

PAC MINUTES
WOONSOCKET PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2010
6:30 P.M. TO 8:30 P.M.
Woonsocket Area Career & Technical Center
400 Aylsworth Avenue

Attendees: Cindy Stepanian (PAC Co-Chair/Globe Delegate), Denise Auclair (PAC Co-Chair/Harris Delegate), Sue Rochefort (WHS PTO Treasurer), Paula Dube (Citizens'/Pothier PTO Treasurer), Kimberly Blais (PAC Recording Secretary), Patrick McGee (WMS Principal), Rob Desrosiers (Globe Park Principal/Elementary Principal Delegate), Steve Boss (WMS Assistant Principal), Robert Gerardi (Superintendent of Schools), Lynne Bedard (WHS/WACTC Principal), Mark Garceau (Director of Instruction and Administration), Donna Coderre (Governor Pothier Principal), Brenda Sanchez (WHS Home School Liaison), Meka Hamilton (Governor Pothier Delegate), Donna Houle (School Success Coalition Team Leader/ RIPIN Rep), Tony Gabriele (WHS PTO President), Jen Kithes (Parent of a Freshman), Brenda Galvin (Leo Savoie Delegate/WMS PTA President, SELAC Alt. Delegate), Lynn Kapiskas (SELAC Chair/Delegate), Ron Celio (Coleman and Fifth Avenue Principal), Tara Dubois (WHS Delegate), Linda Majewski (School Committee Member), Linda Filomeno (Director of Programming for ELLs and Response to Intervention Coordination).

For the Record:

Not in attendance. (WTG Elementary Teacher Delegate), Stephanie Roberts (WTG Elementary Teacher Alt. Delegate), Amy Thibault (Bernon Heights Alt. Delegate), (WMS- WTG Teacher Delegate), (WMS – Parent Delegate), (WHS-WTG Teacher Delegate)

Guest Speakers: Ellen Shalvey (Sodexo General Manager). Michael Ferry (Coordinator, Instructional Technology PBGR Coordinator).

Delegate/Guest Introductions - Suggestions/Concerns:

Sue Rochefort (WHS PTO Treasurer)

- First WHS PTO Meeting will be held on Thursday, September 16th.

Paula Dube (Citizens' and Pothier PTO Treasurer/Citizens' and Pothier Parent) No comment.

Kimberly Blais (Globe Park Parent) No comment.

Patrick McGee (WMS Principal)

Rob Desrosiers (Globe Park Principal) No comment.

Ellen Shalvey (Sodexo General Manager) No comment.

Steve Boss (WMS Assistant Principal)

- First PTA Meeting is September 28th at 6:30 p.m. at the VillaNova.

- School Improvement Team meeting is September 20th at 2:00 p.m. at the VillaNova. Parent volunteers are needed.

Robert Gerardi (Superintendent of Schools)

- Will address the School Readiness Policy which includes the dress code under agenda item.
- Will address and answer questions regarding the financial issues/concerns within the district during this meeting.

Lynne Bedard (WHS/WACTC Principal) No comment.

Mark Garceau (Director of Instruction and Administration).

- Trying to help facilitate a communication system within the district amongst professional staff as well as parents. Mike Ferry will discuss Parent Portal this evening; also trying to improve the automatic calling system to be discussed later this evening.

Donna Coderre (Governor Pothier Principal)

- First PTO meeting today. Excellent turn out.

Brenda Sanchez (WHS Home School Liaison) No comment.

Meka Hamilton (Governor Pothier PTO Member/Pothier Parent)

- First PTO meeting today.
- Concerns with ½ day kindergarten, school supplies, and getting more parents involved in PAC meetings.

Donna Houle (School Success Coalition Team Leader/ RIPIN Rep)

- Next School Success meeting is scheduled for September 23rd from 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at Family Resources.
- Family Matters Conference on November 6th from 8:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at WHS. Passed out invitation flyers. Conference \$25.00 for parents/families and \$30.00 for professionals and will receive continuing education units/professional development credits. Low income families will be charged \$5.00. Connecting Children and Families (CCF) will be providing free child care and transportation from CCF to the WHS. CCF is located on Hope Street. Vendors will have tables at this workshop and we would like to invite PAC to set up a table to promote PAC.
- Passed out RIPIN Networker newsletter (see PAC for a copy).

Tony Gabrielle (WHS PTO President/WHS Parent)

- PTO meeting scheduled for September 16th has been cancelled.
- WHS Parent Information Night is scheduled for October 23rd.

Denise Auclair (PAC Co-Chair/Harris Delegate/Harris, WMS, WHS Parent)

- Bed bug and head lice concern – Would like all principals to tell teachers to remove pillows from classrooms and maintenance to vacuum rugs at least once a day. With flu season, we need to make sure that bubblers/water fountains are cleaned out more than once a day.
- Bussing – One issue brought up during School Committee meeting and some open houses - ½ day kindergarten (students are being dropped off at the wrong schools and parents are not

being notified). School Committee working on this; however, principals should inform parents once they are informed, so parents know where their children are.

- Race to the Top Grant – Where is the money? Hoping Woonsocket gets some of it. PAC sent a letter to the Commissioner congratulating her on receiving the Race to the Top money and invited her to the PAC meeting this evening and on November 3rd. Unfortunately, Commissioner Gist is already committed to speak at events on both September 15th and November 3rd. The Commissioner said, “We are in the process of scheduling district level community forums and once we schedule Woonsocket, may I email you the dates and you can help us get the word out and get your Woonsocket Parent Advisory Committee and Parents to attend the forum”. At this point, we will be able to hear what the Commissioner will have to say and as PAC Members, Administrators, Staff, and Parents will have our chance to speak directly to the Commissioner and ask what is going on with Woonsocket. This is one reason why PAC has to stay strong as a group and communicate and support each other (networking).
 - Supt. Gerardi - ½ day kindergarten - it was an extremely difficult decision for School Committee; concerned parents will be bringing this issue to City Council on Monday (they have requested data; requesting that we reinstate full day kindergarten); cost approximately \$1.25M to reinstate the other half of kindergarten.
 - Meka Hamilton - asked about special needs children noting requirements to go into 1st grade have not changed (how are children supposed to meet the requirements in that time). Supt. Gerardi suggested speaking with Carole Lerner, Director of Special Education to make sure they are getting all their services.
 - Cindy Stepanian - (referring back to parents going to the City Council meeting) read aloud an email requesting the PAC’s help to get signatures (500) for the petition. She noted: as a PAC Co-Chair and as PAC Parents, we don’t get involved in petitions because we represent all parents; will pass the word along that parents are going to City Council Meeting on Monday to voice their concerns and advised them to contact each school and get the name of their PTO/PTA President name and email address to send them a blurb too.
 - Linda Majewski - commented that full day kindergarten is not written in the State’s Basic Education Program (BEP). Maybe they can re-visit State standards and make this become one. There is a performance audit going on right now and maybe there will be a light shed on some of the rumors going on.
 - Supt. Gerardi - audit report has not come out in writing yet but maybe the report will say we need to put full day kindergarten back but in order to do that, they will have to figure out a way to cut \$4.2M. Right now we still have a \$3M deficit. So actually, they would have to cut \$4.2M to afford all day kindergarten.
- Supt. Gerardi discussed issue of finance: We have some real concerns with the way the city has been financing the School Department in that they have asked us to pay FY10 bills with FY11 monies. Bottom line is that they are not giving us enough money to pay our bills. Therefore, during the course of the summer, we almost didn’t have enough money to make payroll. Every purchase order we sent them for the last couple of weeks they are not funding. Another serious issue, Savoie Elementary doesn’t have hot water. The students might have bagged lunch come Friday because they will not pay the bill. Harris - Xerox machine is broken; Konica will not service the machines until the bill is paid. We almost didn’t open school on the first because the fire alarm company will not inspect until the bill is paid. Fortunately, we were able to get a 30 day extension from the fire marshal. All

buildings have been inspected and students are safe. State laws say that if we do not have a balanced budget the city has the right to over see the finances. However, the city is violating laws by not providing things like hot water, not meeting IDEA laws, etc. Back in the Spring, we asked the Commissioner for a new ruling of the Maintenance of Effort which basically means how much money we are allocated. We were suppose to get \$64M from the city but only received \$61M and the Commissioner ruled in our favor saying yes, they need to pay us. Cindy asked if any City Council Members go to School Committee meetings. Supt. Gerardi - once in a while, Chris Beauchamp attends a meeting. We have to wait until the audit reports is complete, then we go to court to ask for an injunction or it involves us shutting a school down and then we call the Commissioner to tell her that we cannot open a school and we have to shut it down because of, and give an explanation. The city knows that they have to pay salaries or their will be a work stoppage through the unions. We are only 9.6% of their budget. What happened to their other 9% of their budget? They took out a lot of loans and that what happened. In conclusion, Supt. Gerardi will email Savoie PTO a notice that Savoie students may have bagged lunch on Friday and cc the PAC to keep on file.

- Denise Auclair - suggested that other emails that concern a specific school can be sent to that school and just cc the PAC as a parent thing to keep them posted.
- Mark Garceau - will call Peter Fontaine regarding the removal of pillows from classrooms and to disinfect rug areas and bubblers. The bussing issues are usually troublesome during the first 2 weeks of school opening; however, we are working hard to try to resolve these issues.
- PAC suggested that maybe the nurses would like to put on a workshop regarding bedbugs and head lice or even the school's PTA.
- Race to the Top money - the Commissioner will be at the upcoming Forum. The approximate amount WED should receive is \$2.5M; cannot use these funds to balance our budget. The Commissioner is making it clear that we need to use this money to improve schools (building systems for parents, professionals and students). However, we may receive \$2.1M from the Edu Funds Federal Grant. The ARRA funds received this year saved teaching jobs in the middle school. Edu Funds were supposed to be used this year and next year to replace the ARRA funds that we will not be getting next year, however, as we go through the legal tussle, we may be forced to use those funds this year therefore next year we will be in even a bigger problem to fund schools.

Cindy Stepanian (PAC Co-Chair/Globe Delegate/WMS and Globe Parent)

- Open house at Globe great success. Rob Desrosiers offered BCI checks and 73 people came forward to sign up so they can volunteer in the school(s).
- Bussing issues – Late to school every day. Marc Dubois, Peter Fontaine and Durham Bus Company have been made aware of these issues.
- ½ day kindergarten petition – hopefully people can make it to City Council on Monday. Speak up on behalf of, not just your children, all the children to give them what they deserve. Spread the word through your parent list and let them know what's going on.

Jen Kithes (Parent of a Freshman) No comment.

Brenda Galvin (WMS PTA President/SELAC Member/WHS, Elementary Parent)

- August uniform shirt orders are on back order. Everything is on back order because the supplier's vendor was out so we had to find another vendor, which is in Massachusetts. Picking up some orders from the vendor this evening and calling those parents tomorrow; have called everyone back that has called. Another contact number for shirts: 765-0477. Because it has taken so long to get the shirts, refunds are being offered to parents who would like one. Best time to call is after 9:00 a.m. and before 8:30 p.m.

Lynn Kapiskas (SELAC Chair/Parent)

- SELAC meeting scheduled for October 7th at Pothier from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Ron Celio (Coleman and Fifth Avenue Principal)

- Open house for the Fairmount Schools will be held September 16th at Coleman school yard with a BBQ from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. and from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. school tours.

Tara Dubois (WHS parent) No comment.

Linda Majewski (School Committee Member)

- Will address school uniforms under agenda item.

Linda Filomeno (Director of Programming for ELL and Response to Intervention Coordination)
No comment.

DISCUSSION OF PAC DELEGATES AND WEBSITE:

WHS – Sue Rochefort, Alternate Delegate; Tara Dubois, Delegate; Dr. Bedard, Administrator; Sue Votto or Carnell Henderson, Alternate.

WACTC – Sue Votto, Delegate; Dr. Bedard, Administrator.

WMS (both schools) – Susan Niles, Delegate; Robin Crane, Alternate; Dr. McGee and Steve Boss, Administrators.

Bernon Heights – To be determined.

Citizens/Pothier – Meka Hamilton, Delegate; Karen Belcher, Alternate.

Fifth/Coleman – Erica Allen, Delegate; Alternate to be determined.

Globe – Cindy Stepanian, Delegate; Alternate to be determined.

Harris – Denise Auclair, Delegate; Alternate to be determined.

Leo Savoie – Brenda Galvin, Delegate; Alternate to be determined.

All Elementary Schools – Rob Desrosiers, Principal Delegate.

SELAC – Lynn Kapiskas, Delegate; Brenda Galvin, Alternate.

WTG Elementary Teacher – Delegate to be determined. Ms. Roberts, Alternate.

PESLO – Delegate to be determined; ESL Parent Translator – Leidyana Tilano.

PAC also asked the members for their PTO/PTA President's email address and/or contact information.

OLD BUSINESS:

Approval of January and March 2010 Minutes:

- Approval of January Minutes
 - Paula Dube made motion to approve. Brenda Galvin seconded.

- Approval of March Minutes
 - Ron Celio made motion to approve. Patrick McGee seconded.

Elections:

- Elections are scheduled for our next PAC meeting November 3rd from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Please pass any nominations to PAC prior to the November meeting.
 - *Survey* – if you did not fill out a survey, please do so by the end of this meeting. We want the results before elections because this survey will tell us which direction the PAC is going in. We need a lot more parent involvement.

NEW BUSINESS:

Sodexo Presentation Ellen Shalvey (Sodexo General Manager):

- Gave handout (see PAC for copies).

RINR 2009 stands for Rhode Island Nutrition Regulations mandated in 2009. Sodexo is in compliance. To be more in compliance we will be offering children more choices of foods; will work with principals later this week. This year, all 8 elementary schools received fresh fruits and vegetable grant worth \$144,000. Grant money is to serve more fruits and vegetables in most natural state to children outside cafeteria. Starting on Tuesday; will send a memo to those schools. Vimala Phongsavanh will Chair the WED Wellness Committee all parents, staff, community members, and students welcome to become members. Sodexo is continuing Woonsocket Backpack Program. The RI Community Food Back will be running a pilot program in Woonsocket during October to help more parents participate in the free lunch program. Tomorrow is RI Local Day at Sodexo School Districts and will feature all RI grown produce.

Communications:

Michael Ferry (Coordinator, Instructional Technology PBGR Coordinator), WHS/WMS Parent Portal Presentation:

- Allows teachers to have access to grading system here or at home. Allows students and parents to check grades from home. This year it is mandatory for all teachers to use this portal. Next Tuesday students will get their portal information and parent portal will be available as well. On Wednesday, WACTC Seniors will get their information. Thursday night we have a round robin event and a booth will be set up. Parents need to show a picture ID in order to get the information. The parent portal will allow parents to review child's grades, discipline, attendance, transcripts, etc. Intent to start portal with WMS next month. January for Elementary Schools. The goal is to have this up and running district wide by the end of the year. We will be available during parent teacher conferences. Also have another program available right now at the WHS and WMS and soon at the Elementary Schools - parent link. Parent link lets parents know when their child is absent - a phone call goes out to parents; flexible program where we can make 2 phone calls a day; will also have this as a snow chain for the teachers. Parent can request the call to go to their email account, cell phone, or work number. Another program we have right now is RIEPS purchased through RINET. The State will not fund RINET; therefore, we will use WEDCom instead (once tech support to get this up and running is approved by School Committee). Also, PAC can have a PAC site where you will have all your emails in there, discussion area, blog, pole, resource area and it will be district wide. This will let Dr. Gerardi and Mark Garceau send out messages to entire staff within seconds.

Getting the information to Parents:

PAC passed out sample of their calendar. Email PAC your school calendar/event for publication on PAC's calendar to try to get more parent involvement; pass information to your PTA/PTO delegates or whoever is in charged with putting events together at your school so they can also help pass the information along. PAC will update server list; start by changing administrator emails to reflect first name initial and last name @woonsocketschools.com.

School Uniforms:

Linda Majewski addressed the headlines in the newspapers regarding the ACLU. Dr. Gerardi went to a hearing with a lawyer who was representing 4 parents not the ACLU. We have legislative support on this policy, great uniform committee, worked in collaboration with administration, school principals and parents. Free uniforms were and maybe still are available at St. James Church - Mondays, 3:00-6:00 pm and Wednesdays, 10:00am - 1:00pm. Need to show some indication of low income. On April 14th the policy was passed. In May and June, Mark Garceau sent an email to the principals to forward to parents a reminder notice that the school uniforms will be in effect starting September 1st. There was a complaint that we did not give parents a 30 day notice, therefore, a 30 day grace period was put into place. At the next School Committee meeting, we will let everyone know what that 30 day extension date will be. Most feedback from the parents is positive. Today, 80% of elementary students wearing uniforms, 75% for the WMS and WHS. Teachers are voluntarily wearing uniforms as well. During the last School Committee, a dress code for WED employees was adopted. During Staff Orientation Day, Dr. Gerardi mentioned the student dress code policy and some of the teachers came forward and said that they were going to help encourage students by wearing the uniform themselves. The Uniform Committee will meet sometime in January or February to tweak the policy. Cindy Stepanian thanked them for bringing up the fact that ACLU is not involved because parents think that they are and that the policy is not going through.

Next PAC Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 3, 2010 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Motion to adjourn made by Denise Auclair. Seconded by Paula Dube. Meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kimberly Blais
PAC Recording Secretary