

WEST HAVEN BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES
September 6, 2011
Parent/Community Relations Committee Meeting

The Parent/Community Relations Committee Meeting was held in the City Council Chambers in City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, CT 06516. The meeting was called to order by Dorinda Borer, Chairman of this Committee at 6:30 p.m. The meeting opened with a pledge to the flag.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS : Dorinda Borer, Chairman
PRESENT Toni Paine

COMMITTEE MEMBERS :
ABSENT Howard Horvath
Eric Murillo

OTHER BOARD MEMBERS
IN ATTENDANCE: Cebi Waterfield
Sean Maher
Rob Saley
Mark Palmieri arrived late
Patrick Egolum arrived late

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT: Neil Cavallaro
Anne Druzolowski
David Cappetta

Dorinda passed out the agenda for this meeting and thanked everyone for coming. She wanted to have a committee meeting to touch base and talk about some of the things we have talked about but we were really not able to give it the time. The first one is the Governance Board. This is something new and is something that they wanted to do in the schools. Tom Hunt stated Forest School is getting one and a piece of it is in place which is a School Compact that we are rolling out but as far as the Governance Council we are following the timeline for November 1st. Dorinda asked him if he wanted to give background on what the requirements are.

Anne Druzolowski stated she made copies of the power point they received a year ago from the state and she will explain what happened at that meeting. We were pretty well represented with principals and we were invited to attend because we are one of the partner districts. The partner school districts already had to go into it but only three have really fulfilled their obligation. We are part of the three more districts coming in. When we sat down with the Department of Education and their consortium they couldn't give us much information because they were interpreting it the way it was written from the statute and they were very broad about it. There are some specifics but there were a lot of mistakes that went through when they set it up. They

hoped that this legislation would be revised a little bit. Anne has been looking for revisions but doesn't believe it has been and some of this is not very clear. Anne passed out information that showed exactly what they are doing. They started with the compact piece which is what all the Title 1 schools are doing and we hope that all the schools will do this. The lead in this piece is Tom because Tom received support from the State Department and he and his teachers created what is called The School Compact.

Tom Hunt, Principal of Forest stated that the School Compact has been around for some time, at least ten years, but schools around Connecticut have shied away from it and this is a rebirth of it. They received assistance in the form of a coach from the State Department of Education. The coach came down and sat with them and helped them devise a School Compact. The Compact is a way that the school is able to help the families help the child. They sat with the coach through a number of revisions and came up with their tentative final product. The final product will be unveiled at their Open House on September 15th. They went by grade level at Forest and picked a skill at each grade level that historically has been difficult for students. Making text connections in fourth grade is something that needs to be worked on. That 4th grade compact is built around how families can help us at home reinforce making text connections. We have a preliminary packet of work with strategies that teachers put together that they will explain to parents during the open house. This is not a traditional open house where parents meet the principal and teachers and walk around and look at the school. Our open house is set up so you go to your child's classroom and you learn about what your child is going to learn. We decided to divide it up into trimesters. In the first semester we give them some ideas they may wish to use at home in terms of strategies to help reinforce what we are doing here. This is a vehicle for parents to become more involved in what the children are doing at home. The packet is also made up of strategies (reading time with the child or something the family is reading together). The teachers can use this as a dip stick to see what was done at home and to see if there is progress being made in that particular skill level. A skill level was chosen for each grade level K – 4 and there is a different compact in terms of the skills being addressed in each grade level. Anne said this is very simply worded as well to demystify the language of education and it backs right into their school improvement plan. Tom stated it is specifically aligned to the school improvement plan which is aligned to the district improvement plan. This is something the coach has pretty much set the parameters for us to follow so it has some consistency for the measurement at the end. There is a Spanish version for Spanish speaking families. During our open house our ESL Department will set up in our cafeteria so Spanish speaking families can go to each grade level in the cafeteria and pretty much get the same presentation in Spanish that is being given in English in the classroom.

Tom was asked by the State to appear in a training film for school compacts. He was in a filming studio in Southington in August and was interviewed by a woman from Washington D.C. who asked him specifically how they developed it and what their plans were to roll it out. The innovative thing his team decided to do was to use the Open House as the vehicle because that historically has the best attendance. There will be two 40 minute sessions so parents will have the ability to be in more than one classroom for siblings. Mr. Winkle is allowing us a bus for transportation to pick up and drop off. We have been doing a transportation piece for a lot of different things at Forest. We probably average about 25 families an event using the

transportation which is a very good piece for us. These are 25 families that we wouldn't necessarily see.

Neil said it is important to note the amount of work that went into actually creating the compact. This wasn't started just last week. Tom said they had monthly meetings starting in January and the only month we didn't meet was in March because of the mastery test. He will get a copy of the finished product for the board to look at once it is back from the copy center and he will have this for their open house. The state coach was pleased with this and asked them to be a part of the training piece for the other Title 1 schools in the state.

Dorinda asked if the other principals would be coming to the open house to check this out. Anne said they are the prototype for them so he is leading the pack with this. Tom said they supply each one of the buildings with a template and every one will be using something very uniform and customized to their own building.

Neil said at the first principal's meeting they had each principal present what they would be presenting to the staff meeting and that was one of the things Tom introduced so all of our principals are aware of this and it worked out really well.

Tom said due to the credit of Dr. Druzolowski and Neil all schools will be compact and we all will do governance and that is going to take the competitive piece out so we will all be together doing the same thing. We were very happy to share with the other schools what we came up with

Anne said the only distinction between the school compact and the school governance is that school compact is primarily geared to an activity for Title 1 schools but now we have said it is for everybody now. The school governance council was state statute and that was also just for those schools that were not making AYP adequate yearly progress so it didn't include everybody. We have said all school will also have school governance councils.

Dorinda asked if the money for this will come out of Title 1 funds. Dr. Druzolowski stated some of it will and some of it can not.

Tom Hunt said all of this fits nicely into what they are doing with the CALI initiative with school climate and it made it that much easier for us to wrap our arms around it and understand it. It was easier to embrace because it had to fit into everything we have already been doing.

Dorinda said it will be nice to have uniformity from school to school because there is such a variance when you have the open houses at the elementary. Neil Cavallaro said he has never seen our principals work together or take ideas from one another as he has seen in the last year or so with these initiatives. It is really heartening to see everybody working together so well.

Dorinda asked when will we start the process of recruiting the parents for the school governance or set the criteria for what we will be looking for in those parents. Anne said probably by the end of September she will be in small committee with a rep from each one of the area. She would welcome input on this. We will devise a procedure that can be done uniform across the board.

There are a set number of parents and teachers that have to be on this council. Their role is very explicit. They will serve in an advisory capacity. The purpose of the school governance council is to enable parents, school staff, students where appropriate and community leaders to work together to improve student achievement. By November 1st we will have our ball moving so we will then be able to have our elections.

Dorinda asked if anyone had any questions. There were none. She then asked if we could have an update during our second meeting in October. Anne said yes, hopefully because at that point she hoped they would have had at least two meetings with that Ad hoc committee that drafts where we think we should go. Dorinda said to let us know if you need any help. Anne said we need a board representative and as Chair of this committee you might like to be on it. Dorinda said sure. Anne said she will communicate directly with Dorinda. Dorinda said that would be great.

Dorinda said the next item on her agenda was Power School and it was said that there was something at the elementary level they were going to try and incorporate. Anne said they had access to that last May. They can go into a parent portal and communicate directly with parents. We are also having training next week and the week after for elementary teachers to use grade book which will be for the grades and assignments. It is not that difficult but you do need to have that training.

Dorinda asked if the elementary teachers were using it now or is that training going to help them to use it. Anne said they will learn how to use it. Neil said he believes they are set up but need the training piece.

Cebi Waterfield said she was the #1 power school user at Carrigan last year. Neil said the teachers at Carrigan, many of whom had an elementary background took to it very well. Anne said it is another way for a parent to ask why don't I know about this or can you help me with this I noticed this.

Rob asked Neil's view on the article in the Register about the IPADS. Neil said he would love to do this but the problem is the start up cost. Rob said he figured that. Neil said once you get that he has to believe there would be a savings from purchasing textbooks. Rob asked if this could be done with the elementary schools. Anne said she would put it anywhere she could get it. Rob said there is some cost savings because if there is a new edition you have the technology right there rather than buying a new book. He thinks this is a great opportunity to look at. Dorinda wondered if we could buy in bulk.

Neil said you will hear about a new program tonight we are very excited about. We did receive a grant to do some work with IPODS. We have been talking about different ways we can implement new technology and one of our goals this year is to get some innovision boards for the high school and we have started at Bailey. Our math department at the high school is in need of more upgraded technology and that is a priority.

Dorinda went on to the next item on her agenda Emergency Preparedness and gave thanks for the way it has been handled. She asked if in our contingency planning could we give out a 1-800

number, a bridge line, to call if you want to find out what is going on at the school because if you don't have power, a television or a phone you don't know if they have postponed school. Neil said they used to do that but have not done it recently because of the school messenger. Our school messenger does send a text or email of the script that he reads. Dorinda said so people get two numbers. Cebi said yes it comes to her cell phone. Neil said you have to put your cell phone number as an emergency number.

Toni Paine said it wouldn't be a bad idea to send out another memo to have people register their cell phone numbers. Toni had three people come to her and say they didn't receive the call from the city. Once your land line is gone and they don't have your cell phone number you won't get a message. It would be wise to tell everybody to register their cell numbers.

Dorinda said we only have a few minutes left is there anything else on emergency preparedness. Neil said our food service people did a tremendous job. Our custodial and maintenance staff did a great job with the clean up. They did a very good job of keeping up with the storm.

Dorinda said that at the PTA Council Meeting there was some discussion about teachers not necessarily attending a lot of the PTA Meetings and I think they would like to have a little more teacher representation so they can talk about things other than gift wrapping and fundraisers. This is a request from the PTA Council.

Rob Saley discussed another article in the Times that talked about a school in the south Bronx that is part of the poorest congressional district in the nation and in one of the city's most violent neighborhoods. It is a public school with 590 kids in it and the teachers actually go door to door on house calls. Another article preaches that uniforms get you to college and it is a very interesting article. The principal Ken Vaughn said it is K-12 and opened in 2006 because he believes it is very critical for families to be involved in the education. Sixty three of seventy two seniors graduated and fifty of them were going on to a four year college. The school parent coordinator spent six weeks before school started in August looking for these kids to talk to them and show them everything. It is an article that shows you what other school districts are doing that are a lot poorer than ours. They have the ability to do this and I just want people to know that.

Dorinda asked for a motion to adjourn. Toni made the motion and Cebi seconded it. All board members present were in favor. The meeting ended at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Marylou Amendola
Board Secretary

