

WESTON BOARD OF EDUCATION
Thursday, March 28, 2013
Weston Middle School Library Resource Center
Executive Session 6:30 p.m.
Regular Session 7:30 p.m.

- | | | |
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| I. | CALL TO ORDER, VERIFICATION OF QUORUM
Philip Schaefer, Chairperson | |
| II. | EXECUTIVE SESSION
1. Discussion of matters concerning security strategy and the deployment of security personnel and devices affecting the security of the Weston Public Schools. | |
| III. | RESUME PUBLIC SESSION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE | |
| IV. | RECOGNITION | Motion |
| V. | APPROVAL OF MINUTES, <i>pages 1-9</i> | Motion |
| VI. | PUBLIC COMMENT | Information |
| VII. | NEW BUSINESS
1. Resignation, <i>page 10</i>
2. Retirement, <i>page 11</i>
3. Revisions to Budget Request
4. School Resource Officer, <i>pages 12-25</i>
5. Discussion of Format of Board of Education Meeting Minutes | Motion
Motion
Motion
Information
Information |
| VIII. | OLD BUSINESS | None |
| IX. | SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT
1. Special Board Meeting Tuesday, April 9, 2013 at 7:00 p.m.; Next Regular Board Meeting Tuesday, April 23, 2013 at 7:30 p.m.
2. Principals' Report, <i>pages 26-35</i>
3. District Update | Information

Information
Information |
| X. | COMMITTEE REPORTS
1. Communications Committee - Dana Levin
2. Curriculum Committee - Ellen Uzenoff
3. Finance Committee - Denise Harvey
4. Facilities Committee - Sonya Stack
5. Policy Committee - Dana Levin
6. Negotiations Committee - Dick Bochinski
7. CES - Sonya Stack
8. CABC - Nina Daniel
9. Weston Education Foundation - Denise Harvey | Information
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| XI. | ADJOURNMENT | Motion |

Attendance:

Philip Schaefer, Chairperson	Dr. Colleen Palmer, Superintendent
Ellen Uzenoff, Vice Chairperson	Dr. Kenneth Craw, Assistant Superintendent
Richard Bochinski, Secretary/Treasurer	Lewis Brey, Director of Human Resources
Nina Daniel	Dr. Jo-Ann Keating, Director of Finance & Ops.
Dana Levin	
Sonya Stack	Absent: Denise Harvey

I. CALL TO ORDER, VERIFICATION OF QUORUM

Philip Schaefer, Chairperson

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. EXECUTIVE SESSION – moved to item XI

Motion to move executive session to item XI by Mrs. Uzenoff, second by Mrs. Levin, all in favor. (6-0)

IV. RECOGNITION – no report

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: Moved that the Weston Board of Education approves the minutes of the January 15, 2013 Executive Session; the January 22, 2013 Executive and Regular Sessions; the January 24, 2013 Special Session; and the February 19, 2013 Executive Session. Motion by Mrs. Stack, second by Mrs. Levin, all in favor. (6-0)

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT

Dr. Palmer opened up the public comment with a statement regarding the resignation of boys basketball coach Michael Hvizdo. Dr. Palmer reinforced that students' best interests are at the heart of the matter and, while it is not customary to do so, provided the community with key facts pertaining to the decision:

- Mr. Hvizdo was serving his second year of probationary employment. As with any probationary coach, the Weston Public Schools would need to invite him to serve as coach for a third year after a thorough review of his performance during the previous year. The employee is not entitled to appeal rights if employment is not continued.
- It was brought to the attention of administration that Mr. Hvizdo appeared in a 10-minute film containing explicit sexual content, vulgarity, and demeaning remarks against certain groups of individuals. Mr. Hvizdo's participation in the video demonstrates poor judgment, undermines his ability to serve as a role model for all his players, creates an unnecessary distraction for his team, and disrupts the educational process of coaching.
- When Mr. Hvizdo met with Dr. Palmer, Mr. Berkowitz, Ms. Wolak, and Mr. Brey on February 6 to discuss the content of the video, he apologized for making it and expressed remorse and embarrassment for doing so.

- During his meeting with administration, Mr. Hvizdo was offered the ability to leave of his own accord before the district commenced the process of terminating him. At that time, Mr. Hvizdo tendered his verbal resignation and Dr. Palmer accepted it, on behalf of the district.
- On the same afternoon of his resignation, Mr. Hvizdo and Mr. Berkowitz met with the varsity basketball team, as was Mr. Hvizdo's wish, so that he could speak personally with the players about his decision to resign. Mr. Hvizdo explained to his team that he resigned for personal reasons and that he had done something in his past that prevents him from continuing as their coach. He acted on that resignation by not attending any practice or games with the team since that date.
- Since then, Coach Hvizdo has indicated a desire to return to his position, and the district has responded to this in writing. The district also offered to elaborate on the performance issues related to his coaching if he requested that information.

Dr. Palmer recognized that times like these are full of emotion, and that Weston is a caring and supportive community that appreciates those who are passionate in what they do. The issue at hand does not diminish the passion but focuses on appropriate professional standards.

As the boys basketball team faces playoffs, Dr. Palmer stressed to the community that we can best serve the team by cheering them on and celebrating the final leg of the season. They are outstanding examples of commitment and the core beliefs of Weston High School spirit, and we are proud of them.

Mr. Schaefer recognized that the issue of the boys basketball coach is one that the community cares deeply about, as does the Weston Board of Education. However, as this is a personnel issue, the Board cannot comment publicly.

Mr. Schaefer provided instruction pertaining to the public comment session to ensure an orderly and civil session is conducted. Weston residents were provided the opportunity to speak first.

Philip Hover
Beaver Brook Road

His son is an eighth-grade basketball player who was taught by Mr. Hvizdo over the summer. Mr. Hover stated that our country was founded on a right to free speech and expressed that because the film was a nine-minute ten-year-old art film, it was not X-rated, and there was no nudity or sexual insinuations involved, there seemed no reason Mr. Hvizdo could not teach the children how to play basketball. He felt that a miscarriage of judgment had occurred as everyone in the room has uttered some form of vulgarity in their lifetime. He asked that Mr. Hvizdo be reinstated at the earliest opportunity should he reapply. He expressed that the original decision to hire him was the correct decision.

Ed Hutchins

Requested to yield his time to another speaker.

Kay Spencer
Lyons Plain Road

She asked that the Board of Education: (1) request that the superintendent offer Mr. Hvizdo re-employment and apologize for the mistake and any harm that has been done to his reputation; and (2) review the authority delegated to the superintendent and re-evaluate all the levels where the decision, termination, and communication processes failed. Mrs. Spencer called the letter that was sent out to parents by the school a misrepresentation of the film and thus a slanderous attack on Mr. Hvizdo. She stated that the community disagreed with the administration on the following points: the movie is not porn - it has been produced by a well-known producer/writer/actor that has never been associated with the porn industry; the statute of limitations is up – by state and district rules, five years is required for a

background check and furthermore, nothing in Mr. Hvizdo's past is illegal; and the decision process was flawed. Mrs. Spencer questioned whether Phil Schaefer, as a member of the Screen Actors Guild, would resign from his position as Chairman of the Weston Board of Education to play any questionable television roles and suggested that there are few roles available that would be acceptable by district administration standards.

Keith Watanabe
Georgetown Road

Mr. Watanabe questioned whether the superintendent exceed her authority in unilaterally making a decision based on a personal judgment of the content in an artistic work, and in doing so suppressed freedom of speech and violated the first amendment of the Constitution. He also questioned a violation of the fourteenth amendment – the right to due process. Because of these questions concerning the protections of the first and fourteenth amendments, Mr. Watanabe stated, the superintendent and counsel should have conducted an investigation to determine the validity of the accusations and then brought the results of that investigation to the Board of Education before taking any action against Mr. Hvizdo. If this matter isn't resolved today, and it is resolved in another forum, and the Town loses.

David Levy
Davis Hill Road

Mr. Levy expressed that he feels the administration and the Weston Board of Education have failed the community, because the community members often rely on the Board and administrators to protect them from themselves. Mr. Levy feels that there was a lone individual who took action against Mr. Hvizdo who should not have had such a large impact. One of the justifications for Mr. Hvizdo's firing was the desire to provide a psychologically safe environment for the children, and in trying to prevent creating a psychologically unsafe environment one may have actually been created. In closing, Mr. Levy expressed that there needs to be a message sent to the community that this kind of tampering with people's lives will not be tolerated.

Terri Clevenger
Old Easton Turnpike

Ms. Clevenger read a letter she wrote the day after the February 11 parent meeting, wherein she stated that she felt the decision to terminate Mr. Hvizdo was without thought of investigating first, based on the administration's personal repulsion to the film, and made with administration's own agenda in mind rather than the boys' best interests. Furthermore, she feels that the actions of the administration show that they do not believe that families can police their own children with regards to morality. She shared with the Board what her eighth grader has learned from this: the decision was not made with the basketball team in mind; if you make a mistake it is unrecoverable; nice/good guys finish last while the bad guy always wins; to get ahead you need to be a bully and a bad guy.

Don Chase
Treadwell Lane

He has no children on the team, but helped form the Weston Basketball Association and the Fairfield County Basketball League, and previously coached a number of the juniors on the Weston basketball team. He is also an attorney. Mr. Chase stated that although there is the right to terminate a coach at-will, terminating two weeks before the end of the season in the manner and timeframe that is was done created a controversy. He feels that if the coach had finished the season, his termination could have been a quiet affair, but now the feedback from the basketball community is a negative one that will result in a difficulty with other coaches wanting to come to Weston. It is a terrible message to send that "one mistake and that's it." You do want coaches to be role models but everyone is flawed and you don't need coaches to be role models because parents are role models.

Matt Gurman
Old Easton Turnpike

A player on the basketball team, Mr. Gurman expressed that he felt someone the team looked up to and enjoyed seeing every day had been taken away. He commented that those in the room during Mr. Hvizdo's explanation of resignation to the team could see he was upset and that everyone sitting at the Board table ruined his life. He feels that Mr. Hvizdo had been a good role model.

Laura Watanabe
Georgetown Road

She went to the February 11 meeting and she still cannot get over it as a parent, as a member of the Weston Community, as an attorney, and as a human being. Mrs. Watanabe has been an employment lawyer for 20 years and feels an investigation should have occurred, including the questioning of parents and students, to evaluate the complaint that Mr. Hvizdo was not fit to be a coach for Weston. She stated that if anyone in the room had been asked, it would have been shown that he is.

Mrs. Watanabe quoted a response to Mr. Hvizdo's email in which he requests to clarify the record that he did not voluntarily resign. She further stated that Mr. Hvizdo could not be at the Board of Education meeting because the letter also prohibited him from entering school property for any reason.

She requested that the Board do the right thing by getting the coach back, trying to clear his name after the movie he acted in was repeatedly referred to as porn, and making sure this doesn't happen again.

Charlie DiPasquale
Pheasant Hill Road

He is a senior captain for the basketball team. He agrees with what his teammate, Matt Gurman said, but he also feels that, on the day Mr. Hvizdo broke the news to the team, Mr. Hvizdo might have been extremely shocked and did not know how exactly to react. He does not believe that Mr. Hvizdo himself thought his ability to coach the team was compromised. Just before that practice, Mr. Hvizdo told the team that he loved them and would never quit on them. He feels that Mr. Hvizdo deserves to be reinstated as coach.

Daniel Gerroll
Bradley Road

He agrees with everything that has been said previously, including some of what Dr. Palmer said at the beginning. He was unable to access the movie to watch it for himself, and therefore has to take on faith that it is in no way justifying the action taken by the Board. He expressed worry over who would use a nine-minute movie from over 10 years ago in a way that is so dangerously destructive to the personality of what is still a very young man. He is in the entertainment business and if he were to be held accountable for all the roles he played he would not be allowed near his own children. He stated that this sort of situation lends itself to a tremendous amount of hyperbole and he can sympathize with those in positions of responsibility, that when something seemingly egregious is put before them, they want to make the decision that seems morally right – that seems they are standing up to the highest principles that they can possibly find within themselves. In this case, a horrible mistake was made. He prayed that the administrators will understand that they were hasty and make retribution.

Joe Galvin
Wampum Hill

He has been part of the Weston basketball community for many years - both his children graduated from the Weston High School system, and had incredible experiences courtesy of excellent coaches and the systems of support they had in place. He commented that the basketball players are the ones who truly

lose in this. The decision regarding Mr. Hvizdo has altered their experience for life. It is the Board's responsibility to do something right, and to understand what is in their best interests and that their opportunity to experience what high school basketball can teach has now been changed.

Amy Sayegh
Old Hyde Road

She finds it ironic that the Board Chairman is an actor. She appreciates Dr. Palmer's well-prepared address; however she wishes that Mr. Hvizdo had been afforded the same time and effort prior to making such a rash decision. Ms. Sayegh has looked at Mr. Schaefer's extensive IMDB reels and believes the roles that he plays are not who he is personally. She wants Dr. Palmer teach the students that it is okay to admit you made a mistake or that you are wrong by admitting that she was hasty in firing Mr. Hvizdo, that she was wrong, and reinstate the coach.

Our artistic community is very small, and in defaming Mr. Hvizdo's character the administrators have defamed the other actors, the producer, and the director of the film. As a Weston resident, she doesn't want to use tax money, but feels the situation needs to be rectified. Ms. Sayegh then read statements from an actresses and the director of the film.

Gail Compton-Flynn
Lords Highway East

Her son is one of the junior captains of the varsity basketball team – there are actually seven juniors on the team this year and Don Chase was a past coach of theirs. The unfortunate part of this situation is that the families received an email the night of Mr. Hvizdo's leaving that did not have a lot of content to it and that got everyone upset. Afterward, families heard about a movie that they had no access to, so they could not decide, with their children, whether the decision made had been the right one. While some children still had the movie on their phones, it was not available for those in a leadership position to view it, which was a disadvantage. For her son as a co-captain – he didn't have the information he needed to make the leadership of the team the right thing. The communication piece was a large miss in terms of how the parents and players would be able to deal with this and move forward next year as leaders.

Keith Werwin
Selwyn Rd; Norwalk, CT

He has known Mr. Hvizdo for many years and has been best friends with his father since grade school. Mr. Werwin stated that Mr. Hvizdo is an upstanding young man – he has never been arrested, is a successful business owner, is married to a wonderful young woman, and loved the kids on the Weston team. He wanted nothing more than to see them succeed and enjoy themselves in the game of basketball.

Joe Pantoliano
Wilton, CT

Mr. Pantoliano knows Mr. Hvizdo from *The Stand*. He expressed that Mr. Hvizdo has been a moral coach for him in terms of body, mind, and spirit. Based on the article he read in *The Hour* – he feels that this is the worst case of being bullied. It feels like the Board was bullied and then the fear was transferred onto Mr. Hvizdo. Mr. Pantoliano thinks it is such a wonderful opportunity for this Board to teach the kids and community that we all make mistakes and reinstate his position.

Nate Balogh

Bridle Trail; Fairfield, CT

Mike Hvizdo is his step-brother. Mr. Balogh has known Mr. Hvizdo for 25 years and has seen him make mistakes, be a big brother, work through tragedies, and love the basketball team that he coached. He calls on the Board to realize that the only mistake here is that made by the district. He also calls on the Board to correct the mistake, reinstate Mr. Hvizdo, and set an example for the kids.

Fred Lawrence

Pilgrim Lane, Weston

Mr. Lawrence has coached football in the Town for a long time, and thinks it would be impossible to find a more informed and intelligent group of parents than you will find in Weston. He has heard a number of parents speak in support of Mr. Hvizdo, yet he has not heard anyone come up and defend the other side. We don't need to be the moral police for the parents in the Weston community. They do a pretty good job themselves.

Neil Horner

Catbrier Road

While he feels his comment is important, it has nothing to do with the situation tonight so in the interest of the community, he has decided to withhold my comments on an entirely different subject at this time.

Dr. Palmer offered some closing comments. She thanked the community for sharing their thoughts and concerns, and let them know that the Board listened very intently. High school athletics is an integral part of the high school experience. As a former high school principal and member of the CIAC, she values a strong athletic experience that provides opportunities of leadership and ways for kids to grow that you just don't have during the school day. A lot of things have been said at the meeting, and the Board is going to process all that feedback. There were certain points that were not totally accurate that Dr. Palmer sought to clarify: she never referred to the movie as porn, but rather that others may interpret it in his way. There are parents who have come forth with concerns about the coach and there are areas of concern about inappropriate language and demeaning comments shared with athletes. It is the body of work. Dr. Palmer would like to step and back look at system and ask "How do we improve the athletic program as a good school system?" Sometimes coaches come in and do not have the same training or outlook in dealing with adolescents. We are going to step back and look at all of this with our athletic director and school principal. We will debrief on this to make sure we have the best interests of our students at heart. This is not a clear-cut issue, as with any personnel issue. We will work as a team to make sure we continue to have a strong athletic program.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Resignation

Motion: Moved that the Weston Board of Education notes and records the resignation of Carinne Mossa, Weston Intermediate School Grade 4 Teacher, effective June 30, 2013.

Motion by Mrs. Levin, second by Mrs. Uzenoff. All in favor. (6-0)

2. Summer Enrichment Program for the Arts

Dr. Craw discussed the Weston Performing Arts summer program proposal, which addresses the need to offer a local program for the theatre arts and music. It would be a self-funded program (a fee would be charged). One option would be a three-week theatre camp that would culminate in a production for students entering grades 4-8. Other options would be one-week half-day camps for band and orchestra. This will extend some of the enrichment opportunities that we currently have, while also addressing an area of our strategic plan, which is to look for opportunities that are in line with our mission that bring in revenue for the district to offset the budget. There is a lot of

potential here and it is perhaps a test-case for other academic enrichment areas. A benefit of this program over other area programs is that, since we have an internal interest, the teachers at the camps would be the same teachers the students would have during the school year, which allows for the building of relationships and a greater opportunity to assist students in reaching their potential. We are looking to begin in March as this is typically when families begin looking for summer opportunities. There should be a caveat that if we do not reach the level of participation we are anticipating, we would let parents know as we need to self-fund the program.

3. Second Quarter Financial Report

Dr. Keating reviewed the Second Quarter Financial Report with the Board object by object, in preparation for presenting the Budget to the Selectmen February 26. The report is run through February 20 and reforecast as of December 31 so that it is as current as possible. The largest variance in the report is certified salaries, which shows a favorable variance.

Internal Services Fund for Health Benefits Program Statement of Revenues and Expenditures was handed out prior to the Board meeting. It was also distributed to the Board of Selectmen for their February 26 meeting.

Motion: Moved that the Weston Board of Education approves the Second Quarter Financial Report. Motion by Ms. Daniel, second by Mr. Bochinski. All in favor. (6-0)

4. Carryover Budget Account

Dr. Keating reviewed a law that went into effect last year, which states that the Board of Education, with the approval with the Board of Finance may carry over up to one percent of their budget to subsequent years. It was requested that funds be carried over from the 2012-13 operating budget for a contingency teacher in the FY 2013-14 budget.

Motion: Moved that the Weston Board of Education formally requests the Board of Finance to authorize the deposit of \$61,824 from the School District's FY 2012-13 operating budget into a carryover budget account for the purpose of funding a contingency teaching position in the FY 2013-14 operating budget should it be needed to comply with the Board of Education's class size guidelines. Motion by Mr. Bochinski, second by Mrs. Uzenoff. All in favor. (6-0)

5. Update on District Security

Some Board members had an opportunity to attend a training by Allan Garcia that was provided all staff on how to identify and prevent an intruder, and what actions could be taken in the event of an intruder to ensure everyone's safety. Mr. Garcia was also invited to an Executive Session meeting of the Board on security that was attended by public officials, which was very productive. During the two days spent with us, Mr. Garcia was also able to walk to schools and advise us on potential infrastructure changes to consider. He applauded us on the hiring of additional security and spoke to the need of having a very low police response time.

Dr. Keating discussed how we hardened the perimeter our buildings via a lock-out initiative. We have hired six new security guards – all highly qualified people with impressive resumes. We are happy to have them on board. Having a fresh set of eyes, they are seeing things that have been very helpful to us. We continue to have a strong partnership with the police department. We have two officers on campus through the end of the school year. We are putting together a district-wide security and safety committee, and school-based security and safety committees that feed into the

district committee. There will be a plan assembled for the Board by mid- to late April with implementation and project schedules, and costs associated.

6. Police Coverage of School Road

Sergeant Ferullo, Police Chief Troxell, and Police Commissioner Jess DiPasquale discussed requesting a “special appropriation” for additional police coverage of School Road for the Mile of Safety patrol in the aftermath of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. From the beginning of the school year through December 17, \$39,800 was spent, \$28,800 of which is already covered by the Mile of Safety budget, leaving \$11,000 in overtime for that period to recoup. It has been forecast that two full-time officers on school road for the remainder of the school year would require an additional \$70,300. In total, the amount would be \$81,300.

Revised Motion: Moved that the Weston Board of Education formally requests a supplemental appropriation for additional police coverage of School Road for the Mile of Safety patrol in an amount not to exceed \$85,000 for the 2012-13 fiscal year. Motion by Mr. Bochinski, second by Mrs. Levin. All in favor. (6-0)

VIII. OLD BUSINESS— no report

IX. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

1. Next Board Meeting: Monday, March 18, 2013

2. Principals’ Report

WHS – Ms. Wolak reported that the high school has been designated as an SAT site by the College Board so that our students will now be at comfortable familiar rooms during the exam. March 9 is the date of the first test at the high school. Code is 7666.

WMS – Mrs. Watkins reported on the first round of the National Geography Bee. Winners are outlined in the February Principals’ report.

WIS – Mrs. Falber reported on the all-school assembly focusing on the “R” of P.R.I.D.E., which stands for respect. Also, over 80 students are participating in the March school musical.

HES – Kim Kus reported on the first and second grade working on Math in Focus along with AM units. Connected to that, Carolyn Vinton held another workshop on Bar Modeling, which is a strategy used by second graders in the new math program, to teach parents how to help their children.

3. District Update

Dr. Palmer reported that the Board of Education would be presenting their budget to the Board of Selectmen the following day. The Board of Finance will queue up on March 13.

X. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Communications Committee - Dana Levin

Next meeting is Wednesday, February 27 at 8:00 a.m. in the Central Office Conference Room to discuss budget communications, security and safety communications, and realtor communications.

2. Curriculum Committee - Ellen Uzenoff

Next meeting is March 13 at 8:00 a.m. in the Central Office Conference Room.

3. Finance Committee - Ellen Uzenoff

The meeting discussed the guidance proposal for the high school and some points for executive session.

4. Facilities Committee - Sonya Stack

Discussed the following issues:

- Shared facilities with the Town for Parks and Rec adult classes in the morning
- Parks and Rec field reservation procedure
- Ongoing security issues updates
- Revson Field signage to be designed by WHS junior for Eagle Scout project
- Cost avoidance report
- Safe Routes to School – sidewalks on School Rd
- Tennis court repairs discussed with Board of Finance members at the Board of Finance meeting

Next meeting is March 13 at 4:00 p.m.

5. Policy Committee - Dana Levin

Site visits to various schools with SROs have included New Canaan and Wilton. Visits to Darien and Ridgefield are scheduled. Next regular meeting is March 6 at 8:30 a.m.

6. Negotiations Committee - Richard Bochinski

Nothing to report.

7. CES - Sonya Stack

There was no meeting in February. In January:

- CES is doing a pilot of their online assessments and suggested a check of bandwidth to ensure the technology can accommodate the curriculum.
- Discussed the possibility of a phase-in process for the teacher/administrator evaluation plan.
- Had a walking tour of the magnet school

8. CAFE - Nina Daniel

Day on the Hill is March 6. Also, CAFE is looking for talented students to be featured in their Friday and Saturday programs on November 15 and 16. Shared letter from CAFE that French government intends to abolish homework for primary and middle schools.

9. Weston Education Foundation – Philip Schaefer

They approved a grant request from Amanda Quaintance for Creative Connections. Trivia Night is being planned for the fall. Individuals interested in joining the Board of Weston Education Foundation, please contact Maria Kalivas.

XI. ADJOURNMENT to executive session

MOTION: Motion to adjourn to executive session by Mrs. Uzenoff, second by Mrs. Stack, all in favor. (6-0). Meeting adjourned to executive session at 10:20 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Jennifer Markov, Board of Education Clerk.

Minutes reviewed/approved by Dr. Colleen Palmer, Superintendent.

RECEIVED

MAR 06 2013

OFFICE OF
SUPERINTENDENT

Daniel McNeill
29 River Road
Weston, CT 06883
(203) 253-5728
mcneilldm@yahoo.com

February 24, 2013

Dr. Colleen Palmer
Weston Public Schools
24 School Road
Weston, CT 06883

Dear Dr. Palmer,

The purpose of this letter is to inform you and The Board of Education that I will not be returning to my position as classroom teacher upon conclusion of my sabbatical for the 2012-13 school year.

I would like to take this time to thank the Weston Public Schools for the opportunity to serve in a dynamic learning environment surrounded by dedicated professionals whose unified goal was the betterment of the education of the students of Weston. Weston Public Schools and the Weston community are indeed special; I am thoroughly grateful for the time I was able to spend working with the educators, families and students of Weston. In my five years of service I was presented with seemingly unlimited opportunities for professional growth which ultimately led to my decision to take a sabbatical in pursuit of a degree in educational administration. During my pursuit of that degree I came realize that my calling as an educator was working directly with students in the role of classroom teacher. I also realized that I needed to reexamine the choices I have made in order to strike a better balance between career and family. As such, I have made the difficult decision to place my career as a classroom teacher on hold in order to spend more time with my family.

Although this is the end of one chapter of my educational career, it is the beginning of another. I look forward to continuing to work within the Weston Public Schools on a volunteer basis. Whether it be acting as a parent volunteer in the LRC or serving on the PTO General Board, I appreciate the opportunities to continue to be an active and contributing member to the wonderful place that is the Weston Public School system.

Respectfully yours,



Daniel B. McNeill

Cc: Dr. Ken Craw
Lewis Brey
Dr. Michael Cicchetti
Kim Kus

RECEIVED

MAR 14 2013

OFFICE OF
SUPERINTENDENT

Lorraine Westervelt
438 Wheeler Park Avenue
Fairfield, CT 06825

March 14, 2013

Dr. Colleen Palmer
Superintendent
Weston Public Schools
24 School Road
Weston, CT 06883

Dear Dr. Palmer:

This is to inform you that I am retiring from my position as teacher at the end of the school year.

I appreciate the opportunities for professional and personal development that Weston Public Schools has provided me during the last thirty years. Through my teaching of Weston students, I hope that I have been a part of helping them make their dreams a possibility.

I wish the students and staff continued success in the future.

Sincerely,



Lorraine Westervelt

cc. Amy Watkins
Lewis Brey
Ken Crow



WHS is committed to providing a safe and intellectually challenging environment that will empower students to become innovative thinkers, creative problem-solvers, effective communicators and inspired learners prepared to thrive in the twenty-first century.

Report: School Resource Officer (SRO), Executive Summary

Weston High School Administration

Date: March 28, 2013

Introduction

The Weston Public School community, in its commitment to establishing a safe and responsible school environment, has recognized the need to explore a number of changes to safety policy and procedures to ensure that Weston High School and the campus at large provide the equipment and personnel to manage the challenges and demands of 21st century security. To this end, the Policy Committee of the Weston Board of Education is currently investigating the position of a School Resource Officer (SRO), including the duties, responsibilities, and effectiveness of the SRO, and is exploring the appropriateness of an SRO for Weston High School and the adjoining campus.

Review Process

A draft of a report was presented to the Policy Committee and to representatives of the Weston Police Department in November to begin the study of the SRO program. The report presented information from a variety of relevant sources to inform the Weston Public Schools about the position of an SRO and included details from three resources recommended by educators who have had experience with this position in their respective school districts. The most instructive of these resources was the *Connecticut Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee Children, Youth, and the Police Recommended Policies and Procedures* (Revised, 2011). Among the many delineated items about the SRO detailed in the report, the most informative were the job description and the established principle of adjusting the position, including duties, responsibilities, and assessment of effectiveness, to fit the requirements and culture of Weston Public Schools and the Weston community.

Helpful to this process has been the examination of SRO job descriptions from area high schools and conversations with building administrators about the SRO; site visits to high schools currently employing an SRO are planned to inform the Committee. From the initial meeting in November, it is recommended that we move from our current fact-finding phase to an identification of security priorities appropriate, unique, to the Weston Public Schools. We can then determine whether we can address these priorities with a realignment of existing staff, or with the addition of a traditional, established SRO position. If it is then determined that an SRO

is required to meet our priorities and needs, then we would design a School Resource Officer job description specifically for the Weston Public Schools, building upon the information and experiences from our initial investigation.

SRO Job Descriptions

For the purpose of this summary, the following is a representative job description of an SRO taken from DRG A high schools and other neighboring high schools that currently employ an SRO. It is recommended that we refer to these common descriptors when designing an SRO job description to fit the specific needs of the Weston Public Schools:

The SRO program is intended to provide a safe environment at school and to foster positive relationships between police and those at the school, particularly the students. It is part of an overall plan to address security and related problems through community policing. The primary role of the SRO is to protect the students and staff of the school from dangerous persons and situations, and to serve as a resource regarding matters of law and public safety. SRO's are specially trained and certified law enforcement officers assigned to work full-time in a school environment. They perform a broad range of activities in the school, covering the areas of law enforcement and security, law-related counseling, and law-related education. They enhance security by developing a close contact with student and school personnel and by becoming an integral part of the school community. The SRO will work on a full-time basis, and the duties and responsibilities of the position include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Develop and present, on a regular basis, law education materials that can be integrated into the existing curriculum established by the Board of Education.
- Confer with administrators and faculty to develop response plans and provide appropriate training related to dangerous situations on or near campus. Act as a team leader to coordinate safety drills and security training.
- Act as a resource for teachers, counselors, parents and students for conferences on an individual basis to provide guidance and intervention strategies to students and parents who can benefit from such assistance.
- Coordinate security concerns that originate on campus and off campus at school-sponsored events.
- Maintain a high visibility, through a proactive approach, to establish student and staff contacts to help establish a secure environment and to address security-related problems on campus. Generate innovative responses to, or referral for, the resolution of these problems.
- Act as a mentor and role model to students. Serve as a member of school committees and community organizations.
- Take law enforcement action as necessary consistent with Board of Education Policy and Administrative Regulations, and when possible, advise the principal

before requesting additional law enforcement assistance on campus.

- Document all officer activities and provide the police department and the principal with monthly reports and security updates and recommendations.

As our research continues to inform the process of inquiry concerning an SRO and its appropriateness for Weston High School, we will take into account information collected from DRG A and neighboring schools that employ the position and from interviews with key personnel at these schools and with their students. Included as addendum in this summary are the SRO job descriptions from three of the seven DRG-A high schools. Four DRG A high schools currently employ an SRO: Darien, New Canaan, Wilton, and Ridgefield.

Darien Police Department: School Resource Officer Job Description

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of the School Resource Office (SRO) shall be to act as a liaison between the police department and the faculty and student body of the Darien Public School System. The SRO shall work diligently to foster a spirit of cooperation and trust between these parties. The SRO shall also provide education, assistance, and law enforcement services to the school community.

Duties to include, but not limited to:

- Present classes in the school system as outlined below:
 1. Legal issues, police youth relationships, and community responsibility issues.
 2. Conflict mediation (discussion groups about health issues, teen issues, family life dealing with peer pressure, legal issues, refusal skills, and consequences)
 3. Mentoring activities (Possible club activities at the high school, student mentoring, and student council).
- Develop and utilize problem solving projects.
- Monitor truancy (liaison between principals, guidance counselors, faculty, students, crisis support workers, and human services departments)
- Monitor crime awareness; investigate criminal issues in and around the schools and disseminate any intelligence information to appropriate personnel.
- Interact with students and faculty and respond to requests for police service and assistance. Interview complainants, victims, and witnesses at the scene of a crime or other incidents to gather relevant information.
- Patrol duties on foot, bicycle or by car, to establish a visible presence, detect situations requiring police assistance and render assistance. Write reports in narrative form describing events, activities, investigation, or enforcement action taken.
- Exercise judgment to determine whether an arrest should be made and complete the necessary paperwork and procedures when processing an arrested party. Prepare cases for court or give deposition testimony regarding the facts of a case.
- Provide emergency medical assistance as needed.
- Act as a liaison between the school system, (guidance counselors, psychologists, crisis support workers, principals, superintendent) youth agencies, youth organizations, town departments and justice programs) and maintain effective communication.

- Act as an informational resource to school personnel, youths, and parents.
- Develop youth related programs and initiatives for the school system to aid in the prevention of crime, violence, and drug abuse.
- Prepare a monthly report of activity and forward to the Administrative Lieutenant and Youth Officers.

Desirable Knowledge, Skills and Abilities

- Knowledge of law enforcement and security practices and procedures. A considerable knowledge of the law and resources available to the department.
- Must possess excellent interpersonal skills to establish rapport with school faculty, students, and parents.
- Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with other members of the department, town staff, as well as other agencies and service providers. Ability to get along with a variety of people and to work well as part of a group or team.
- Ability to work under pressure, properly handle emergencies and pressure without losing control. Ability to handle complex criminal investigations.
- Ability to speak clearly, understandably and effectively. Ability to understand and follow spoken directions; ability to follow conversations and comments.
- Ability to analyze problems logically and choose effective solutions.
- Determination, dependability, decisiveness, and a reputation for following through on assignments.
- Resourcefulness and an ability to come up with solutions to problems.

Education and Special Requirements

- Must hold a current law enforcement certification through the Connecticut Police Officers Standard and Training Council.
- Only sworn officers of the department shall be eligible for assignment as an SRO.
- Personnel shall have a minimum of two years' experience with the department to apply for the SRO Position.
- The selection process used to select the SRO position shall be promulgated by the Office of the Chief of Police to all department personnel prior to the inception of the selection process.

New Canaan High School: School Resource Officer Job Description

1. Establish and maintain a close partnership with school administrators in order to provide for a safe school environment. Assist school officials with their efforts to enforce Board Of Education policies and procedures. Assist school administrators in emergency crisis planning and building security matters.
2. Work to promote healthy behavior through close contact and positive relationships with students. In addition the SRO shall conduct security inspections to deter unsafe activities.
3. Become visible within the school community. Attend and participate in school functions. Build working relationships with the school's staff as well as with student and parent groups.
4. Work with students and families in relation to community or neighborhood issues that require assistance or preventive intervention.
5. Develop and implement classes in law related education to support the educational efforts of the faculty. Work closely with teachers in designing and presenting law-related topics and the role of police in our society.
6. Work with guidance counselors and other student support staff to assist students and to provide services to students involved in situations where referrals to service agencies are necessary. Assist in conflict resolution efforts.
7. Initiate interaction with students in the classroom and general areas of the school building. Promote the profession of police officer and be a positive role model. Increase the visibility and accessibility of police to the school community.

Ridgefield High School: School Resource Officer Job Description

The Ridgefield School Resource Officer (SRO) Program supports safe and secure conditions in the Ridgefield Public Schools and seeks to strengthen the relationship between law enforcement and youth.

The primary mission of the SRO Program is to help plan and maintain general safety and security within the schools, provide special attention to issues of safety and security that may arise at any of the Ridgefield Public Schools, and work with students to strengthen positive relationships and improve communication between law enforcement and youth.

At the discretion of the High School Principal, the SRO will be available to assist classroom teachers as a guest speaker on topics such as law enforcement, substance abuse prevention, the justice system, career education, etc. He/she will also be available to speak to parent, faculty and community groups on the SRO Program and related topics when requested.

The SRO will work an eight-hour day, five days per week which will include the hours that Ridgefield High School is in session. He/she will be stationed at Ridgefield High School but will be available to the Middle Schools and Elementary Schools on a limited basis as needed. The SRO will be assigned a private office in the main office area of Ridgefield High School.

The SRO reports directly to his/her supervisor in the Ridgefield Police Department and to the High School Principal. The primary evaluator for the position in the Ridgefield Public Schools will be the High School Principal or his/her designee. The SRO will be evaluated annually in June. The basis of the evaluation will be the performance of the Police Officer (SRO) relative to the duties and responsibilities of the position. The SRO Committee will evaluate the program annually. The duties and responsibilities will be as follows:

Safety:

- Works in cooperation with building principals in establishing procedures which provide for the safety of all individuals within the schools;
- Performs law enforcement action when necessary;
- Requests additional enforcement assistance whenever necessary after consulting with the principal or his/her designee;
- Promotes civil attention to law enforcement within the school community;
- Assists in the peaceful carrying out of school related programs;
- Advises building principals of the necessity of extra police support for various extra-curricular events;

- Coordinates with the Administration and staff strategies to minimize dangerous situations.

Instruction:

- Serves as a guest speaker in different subjects and grade levels on topics such as law enforcement, the justice system, substance abuse prevention, career education, etc.;
- Prepare appropriate lesson plans for lessons taught.

Interaction with Students:

- Works to strengthen the relationship between law enforcement and youth in Ridgefield by interaction with students to strengthen positive relationships and improve communications;
- Builds rapport with students as a classroom guest speaker;
- Develops a positive relationship with students both in and outside of classroom;
- Makes himself/herself available to meet with students on an individual or group basis;
- Is not used in place of the school counselor and should not offer students any formal psychological counseling;
- Advises students on responsibilities and procedures concerning criminal matters;
- Helps resolve, by advice, issues between students that involve criminal matters or matters which may result in a criminal matter or disturbance or disruption;
- Maintains student confidentiality in working with students unless the gravity of a situation dictates otherwise;
- Meets with students and/or the parents of students for consultations in the SRO's office. Whenever requested by the Principal or his designee, home visits will only be done upon approval of the officer's supervisor in the RPD;
- Attends as many extra-curricular activities as possible which are sponsored or sanctioned by the school or Police Department and are held either off campus or outside normal school hours. This includes athletic games as well as dances, concerts and special events.

Communication:

- Encourages individual and small group discussion about law enforcement related matters with students, staff and parents;
- Attends meetings of parents and staff when requested to solicit their support and understanding of the public school resource program and to promote awareness of law enforcement functions;
- Available for conferences with students, parents, and staff members to assist them with problems of a law enforcement or crime prevention nature;
- Provides information to teachers concerning laws and updates on new laws as it relates to them and their positions;
- Acts as instructor for specialized short-term programs, when invited to do so by a faculty member;
- When requested by a principal, attends faculty meetings to solicit support and an understanding of the program;
- Refers or reports students to guidance counselors, administrators and/or deans whenever necessary regarding disciplinary or counseling issues;
- Briefs Deans, Counselors and Administrators periodically regarding situations or students that may need assistance or attention;
- Writes a report at the end of each school marking quarter making recommendations and summarizing his/her accomplishments for that time period and review this report with the High School Principal or his/her designee.

Supports Parent, Community, and Faculty Programs:

- Encourages individual and small group discussions about law enforcement matters with faculty and parents;
- Is available for conferences with parents and faculty members to assist them with problems of a law enforcement or crime prevention nature. Such meetings will be held in the privacy of the SRO's office or in an equivalent facility within the Ridgefield School District;
- Participates in or attends school functions whenever possible to promote citizen awareness of law enforcement efforts, to assure the peaceful operation of school related programs and to build support with student and the RHS community;
- Acts as a liaison for the Police Department to the PTSA, PTA and any other organization deemed necessary by the school principal, SRO and his/her

supervisor within the Police Department;

- Utilizes the PTSA newsletter, the Ridgefield Press and student publications to communicate with the Ridgefield High School community and townspeople.

Common Characteristics of SRO Programs

The following section is a notation of the common characteristics of the SRO as evidenced through the site visits to DRG A schools. These visits included the following schools: New Canaan High School, January 31; Wilton High School, February 21; Darien High School, February 28; and Ridgefield High School, March 15.

Selection and Operations:

- Police Department posts opening and then determines who is eligible for the position; the town police department hires the officer, but the school district is part of the final decision and is represented in the interview process.
- The duration of the SRO's term is established with the PD; a balance between a freshness of approach and a familiarity with the position and the school's cultural should be considered.
- The SRO participates in school-based policing training, the type offered by NASRO, and remains current with this specialized instruction.
- The SRO acts as a liaison between the police department and the school; when a police officer is needed, the SRO would assist during the incident, but he would not be the arresting officer in most cases. However, depending on the circumstances, in cases of immediate safety for example, the SRO can make an on-the-spot arrest.
- The SRO will make arrests in situations where immediate safety is compromised, noting that in CT students under 18 are treated as juveniles, and in these cases the parents are called and given the summons. These arrests are not custodial, and when situations outside of school occur, a youth officer (who is not the SRO) is called.
- Discipline problems and policy violations are dealt with by the school administration unless a major crime is committed. Administrators consult with the SRO, but the school will do its investigation before the SRO is formally involved.
- The SRO frequently attends after-school events, but exercises discretion in this regard; the belief is that when the SRO is present at these events, students will feel more comfortable approaching the officer in a variety of circumstances during the school day.
- The SRO's summer months are used for training, vacation, and/or a return to patrol duty for the town.

- The SRO is available as a resource to advisory and support teams, both school-based and district-wide.
- The SRO is directly involved in school security operations, security drills, and presents an over-all visibility in the school that complements a secure environment and serves as a deterrent to inappropriate behaviors.
- The SRO carries a fully-equipped police belt at all times, but the uniform can be modified at the discretion of the police department and school officials.

Integration in the School Environment and Community:

- The SRO spends time teaching, as part of a regularly scheduled class or as a guest speaker concerning curriculum-related topics.
- The SRO presents lessons at the high school through the health class curriculum on topics that vary by grade, from civil liability and an introduction to law enforcement to DUI laws.
- The SRO presents lessons on internet safety, cyberbullying, and illegal drug use at the high school and is available to teach appropriate lessons at the middle and elementary levels also.
- The SRO is available to work with Youth Assistant Services, Guidance Counselors, Social Workers and Psychologists.
- The office of the SRO is located where students have comfortable access to it throughout the day without feeling that the SRO is an extension of administration, an association that is oftentimes exclusively associated with discipline.
- The SRO is available to speak to students in small focus groups, the result of which is that students see the officer as a counseling resource, presented in a more humanizing role.

Administrator Commentary:

- The goal is that the SRO program becomes firmly established to the point to where it is considered a part of the fabric of school life.
- Community support of the SRO is high, and the option of a second SRO, based on the successful implementation of the original position, is a consideration.
- Administration finds the SRO invaluable in a variety of cases where serious interventions are required and where only warnings or less punitive responses are appropriate.

Student Commentary:

- Students, by and large, enjoyed having the SRO as an educational resource; many found having an SRO to be not only helpful, but also comforting.
- Teacher or guidance counselor would be approached first for most school issues (e.g., bullying); despite the SRO's non-intimidating appearance and manner, he was still “the police.”
- The SRO served as a deterrent to bad behavior, and students were able to distinguish between punitive consequences imposed by the school and penalties imposed by law enforcement.
- Responses to the SRO in the school were mostly positive, with some students viewing the SRO as unnecessary.

SRO Programs in DRG A

DRG-A SCHOOL	SRO	YEARS
Darien	Yes	1
New Canaan	Yes	5
Wilton	Yes	14
Ridgefield	Yes	16
Staples	No	--
Joel Barlow	No	--

Integration Into Curricula

The following section contains suggestions for the integration of an SRO into high school curricula as described in the Weston High School Program of Studies.

Health Education**Grade 9**

Course Title: How to Thrive and Survive

- Introduction to Building Resources which will include a SRO

- Drug Education including - school policies and regulations
- School Safety Procedures
- Bullying/Internet Safety – CyberBullying

Grade 10

Course Title: Human Sexuality

- Healthy/Unhealthy Relationships
- Domestic Violence/Harassment/Laws regarding sexual consent
- Online Safety/Sexting, etc.

Grade 11

Course Title: Independent Research Project

- Act as a resource to any student choosing a topic related to safety, violence, conflict, drug issues, etc.

Grade 12

Course Title: Life After High School

- Domestic Violence/Harassment/Laws regarding sexual consent
- Distracted Driving Prevention Education/Consequences
- Diversity Education/Bias Crimes/Hazing
- Public Safety on College Campus

Community Class – Health/Physical Education

- Overall Safety/Personal Safety/ School Drills and Procedures
- Stranger Danger
- Good Touch/Bad Touch
- Peer Mentor

Grade 9-12 Physical Education

- Outdoor Safety: Evacuation Drills and Procedures
- Assist with CPR/AED training

Forensics

- Crime scene investigation protocols
- Presentation of evidence
- Review of actual crime investigation experiences
- Current laws governing the collection and presentation of evidence

American Government

- Guest presenter on rights of the accused and students' rights in unit on Judicial Branch
- Informed participant in Judicial Simulation

Psychology

- Guest presenter on criminal/abnormal behavior

Conclusion

The Policy Committee of the Weston Board of Education has completed the research phase of its inquiry into the possible addition of an SRO for Weston High School and the adjoining campus. This inquiry reflects Weston Public Schools' recognition of the need to explore adjustments and changes to its safety policy to ensure that Weston High School and the campus at-large can appropriately manage the challenges and demands of 21st century security.

A draft of the full report was presented to the Policy Committee and to representatives of the Weston Police Department in November to begin this inquiry, and, as this summary outlines, the report presented information from a variety of relevant sources to inform Weston Public Schools about the position of an SRO. The Policy Committee is now prepared to move from the fact-finding phase of this inquiry to an identification of the unique security priorities to Weston Public Schools and the appropriateness of an SRO in addressing these security issues.

WESTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS REPORT

March 18, 2013



Weston High School

Lisa Wolak, Principal

*In this issue... Principal's Message
Academic Program Updates
Co-Curricular Program Updates*

Principal's Message

March signifies state standardized testing with the administration of the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) to all sophomores at Weston High School. However, during the CAPT we also take advantage of these testing periods to provide additional Advanced Placement review for our upperclassmen. Our freshmen also hone their skills through CAPT practice tests.

In addition, all juniors took our Academic Innovation and Measurement (AIM) cornerstone. This assessment was designed by our staff to measure our students' abilities to analyze and synthesize information and construct an appropriate response to an authentic problem. This year's assessment asked students to form a plan of action to gain support and write a petition to impact the issue of e-waste. The top responses will be submitted to the White House *We the People* website.

On Wednesday, March 27 we welcome all eighth graders and their parents to our annual transition night beginning at 7:00 p.m. in the auditorium. Students and parents will learn about the academic and co-curricular programs at WHS, and there will be student representatives from a variety of clubs and sports teams present as well.

This April there will be a special evening program for our seniors to help them with their transition to college. *College 101*, an evening workshop program, will be held over the course of four Thursdays beginning at 7:00 p.m. in our College and Career Center. The dates are April 4, 11, 25, and May 2. It is limited to 30 students so interested seniors should sign up in the School Counseling Department. Topics include how to eat healthy, stay safe on campus, relate to your roommates, and manage your money.

Academic Program

The Arts

Music

Weston High School alumna Arianna Gass and the Vassar Devils, an a cappella ensemble, visited the music classes of Erik Paul on their spring tour. Performing contemporary songs for WHS music students, the Vassar Devils had a Q & A session about college life, what it takes to succeed in college, and the rigors of performing vocal music without instrumental accompaniment. WHS students were intrigued by the complicated harmonies and enjoyed their camaraderie. Several WHS students intend to perform in a capella ensembles in college.

Ross Cohen and Matthew Proctor, members of the WHS class of 2014, were selected by audition to participate in the 2013 CT All-State Band under the direction of Dr. Jack Stamp. Dr. Stamp is an internationally acclaimed composer and conductor, and our young musicians will gain tremendously from their inclusion in this most prestigious ensemble. The CT All-State Band is a 97-piece ensemble featuring the finest musicians from all corners of our state. Congratulations and good luck to these two outstanding musicians.

Our annual *Spectrum* concert was held on March 14 and featured all of the district bands and jazz ensembles. This is the fifteenth *Spectrum* concert with over 300 students grades 6-12 participating.

Visual Arts

Videography

A team of Weston High School seniors are top ten finalists in the 2013 Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles Center for Teen Safe Driving video contest. Harrison Manning, Walker Edelman, and Andrew Katz produced a public service announcement on this year's theme: "Teen Safe Driving: Are You In?" The video demonstrates "what other 16-17-and 18-year-olds and adults are doing to help teens be safer drivers." The competition drew 128 entries from a total of 480 students statewide. The 26 judges included Governor Daniel Malloy, Attorney General George Jepsen, executives from Travelers Insurance, and other teen safe driving advocates from around the state. The five winning teams will be announced at a ceremony on April 2.

Physical Education/Health

Emily Leventhal, a facilitator from the Domestic Violence Crisis Center, discussed media literacy with students in senior health this month. Students analyzed how gender is portrayed in advertisement, music, television, and film. They discussed how the objectifying of women and men is dehumanizing and opens the door for physically and emotionally abusive behaviors.

Our Freshmen and Sophomores are taking the CT Physical Fitness Test during PE this month. This assessment encompasses cardiovascular endurance, upper body strength, abdominal strength, and flexibility. All results are sent to the Connecticut State Department of Education.

Science/Technology

Christine Xu and Asra Ali were selected as the two CT State representatives to attend the National Youth Science Camp. The National Youth Science Foundation encourages students in the areas of science and technology. To have two students selected from the same high school in the state is quite an achievement.

School Counseling

Weston High School is now a designated site for SAT administration. On March 9 two hundred sophomores and juniors presented for this examination. We were thrilled to be able to offer this high stakes testing at our own school where students feel more comfortable.

Family University will be held on Thursday, March 21 from 6:00-9:30 p.m. at Weston High School. This is a night for WMS and WHS parents and their students to engage in powerful dialogue about today's world. Please visit the district website for more information on the presentations and how to register for this program.

Social Studies

Entrepreneurship Seminar

Seniors Connor Mulcahey and Andrew Katz have started their own businesses. Connor has started a company which sells apps to students and Andrew has started a videography business specializing in Bar and Bat mitzvahs. Connor is mentored by David Emberling, and Andrew is mentored by Don Kendall, who are both community volunteers in this new program.

Introduction to Psychology

The Introduction to Psychology class has just finished studying a new field of psychology called positive psychology, which looks for ways that have been proven to boost happiness. One scientifically proven way to do so is through meditation, so the class spent some time in the exercise room last week practicing different forms of meditation. More than half of the students expressed that they would like to incorporate some practice in their daily lives.

World Language

Latin

Latin students participated in the National Latin Exam. Students who volunteered to take this assessment were tested on their knowledge of Latin grammar, Roman culture, and reading comprehension. This exam is taken by students around the world and is a great way for Weston's Latin students to see how they compare with others. Results will come in late April.

Professional Development

Social Worker Meghan Skelton attended a suicide and self-mutilation workshop facilitated by Jack Klott, MSSA, LISW, a suicideologist with 45 years of experience. Topics discussed included the latest clinical research on risk factors, the impact of mental disorders, social stressors, and psychological vulnerabilities.

Co-curricular Program

Student government is hosting a *Spring into Spring Week* from March 18-22. Events include dress-up days and an evening dodge ball tournament, on March 21 to raise money for Autism Speaks.

Athletics

Boys basketball has had a stellar season competing in the state tournament. The boys are headed to Mohegan Sun March 15 to compete for the state championship against Valley Regional. Indoor track has had a great season as well. Emily Savage broke her own state pole vault record with a jump of 12'-9". The girls' 4X800 meter relay took eighth in New England. Our boys swim and dive team placed third at the SWC Championship meet and will compete on March 13 at the state championship meet. Girls cheerleading gave an outstanding performance at the state competition on March 9.

Clubs

Company's spring musical *Kiss Me, Kate!* is a resounding success. If you have not yet seen it, the final performances are March 22 and 23.

On March 1, Circle of Friends in collaboration with Katie Dennett, Senior Program Coordinator for Special Olympics Connecticut, participated in the National Spread the Word to End the Word campaign in support of people with intellectual disabilities. This annual day of awareness is held the

first Wednesday of every March. Over 400 staff and students pledged to Spread the Word to End the Word.

Circle of Friends club members participated in the Penguin Plunge at Compo Beach on Saturday, March 9. The event was held to raise money for the Connecticut Special Olympics. Congratulations to students Catherine Kimberly, Grace Gulino, Anna Kimberly, Colin Huang, and Hank Weinstock as well as staff member Ms. Simone Koprosk who braved the 38 degree water. Circle of Friends raised over \$1,000 for the cause and the Westport Plunge raised over \$90,000. The club is accepting donations for the CT Special Olympics and can be mailed to:

Weston High School
Attention: Circle of Friends Club
115 School Road
Weston, CT 06883

The Garden Club is in its initial stages of planning our spring and summer garden. In addition to growing standard items like basil, tomatoes, and lettuce, this year the students have also selected broccoli rape, purple dove snap peas, zucchini, chamomile, bell peppers, celery, and jalapeños. Students already planted garlic last fall and asparagus last spring and are hoping to harvest both crops this year. The club is looking for ideas on what to do with our future harvests, especially if there is a need somewhere, so please forward any thoughts to club advisor Ms. Klein at jenniferklein@westonps.org.

Weston Middle School

Amy Watkins, Principal

In this issue...

The Node Chairs Arrive

Art "Links" to Jordan

Professional Development:

Unpacking Data, Common Core State Standard, Safety & Web 2.0 Tools

WMS PFAs Shine

Welcome to June Curiano

The Node Chairs Arrive

WMS students are thrilled with the Node chairs that have arrived to the popularly called, "Think Tank." These chairs offer students the flexibility to work independently, collaborate in small groups, and even spread out for Socratic seminar conversations. The wheels on the chairs make these transitions quick and seamless to maximize learning time. The convenient tray at the base of the chair prevents tripping hazards from books and supplies. Thank you to the WMS PTO for their support in purchasing these chairs.



6th Grade Students Connect with Amman, Jordan

Students from the Inventors have been working throughout the year making connections with students from a school in Amman, Jordan. Earlier in the year the students were asked to create a piece of art that represents something important from their culture. Students then swapped their pieces of art and developed thoughtful questions about the artwork they received. This past week the culminating experience was a Skype session in which students from both schools asked questions about their artwork face-to-face. This program was funded by the Weston

Education Foundation through ArtLink: Creative Connections founded by CEO Alan Steckler. We would like to thank Mrs. Quaintance for her time in bringing this program to her students.



Professional Development: Unpacking Data, Common Core State Standard, Safety & Web 2.0 Tools

This past February teachers spent time during the early release day on February 15 unpacking the data from our recent MAP assessment, Common Core, and training for our counselors on student success plans. This was followed by a morning presentation to our staff by Allan Garcia on school safety and an afternoon presentation by Burke Hatch, a technology guru, on various web 2.0 tools that continue to move our work forward in readying students for the work force as adults through authentic opportunities that allow for collaboration, communication, creativity and critical thinking.



WMS PFAs Shine

Our practical and fine arts programs continue to thrive. I recently enjoyed the seventh-grade Project Lead the Way class, led by Mrs. Westervelt, as they design and build a tree house!

Welcome to June Curiano – New Administrative Assistant to the Principal

Welcome to June Curiano who has joined the WMS family as our new Administrative Assistant to the Principal. June comes to us with an impressive work history and professional background. We are thrilled to have her as a new member of our team. We thank Meredith Herman for her help as she has transitioned to her new position as the Administrative Assistant to the Assistant Superintendent for Dr. Kenneth Craw.



*In this issue...**Teaching and Learning
Technology
Student Leadership*Teaching and Learning

This month it was our fourth-grade students' turn to participate in curriculum-embedded performance tasks in science, as well as a full inquiry experience. These open-ended investigations allow students to design scientific experiments to test ideas rather than follow step-by-step directions to achieve a predetermined outcome. At the end of the unit on electricity, the students get to investigate a question of interest. To get them started thinking, students completed a "starter" activity. They followed directions to build an electromagnet with three different amounts of winds of wire around the post. The students then generated other possible variables that could contribute to the strength of the magnet (placement of winds, thickness of wire, thickness of post, wire material, post material, battery type, and number of batteries, etc.). Lots of materials were set out for them to see to get them thinking. Working with a partner or small group, they created and chose an investigable question, designed their investigation, carried it out, and are now getting ready to share their results with the class. Students are diligently working to create graphs using Glogster to show their data.



Also in fourth grade this month, the students attended an assembly to learn about an exciting research project that they would be starting as a culminating activity to their non-fiction reading and writing unit. Over the next couple of weeks students will be researching American inventions to decide which they think is the most important invention. Each class of students will narrow down their choices, and ultimately select what they consider to be the top five inventions. The students will work together in small groups to do further research on their invention, before deciding on how to create a presentation to their peers.



In fifth grade, the students have been involved in a lot of hands-on activities over the past few weeks, especially in the area of science. With the unit on light and color coming to an end, students were able to participate in the dissection of a sheep's eye and experience the separation of white light via a light-box and prisms, allowing them to see the seven colors of the spectrum.

Social studies has also not disappointed the students this month. As they entered the time period of the Revolutionary War, they learned about many of the acts (punishments) the colonists had to face. A highlight for most of them was watching a video on the Boston Massacre. The video brought them into the world of fact/fiction and opinion. The question at hand was... Was the Boston Massacre really a massacre, or did the British

act in self-defense? This sparked lively debates amongst the students, as they were asked to choose a side. Students also experienced first-hand the colonists' feelings of frustration and unfair treatment as the teachers "required" the students to pay a penny tax to get a stamp on their homework. Students quickly realized though what was happening and organized a "revolt" to demand that the homework tax be repealed.

Technology

Here are a few of the new and exciting technology integration initiatives going on in the building:

XtraNormal

An online animated movie creator allows students to create movies by simply choosing characters and typing dialogue. XtraNormal instantly turns the students' words into a 3D animated movie. Several fifth-grade teachers are currently piloting this in all subject areas to reinforce grammar and spelling lessons, to check understanding, bring history alive through stories and dialogue, express opinions, and create debates. This software program is not only fun and engaging, but inspires student creativity.

KidBlog

Originally piloted in fifth grade, this is now being piloted in all three grades. *Kid Blog* allows students to safely practice digital communication within a secure, private classroom blogging space. The students are enjoying this opportunity to blog their responses to literature and non-fiction, to continue class discussions in social studies and science, and to practice their writing skills digitally. In addition, our staff is using this blog to share classroom technology integration success stories, share links to educational content, ask for technology tips and advice, helping us all be more technology savvy.

Student Leadership

This year, our Learning Resource Center started a volunteer club for fifth graders. Sixty-five students attended the first meeting in January. The students suggested several names for the club, before settling on the "LRC Wolfpups." They formed four committees: decorating, events, booktalk video, and leadership to encourage more student participation. Currently, the *LRC Wolfpups* are coordinating a school-wide reading contest to celebrate Dr. Seuss and "Read across America." During the month of March a friendly competition is being held to see which grade can read the most pages. Students are keeping track of what they read on special reading logs and submitting them to the LRC once a week. On Friday, March 22, a school-wide reading celebration is planned, with students and staff coming to

school dressed as a character from a Dr. Seuss book. In addition, the Wolfpups are asking students and staff to donate new and gently used books this month for a nonprofit organization.



Below are pictures from our last school-wide reading event that was designed to celebrate 25 years of *Where's Waldo*. Scavenger hunts were held each day to find Waldo, and students submitted artwork to create *Where's Waldo* bookmarks.



Hurlbutt Elementary School

Michael Cicchetti, Principal

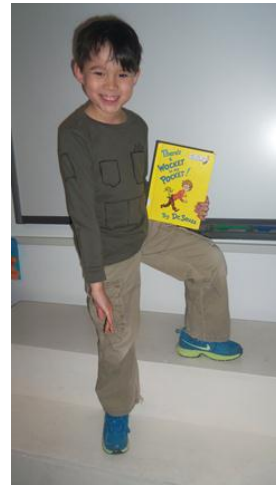
*In this issue... Celebrating Dr. Seuss' Birthday
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Celebrating Dr. Seuss' Birthday

The entire Hurlbutt Elementary School community celebrated the birthday of Dr. Seuss during the week of February 25. Sharon Rodko, Learning Resource Center specialist, coordinated various reading and special activities for students and staff to share their love of reading. The school community read for more than 3,000 minutes that week. Other activities, which were linked to one of Dr. Seuss' books, included:

- Monday- All students made an "Oh, The Places I Can Read" lanyard to wear.
- Tuesday- *Fox in Socks*- All were invited to wear their craziest pair of socks, matched or mismatched.

- Wednesday-Wacky Wednesday-Wacky outfits were seen all over the school.
- Thursday-*There's a Wocket in My Pocket*-All were challenged to wear as many pockets as they could.
- Friday-Red and white clothing was everywhere in honor of the *Cat in the Hat*.



Faculty Meeting Literacy Activity

As part of a strategic planning effort, the School District of Lancaster (PA) developed “Elementary Literacy’s 10 Non-Negotiables,” which consisted of the following tools, training and values to guide future work:

- Common materials and resources
- Common formative assessments
- A map of the 120-minute block
- Observational “look-fors”
- Sustained, embedded, on-going professional development
- Support for principals and accountability for implementation without judgment
- Broad understanding and support for “how we teach reading”
- An appropriately supported and supplemented core
- Incorporating all strands of literacy
- Integration of literacy

Hurlbutt faculty members – organized into four grade-level and special-area teams – discussed each of the above areas and assigned a rating based on their perception of how well the area is being implemented in the school. They also cited evidence to support their rating and growth areas that could serve to raise the rating level. This work will continue for the remainder of the school year and into the 2013-14 school year, serving as an important tool for staff members to identify priority areas that will have the greatest impact on student learning and success in literacy.

Status of Full-Day Kindergarten Implementation

As we approach the last quarter of the school year, the full-day kindergarten program continues to provide a positive experience for students. Teachers note significant growth in the level of stamina that students bring to their day. Instructionally, students have done well with the non-fiction language arts unit, math units, and science lab lessons. The two purposeful play periods continue to be valuable “brain breaks” that allow students to use their brains in different ways to build sensory and social skills. Teachers continue to carefully monitor student achievement as well as engage in discussion regarding how to teach instructional units in greater depth. For the remainder of the year, teachers will evaluate the effectiveness of writing instruction, especially as it relates to class size and paraprofessional support.

Grade 2 Biography Unit

Second-grade students recently embarked on an exciting language arts non-fiction biography unit. Based on work they completed during common planning time meetings and the February professional development days, teachers introduced students to the world of biographies. Students explore strategies and skills while reading to comprehend non-fiction text. Through this unit, students discover what we can learn from the past; how lessons learned from the past impact the present and future; and how reading biographies help us understand the important people who shape our world. In a more global sense, students learn how decisions others have made can help us make important decisions in our own lives; how individuals from history have impacted their communities, our lives today and the greater world; and how people from the past and present serve as role models for us. This unit supports the 21st century outcome of engaging in multiple perspectives, i.e. students examine multiple perspectives and synthesize that information to form an original empathetic response regarding whether or not an individual is a person of importance.

