

**Westwood School Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
November 16, 2017**

**Present:**

Carol Lewis, Chairperson  
Brian Kelly, Vice Chairperson  
Charlie Donahue, Clerk  
Tony Mullin, Committee Member  
Josepha Jowdy, Committee Member  
Danielle Sutrich, WHS Student Representative (present beginning at 7:05pm)

Emily Parks, Superintendent  
Allison Borchers, Assistant Superintendent  
Heath Petracca, Director of Business and Finance (present beginning at 7:05pm)  
Abby Hanscom, Director of Student Services (present beginning at 7:05pm)

**Meeting called to order (6:30 pm)**

Official Vote: Unanimous approval to adjourn to Executive Session

**Executive Session**

The School Committee went into Executive Session to discuss issues related to litigation strategy which would have a detrimental effect on the position of the governing body if the discussion was in open session.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

*Meeting was recorded by Westwood Media Center*

The School Committee re-convened to Open Session at 7:05.

**Superintendent's Report (7:06-7:17)**

TMS Principal Search Timeline

The search for the next TMS Principal will start in December. The position will be posted along with recruiting candidates. Recruitment of faculty and parents for the Interview Committee will also take place. In late January, there will be a screen for initial interviews. Initial interviews will take place afterwards. Semi finalists will interview with the entire committee in early February. Then 3 finalists will visit the school and have final interviews with hope of selection by March 1st.

### Update on WHS J-Term pilot

The J-Term Program will take place the last 4 1/2 days of school. A grant was received from The Foundation for Westwood Education to run this program. Mr. Donahue is on the steering committee. 37 elective courses were determined. This fall, students learned of all the courses. There is a J-Term website as well as an article in the school paper which was written by Danielle Sutrich. There will be a “shopping” day to hear about the 8 courses the student selects. The students will make their course selection right after Thanksgiving. The students will know in December which course they will be enrolled in. Ms. Parks expressed how the professional development value has exceeded expectations with creating the course selections.

Mr. Donahue is very pleased about how this has developed.

### Upcoming “Courageous Conversations” Program - Nov 28th.

Marion Lazan, a holocaust survivor, will be speaking at the high school. She will be speaking to the high school and middle school students. There will be a preview discussion with the students prior to her visit with the middle school students. After her presentation, the teachers will then debrief with the high school and middle school students. This was funded by the High School and Middle School PTOs. The “Courageous Conversations” initiative started from students. Around 30 students met with teachers and administrators last spring to start a program to have these sort of conversations. Ms. Parks wanted to thank them for initiating this program.

### Recognize student achievement

The Biobuilders club is an after school activity is a group that is interested in Synthetic Biology. Four students from this club presented their findings to Ms. Parks last spring. They were making a design to modify yeast to more efficiently produce bioethanol. The write-up of their design has now been published. “Using yeast to Create Bioethanol” is published through [biotreks.org](http://biotreks.org).

The Girls Cross Country team won the 2017 MIAA East Division 4 championship. Ms. Parks would like to invite them to a future meeting to recognize their achievement. The School Committee welcomed that.

### **Public Participation (7:17-7:18)**

There was no public participation.

### **Discussion Items (7:18-8:35)**

#### Report of 2017 MCAS Analysis (7:18-7:59)

Ms. Borchers made this presentation.

## **Legacy vs next generation tests**

Two types of MCAS tests were given, the legacy test, which has existed since 1998, and the next generation MCAS 2.0.

The next generation MCAS 2.0 took-over for PARCC.

10th grade ELA and Math, science and technology in grades 5, 8 and 10 were legacy tests. Grade 3-8 Math and ELA was next generation test. Taken either on computer, or paper based test. Its a re done test, with new scoring mechanisms. The new test establishing “high expectations” and the 2017 results form a baseline. Results are not comparable to earlier tests. Fewer students scored in the meeting or exceeding expectations vs from the legacy test.

Ms. Lewis asked is there an expectation that there should be a certain % in each category? The criteria reference is not trying to do a bell curve but to set a standard and go from there.

The schedule for implementing the MCAS 2.0:

- 2018: districts pilot new test questions.
- 2019: students in grade 10 take next generation test.
- There could be a possible “recalibration” of performance standards.
- This could have a possible impact on competency and determination for graduation.

New Science Technology Engineering test schedule.

It is a phase-in process for Science technology for grade 5-8

- 2017 old test
- 2018 overlapping
- 2019 new test

## **2017 highlights**

Westwood High School is one of just seven high schools in the Commonwealth awarded commendation. The school was commended in 2 of 3 possible categories: High achievement Graduation rate PPI (progress performance index) and High progress in median SGP (student growth percentile)

Grade 8 science had significant improvement over 2015-2016 scores.

Curriculum alignment and review of key concepts are reasons why there was improvement

Elementary Math, ELA and Science/Technology/Engineering

Strong performance in grade 3-5 through the district.

Top three among comparative districts for every test.

Very strong performance in science (77% proficient or advanced) even during curriculum transition

## **Comparative data**

How did Westwood compare to comparable districts?

ELA

Grade 3-4-5 top three, Middle school lower end, grade 10 middle.

Grade 8 ELA is 76%. Westwood is in the mix with comparable districts.

#### Math

Top in grades 3-5, drop in 6th grade and go back in the middle into high school.

#### Science and Technology

Grade 8 significantly improved while comparable districts dropped in scores. Having the new alignment has helped in the improvement

### **District data team analysis**

#### Focus for improvement

District wide data team 2017 is made up of teachers and administrators across the district. Their goals are to identify significant patterns and trends in MCAS data including performance gaps among subgroups and areas of relative weakness. They will identify a manageable number of specific focus areas and develop action plans to address the focus areas.

#### Key finding #1 math “constructed response”

Student earned a lower percentage of possible points on “constructed response” and “open response” questions. Multistep questions requiring written answer. The answers/explanations must address all parts of the question.

#### Key finding #2 ELA “text types and purposes”

The lowest scoring category for all grade levels on ELA assessments is “text types and purposes” a strand within the writing standards. There are short response and essay questions. Essay writing is included in the test at all grade levels. All writing is in response to a text.

#### Key #3-4 Subgroups Gaps

There are significant performance gaps between students with disabilities and those without, and between African American/black students and other racial groups. Gaps exist in grade 3-8 in all subjects. Gaps are narrowed substantially but not closed completely by high school. Gaps narrow by the time they reach high school, but there is still a gap. Growth percentile with IEPs was higher than other students.

### **Next steps**

#### District level

Share key findings and detailed data with curriculum leaders and administrators. Support curriculum teams in developing action plans. Plan for professional development that targets achievement gaps (i.e. focus on universal design). Continue curriculum alignment work in science. Revise curriculum review cycle: move up ELA curriculum review.

#### School and grade level teams

Use MCAS data to create or refine support plans for specific students. Plan ahead for possible changes to high school competency determination. Refine specific strategies for constructed response questions. Refine lesson plans.

Massachusetts leads the nation in public education.

#1 NAEP scores for reading and math.

#1 in overall quality for 3rd year running in education week annual "quality counts" report.

#1 in ACT and AP scores

Westwood is among the strongest districts in the state.

Mr. Donahue shared SchoolDigger.com statistics. Looking at all schools in Massachusetts, last year Westwood High School was 42nd and now ranked 11th. Deerfield ranked 5th in all elementary schools, Martha Jones moved from 60th to 7th, Sheehan was ranked 18th.

Mr. Mullin commented that something seems to happen when students leave 5th grade and enter the middle school. Is there any theory?

Would like to focus more on math than English. Feels the schedule could play a factor since there is only 42 minutes per class compared to elementary having 75 minutes. This is going to be looked into to see how the middle school schedules could be changed.

#### Budget Calendar and Priorities (7:59-8:27)

#### **Examination of current status of fees and tuition**

Looked at kindergarten fees since this is a core program, not sports fees.

There are a couple of options on getting rid of the fee for full day kindergarten. Asking the committee on how they would like to move forward on this.

Option 1: Eliminate fees starting FY'19. By doing this you would only have to raise the budget by 0.26% each year.

Option 2: Reduce the current fee by \$450 per year over the next four years. It would be eliminated in FY '23. By doing this you would only have to raise the budget by .13% each year.

Mr. Kelly would like to see that kindergarten fees go away. If it takes stages, that is ok.

Mr. Donahue would like to eliminate it.

Mrs. Jowdy would like to eliminate the fee immediately.

Mr. Mullin would like to eliminate the fee immediately.

Mr. Kelly asked if starting to gradually reduce fees in kindergarten, he would also like to look at reducing athletic fees. He requested to see the numbers for reducing, not eliminating sports fees and how that would increase the budget. If eliminating the kindergarten fees this year, he would like to look at reducing sports fees for the next budget cycle.

Ms. Parks will include eliminating the kindergarten fee immediately when developing this coming year's budget.

Ms. Parks asked what priorities does the School Committee have so it can be included in this year's budget process.

Mr. Donahue would like to see a “wish” list from district. What you would love to have but haven’t been able to fund. Thought it would be very helpful to know what those items are.

Ms. Jowdy would like foreign language in the lower grades.

Mr. Donahue asked about offering Mandarin at a lower level than high school.

Ms. Lewis, expanding on engineering into the elementary curriculum. Improving what we currently are doing.

Mr. Donahue asked if the engineering and computer science program at the middle school could expand from 30 days to a longer period of time? The 30 day is linked to the trimester schedule and the schedule would need to adjust to expand to more days. Ms. Parks explained coding has started in grade 3 and then not again until grade 6. The district is looking into how to continue this in grades 4 and 5.

Mr. Mullin would like to see other non personnel cost more detailed in the budget. This along with discretionary line items will be more detailed in presentation in December.

Mr. Donahue asked about the J-Term and wanted to make sure that would be a part of the budget since it was funded by an outside organization this year.

Ms. Lewis would like to see further expansion in semester course offerings at the high school.

Mr. Donahue asked about the SIPP program. Not as many students are in this course this year as last year. Since course selection is not until February, this is guessed at during the budget process.

Mr. Donahue asked if need more staff for the sub groups teaching in science?

Ms. Parks stated that Science Technology and Engineering as well as social/emotional learning are both leading district goals and will be a part of this years budget.

#### Building Project Community Engagement Plan (8:27-8:35)

Ms. Lewis, Mr. Mullin and Ms. Parks met and came up with a schedule for the capital project community engagement plan.

Westwood Media Center is looking forward to working with them in December to create a video. A website will launch in January and then a letter to be sent out to all residents by 1/15/18.

This schedule needs to collaborate with MSBA schedule. Depending on if Westwood is asked to continue, then the schedule would be changed.

Mr. Donahue stated we need to develop what is the best 2-5 minute explanation as to what our needs are. As a Committee, we need to work together to communicate the same points.

Ms. Parks agrees this is very important to all have common talking points and this will be addressed at the December meeting.

#### Action Items (8:35-8:43)

Mr. Kelly was not present to vote on the action items.

**Approval of Minutes: October 11, 2017**

A motion to approve the October minutes was made by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Mr. Donahue.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

### **Class Size Guideline Policy - First Reading**

Motion was made to waive first reading of this guideline from Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Mr. Mullin.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

### **Reauthorization of Anti-Bullying and Intervention Plan**

Ms. Hanscom uses this plan. Curriculum is in place for this.

Motion was made to reauthorize Anti-Bullying and Intervention Plan by Mr. Donahue. Seconded by Mr. Mullin.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

### **Approval of TMS 8th grade trip to Washington, DC**

Motion made to approve the TMS 8th grade trip to Washington DC by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Mr. Mullin.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

### **Change to 2018-2019 School Calendar**

Dottie Powers, the town clerk, asked if the district would close schools on November 6th for the state election. A large turnout is expected.

Mr. Mullin asked if this was requested due to a safety issue, because if it is, it isn't consistent. There are three elections, not just the one in November. Really think that polling places need to be moved out of the school buildings. Dottie Powers indicated to Ms. Parks that she doesn't think the polling places could be moved from the school buildings by November 6th.

Ms. Parks thinks she is looking at volume of voters, not safety of the people coming into the buildings.

The committee would like more information on why this needs to be done before making any changes. Why is it so hard to change polling places by November?

### **Ratification of Instructional Assistants Contract**

Last spring was a ratified contract. It was voted down. Met again this fall and ratified another contract.

The change was in the language of article 8, sick leave. Updated the language to care for family members.

A motion was made to accept the revised version of the ratified contract of the Instructional Assistants by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Mr. Donahue.

Official Vote: Unanimous Approval

### **New Business (8:43-8:44)**

Liaison Reports were moved to the December meeting agenda

### **Public Participation (8:44-8:45)**

Resident has a 3rd grade student at Martha Jones. She wanted to let the committee know that it is going well, there are 24 students in the class and an aide as been added. She is very happy with how it is going. However, a 25th student is joining the class next week. It is big and getting bigger. That is still a concern. Please keep that in mind as budget is looked at for next year.

### **Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Mr. Mullin.

Official vote: Unanimous approval

**Meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm**