

**Westwood School Committee
Meeting Minutes
February 7, 2019**

Present:

Charlie Donahue, Chairperson
Tony Mullin, Vice Chairperson
Josepha Jowdy, Clerk
Carol Lewis, Committee Member
Maya Plotkin, Committee Member
Chris Bezdedeau, WHS Student Representative

Emily Parks, Superintendent
Allison Borchers, Assistant Superintendent
Heath Petracca, Director of Business and Finance
Abby Hanscom, Director of Student Services

**Meeting called to order 7:00 pm
Pledge of Allegiance**

Meeting was recorded by Westwood Media Center

Superintendent's Report (7:00-7:15)

MSBA Project Update

Ms. Parks reported. The MSBA meeting is on February 13, 2019 and Westwood has been invited to attend the meeting and should be voted into the feasibility study. Mr. Petracca, Ms. Parks, Mr. Donahue and Ms. Plotkin will be attending the meeting. There may be a short period of time when other documents need to be submitted before entering into the feasibility study and then to start work on the Owner's Project Manager (OPM) process. Ms. Parks has met with the Procurement Officer for the Town and Mr. Petracca has been gathering information from the MSBA to be ready to start the process of hiring the OPM. The School Building Committee is established and can start meeting soon; aiming to start meeting in early March.

Security Audit Update

Ms. Parks reported. She met with the security audit group today. They are wrapping up their data collection phase. By the first week of March, Westwood will have a draft of their recommendations. Ms. Parks thinks we will find a lot of good news in this report. They are aware of the security updates that have been completed within the last couple of years. The security audit group will present their findings at a future meeting. Ms. Lewis requested that once that meeting date has been set to please invite the Police and Fire Chiefs to the meeting so they can also give some guidance on the security audit findings and help guide the School Committee on how to prioritize the recommendations.

Westwood Cultural Council - J-Term Grant

Ms. Parks wanted to thank the Westwood Cultural Council for a \$1,000 grant for J-Term, designated for the "Be A Maker" class.

Other Items

Four students from the middle school competed in the MathCounts competition. They qualified to attend the state Math Counts meet.

Black history month is the month of February. At the high school today, in recognition of black history month, a read-in was held in the library. Students chose poems or passages from African American authors and shared them.

Coding highlights from the 3rd grade: A two-minute video was put together to highlight this program.

Public Participation (7:15-7:22)

A resident said her 3rd grade child has really enjoyed the coding special. Her 5th grader is upset that he didn't have coding as a special in 3rd grade. Moving into the middle school next year, she wanted to hear if there was any progress on the gay/straight alliance at the middle school. Mr. Kuklantz, Thurston Assistant Principal, reported that the guidance department and school adjustment counselor has met with the high school to see how it is run at the high school and see how it can be implemented well at the middle school. Implementation is being looked at for the beginning of next school year.

A resident has a current 1st grader at Hanlon. Next year, going into 2nd grade, the class size is over guideline. Current proposal is to hire an assistant to share the two classrooms; 46 students. Can there be a 3rd classroom found to use at the school, looking for other options as a 1/2 day assistant is not enough?

Resident has a current 1st grader at Hanlon and wanted to echo what the other resident had stated. Wanted to see what other options there could be.

Resident concerned about class size at the Hanlon for next year's 2nd grade class. Wanted to explore some more options than just a 1/2 day assistant to share with both classrooms.

Resident concerned about class size for next year's 2nd grade class at the Hanlon.

Discussion Items (7:22-8:25)

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Curriculum Review Findings (7:22-7:53)

Ms. Borchers reported. The review grew out of Goal 8 from last year which was developing and supporting practices that acknowledge the diverse backgrounds, identities, strengths and challenges of students. Some professional development stemmed from this; educators wanted to learn more.

The SEL Review Team was made up of representatives from across the district.

What is SEL?

Social and emotional learning is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships and make responsible decisions.

This is something that is done for everyone.

The CASEL Framework. Developed framework as to what SEL is. SEL occurs in homes and communities, schools, and classrooms. How it occurs in homes and communities, schools and classrooms and what occurs: self awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision making, self management, social awareness.

Why now? Educators want to have more education on this; have seen some more social emotional issues.

A different review process for a different type of learning.

- No formal curriculum standards
- Competencies, not content
- Differing frameworks
- Relatively new research focus
- Many approaches and options

The process

Generate guiding questions

Reading, research, outreach

- Focus groups: students, parents, educators
- Current WPS curriculum resources and practices
- Approaches in other communities
- Program comparison
- Student data (VOCAL)

Draft recommendations

District Wide Recommendations

Leadership

- Create a leadership team to facilitate work at all levels and in all buildings.
- Hire an SEL Coordinator to support K-8.
- Develop a vision for SEL that aligns with district goals and priorities.

Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development

Identify and implement programs that support the infusion of SEL into instruction and daily activity of schools.

Ensure that all employees are well-versed in the CASEL framework for SEL as well as program-specific vocabulary.

Provide PD around supporting SEL for marginalized students.

Ensure that all WPS employees have opportunities to understand and improve their own SEL competencies.

Assessment

Use existing data related to student well-being, school climate and SEL competencies (e.g. VOCAL survey, discipline referrals, YRBS) to assist SEL efforts.

Parent and Community Outreach

Ensure that all WPS community members (parents, students, staff, community partners) understand the academic and lifelong benefits of SEL.

Offer parent programming to support the generalization of SEL competencies outside of schools.

Space and Time

Consider how to use existing space to support SEL and student well-being.

Work with the School Building Committee to ensure elementary building project reflects up-to-date thinking about how the physical environment can support SEL.

Revise or refine schedules at all levels to support SEL and student well-being.

Elementary Recommendations

Leadership

Provide SEL teacher leadership at each school to support training and consistent implementation.

Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development

Develop plan for training and implementation of Responsive Classroom K-5.

Investigate lesson-based programs (e.g. Second Step) as a resource for more explicit instruction.

Outreach

Provide parents with program information and support for SEL at home.

Encourage parent partnerships through survey input and collaborative parent/child tasks.

Additional Resources

Invest in program resources (quick guides, suggested activity books) that support implementation.

Middle School Recommendations

Leadership

Form teacher leadership team to support SEL coordinator in investigating curriculum options, identifying PD, and supporting teachers with implementation.

Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development

Involve full faculty in exploring curriculum options for implementing SEL during advisory.
Visit other school systems to assess SEL program options.

Assessment

Assess faculty understanding of and comfort with SEL in order to determine PD needs.
Implement a universal formative assessment/benchmark linked to curriculum to assess student SEL progress.

Parent and Community Outreach

Offer relevant, targeted parent programming focused on adolescent development and SEL.

High School Recommendations

Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development

Examine timing and delivery of health and wellness classes as well as universal prevention programs such as SOS (Signs of Suicide) and SBIRT (substance abuse screening).
Develop courses that address SEL explicitly (electives, J-term courses).
Explore the connections between project-based learning and SEL.
Work with faculty to embed SEL into their classroom routines (e.g., check-ins, mindful minute, opportunities for feedback).

Structures and practices

Address overall stress created by the volume and timing of homework and assessments.
Explore options that support better sleep habits for students.
Provide training and support for Restorative Justice Initiatives.

Building Use

Create spaces and programming for students to unwind, practice wellness activities and develop SEL competencies.

FY'20 Budget Hearing (7:53-7:58)

Public Comment on FY'20 Proposed Budget

No public participation

Mr. Petracca reported that additional capital was funded through the meals tax in the amount of \$300,000; plan to use this money towards the priority of the heating system at the middle school. The plan is to change from steam to forced hot water heat in the older part of the building, as well as replace all the univents in that area. In addition, we will be able to add a better control system for the entire building making the energy use at the Middle School much more efficient.

First Reading of revised policies (7:58-8:14)

There has been a lot of use of e-cigarettes and vaping. Student handbooks were updated, but the School Committee policies have not. School Committee policies are for both students and adults. Vaping needed to be included in these policies.

Ms. Plotkin has heard from parents concerned about vaping, saying that High School bathrooms are full of vaping, students scared to go into the bathrooms, and there was a rumor that a student was caught with a backpack full of drugs, and there has been no communication about this to parents. Parents are looking for more information. It would be helpful if more communication was sent out to the parents, community.

Ms. Parks responded that vaping is a growing concern at the high school. The high school is looking to come at this from a preventative/educational perspective as well as disciplinary consequences. It has been frustrating because the building has been evacuated a couple of times because someone was vaping in the bathroom and set off the smoke alarms; looking into technology that can detect vaping and possibly placing these detectors into the restrooms.

Ms. Lewis suggested that the Westwood Cares committee would be a great place for parents to get involved with these concerns.

The High School sponsored a program "Vaping: What Parents Need to Know," in January 2018. Another program is scheduled for April 2019.

Chris Bezdedeau reported that the school nurse is really concerned about this. It has trickled down into the middle school. Legislative Council met two weeks ago, talking about this concern. Posters were placed in bathrooms to talk about the effects of having to evacuate the building on special needs students, students, and educators. It is very disruptive when smoke alarm goes off because of one student. Students are feeling unsafe on the school property. The nurse has a lot of material she wanted to send out to the next newsletter. In March, the nurse will be rolling out more education programs. If caught vaping, student would need to complete a program to learn about the dangers of vaping.

Resident was glad there was an awareness program at the high school, and hopes that there is a middle school awareness program. The high school has been working with the middle school. Middle School has been working with elementary to see where it can be included in the wellness program there. It will be talked about in the DARE program with the 5th graders.

ADC - Smoking/Vaping on School Premises

GBED - Tobacco Use/Vaping on School Property by Staff Members

JICG- Tobacco Use, Vaping, and/or Possession by Students

JICHA - Prohibition Against Alcohol or Drugs or Vaping at School-Sponsored Events

A motion was made to wave the first reading of the revised policies by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Ms. Lewis

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Action Items (8:15-8:22)

Approval of FY'20 Budget

Mr. Mullin knows that there can sometimes be some flexibility in the budget based on retirements. He asked if there is anything on the wish list that could be funded what would it be? Ms. Parks indicated it would be to increase high school guidance or relook at middle school guidance. Mr. Mullin asked if this could be reported back to the Committee in September to see where this ends up.

Mr. Mullin has been very supportive of the .4 Middle School curriculum coordinator addition and wondered if an update on this topic would come to a future meeting. Ms. Parks reported the April agenda will have the middle school curriculum team on agenda.

Ms. Parks wanted to let the residents that came to the meeting tonight concerned about class size at Hanlon to know that this will be looked at. Historically, class size has been looked at throughout the school year and changes can be made in the future if need be.

A motion to approve the FY'20 operating budget for the amount of \$46,463,031 was made by Ms. Lewis. Seconded by Ms. Jowdy.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

A motion to approve the FY'20 capital budget for the amount of \$1,017,000 was made by Ms. Lewis. Seconded by Ms. Jowdy.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Approval of Minutes: January 15, 2019

A motion was made to approve the January 15, 2019 minutes by Mr. Mullin. Seconded by Ms. Plotkin.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

New Business/Liaison Reports (8:22-8:22)

None

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Ms. Plotkin.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Meeting Adjourned at 8:23 pm