the year, it might be length of the class that is how they seem at least in part to get those kids up quicker or faster or more consistently. It just strikes me that we need to understand that piece better. It sounds that you all do though.

Stefania said keep in mind though that this is all just preliminary data. During the first couple of weeks of school there are universal screenings that are taking place in school so this is just one piece of the puzzle and then through diagnostic assessments we are able to pinpoint things better. Howie said that makes him feel very comfortable and it is great to hear that you guys are doing this.

Howie said here is my fundamental Joe citizen question. Can you really catch up somebody that is three or four years behind? Anne Druzolowski said if you didn't believe that then you shouldn't have been in the field. No, no Howie said he believes you can I think there is plenty of evidence that you can but can a school system like ours? Anne Druzolowski said absolutely. That is what the 90/90 100/100/100 study actually says and in fact it was done specifically to prove that. That regardless of what one may think or predisposed conditions that kids come in with there are no excuses. Unfortunately I may not be alive long enough to see it in the majority of districts but what I guess I am saying is it can happen. A further discussion took place.

The board thanked everyone for the great presentation.

C.1.c. Committee

Rob said the Building Oversight Committee/New High School is getting the architect tonight they started to do this. They want to narrow it down to six or eight candidates. Neil thought it was scheduled for tomorrow night. Rob said you are right it is tomorrow night.

With what is going on in City Hall they are on task and will be doing a little bit more work in the finance department and with the Commissioner of Public Works. They will be putting some stuff out to bid for the design because there is a little bit more asbestos that they want to remove. The roof material that we put in should all be done this month or the first part of October. Everything is moving forward Mr. Chairman.

Howie said they had a one hour ERIN Committee Meeting that talked a little bit about a new commissioner. He discussed some technology programs that he wanted to share and briefly discussed the superintendent and board evaluation. He requested that paperwork be looked at and brought to the next meeting and we will have an executive session to discuss it and then two weeks later we will come back and complete everything and have the final conversation. If there are any questions on this let Howie know.

C.1.d. Board

Cebi said we had a Casey Crusade Fundraiser yesterday that was very successful and she wanted to thank the teachers for coming out in mass and supporting the event. We had teachers donate raffle prizes and one or two braved the wretched duck tank. We want to thank all who came and supported Casey. Mr. Paolino and Taryn were there along with a lot of teachers from Carrigan where Casey attends school as well as some other school personnel. It was very successful, the Ridgeways were very touched and Casey had a great time. Howie said it was great to see her face. Cebi said and Howie performed very well. Howie said it was a great thing to see her smiling and so happy.

Rob said the BOC did talk about energy and the schools and how they could save us money. They also want to include the municipal building so we are working on that. He thinks these guys are pretty good.

D.1. Approval of Minutes

D.1.a. West Haven Board of Education Regular Board Meeting held in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, CT on September 6, 2011 at 7:00 PM

D.1.b. West Haven Board of Education Parent/Community Relations Committee Meeting held in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, CT on September 6, 2011 at 6:30 PM

Howie Horvath asked for a motion to approve D.1.a. and D.1.b. inclusive
M. Toni Paine made the motion to approve D.1. a. and D.1.b. inclusive
Mark Palmieri seconded the motion
Discussion: None
All members present were in favor
Motion passes

D.2. Resignation: (Certified)

11-158 V. Patrick Morrissey Jr.
Social Studies Teacher - Carrigan
Effective: August 31, 2011
Reason: Personal

Howie Horvath asked for a motion to approve 11-158
Toni Paine made the motion to approve 11-158
Cebi Waterfield seconded the motion
Discussion: None
All members present were in favor
Motion passes

D.3. Resignation: (Non-Certified)

D.4. Leave of Absence: (Certified)

D.5. New Hire: (Certified)

11-159 Eric Rice, 48 Pleasant Street, Chester, CT 06412
Assistant Football Coach - WHHS
Effective: Immediately
Salary: \$3,500.00

11-160 Megan Elliott, 20 Mueller Drive, Hamden, CT 06514
Assistant Volleyball Coach – WHHS
Effective: Immediately
Salary: \$1,800.00

11-161 Jennifer McCormick, 15 Iris Court, Cheshire, CT 06410
Assistant Girls Swimming Coach - \$2,100.00
Effective: Immediately
Salary: \$1,800.00

D.6. New Hire: (Non-Certified) (from the addendum)

11-162 Dawn Reiss-Meello, 21 Fair Sailing Road, West Haven, CT 06516
3 ½ Hour Cook – Carrigan School
Effective: Immediately

Salary: Per AFSME Council 4 Local 1303-410 Contract

Howie Horvath asked for a motion to approve D.5. 11-159 – D.6. 11-162 inclusive

Cebi Waterfield made a motion to approve D.5. 11-159 – D.6. 11-162 inclusive

Mark Palmieri Egolum seconded the motion

Discussion: None

All board members were in favor

Motion passes

D.7. New Business

F. Informational:

Howie Horvath asked if there was anything under informational.

Neil Cavallaro thanked everyone for the wonderful job they did on the presentation.

There was nothing else to add.

Howard Horvath asked for a motion to adjourn

Patrick Egolum a motion to adjourn

Cebi Waterfield seconded the motion

All board members present voted to adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Marylou Amendola

Board Secretary