

**WEST HAVEN BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES**  
**September 2, 2008**  
**Regular Board Meeting**

The Regularly Scheduled Meeting of the Board of Education was held at the Blake Building, 25 Ogden Street, West Haven on September 2, 2008. The meeting was called to order by Mark Palmieri, Chairman of the Board of Education at 7:05 p.m. The meeting opened with a pledge to the flag.

**BOARD MEMBERS  
IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mark Palmieri, Chairman  
Gerald A. Calabritto  
Eric Murillo  
T. Sean Maher  
Robert Saley  
M. Toni Paine  
Patrick Egolum  
Howard Horvath Jr.  
Andrew R. DePalma

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:** Neil Cavallaro, Superintendent of Schools  
Dave Cappetta, Director of Finance

**CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:**

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES**

**PRESENT:** Shamsi Aysha

**C. REPORTS**

**C.1. Administration**

Neil Cavallaro said several members of the Freshman Academy are here to give us a report on the first couple of days of school and the kids' reaction. We had a great opening and it was a very well run orientation. It was very well planned out and will only get better as we get into it. The assemblies went very well the first day.

Toni Paine asked how the incoming freshmen were notified of orientation day. She was told that they were sent letters. Both Neil and Toni stated they had never seen a crowd that size for orientation before.

Scott Shand showed a slide show and explained when planning for the Freshman Academy it was decided to have an orientation with the entire freshmen together and have good team building activities. Everyone threw in their ideas and everything was focused on learning, becoming a good WHHS student and how you can learn to like

school. Within two weeks the new incoming freshmen have made their decision as to whether they will remain in school or leave that school. The best way to get them to stay and love learning is to have a great opening day and get them involved. Scott Shand, Administrator stated that the whole academy should be complimented, the Peer Advocate Advisors, Special Education Team and Reading Specialist: Paul Cavanna, Christine, Liz Warren, Pete, Karen LaFo, Michelle Kelly, Judith Hunter, Liam Leapley and Kathleen Donroe as they did a great job of organizing the students. Everyone was looking forward to this day. The consultant who was helping us Naomi said that it was amazing that this is your very first day because she said it was very organized; more organized than schools that have been doing this for years.

Paul and the academy teachers continued and showed pictures and gave information on the first day of Freshman Academy. He stated the cheerleaders and jazz band were there. We had a great motivational teacher and the day continued with a number of stations: one on team building activities, the library had a scavenger hunt, another was on why to stay in school, and another was on appropriate fashion for the high school and the final one was on additional team building.

Liz Warren commented that some students coming from Wilbur Cross and other schools felt anxious and really didn't want to be there but by the day's end realized we really cared about them and they felt connected. This would not have happened without the Freshman Academy. They all felt they belonged. By the end every kid on every team was helping each other through the activities. Everyone was given a shirt and it turned out better than anyone had anticipated. Everyone felt connected on a personal basis.

The slide show was shown.

Board member Sean Maher spent the entire day there on the Sand Team. He listened to Chris Irving and went to some of the team building exercises. He felt the whole thing was great and he participated. He sat with his circle of students and received their positive and negative feedback.

Some of the things the kids liked best were that the teachers were involved in a group with them doing the activities; not just giving instruction and the relationships that were formed. They had a greater respect for each other at the end of the day and the relationships that they developed early in the day grew stronger by the end of the day due to the Freshman Academy. He complimented everyone involved for doing such a great job.

Some of the things stated were:

- that the bullying issue will go down due to the respect the students feel for one another
- students have connected on a personal level
- students met for the first time and they were smiling and joking with each other

Board member Toni Paine said she would like to see a portrait of the high school four years from now when every class has had the benefit of the Freshman Academy. She thinks there will be a tremendous decline in absenteeism, a rise in test scores and a whole new mindset for everybody. Everyone should be commended for their hard work.

Pictures of incoming freshman with caps and gowns were hung in their classrooms. This is what their goal is to get it done in four years. This is what you are supposed to look like in June of 2012.

Board Member Rob Saley met with a retired teacher who thought the Freshman Academy was a phenomenal idea and the involvement of teachers was great and she would like to see the numbers after the second and third year.

Paul stated that the teachers are really excited about the program and the resources. They are working with the kids and the excitement really does trickle down. The support really does make a difference.

Liz said I really don't think you will have as many behavior problems because if you are in a class with kids who behave you will be embarrassed to act out.

Paul stated we want every student to challenge themselves; we have a high standard and will teach that way.

Board member Howie Horvath commended everyone and asked if we were going to leverage power school in a way to give it the extra push so parents know what the freshman are doing, what their grades are etc. Paul stated yes this would be done. The kids will be talked to individually every week and parents every two weeks. Parents will be called every two weeks for good news and bad. Howie thought it might be a good idea to recognize the student and the parent. This is being looked into and everyone would be given certificates etc.

Howie asked how teachers were finding working together rather than in isolation. Scott Shand said at first it was difficult to get them to open up but this summer really helped teachers see the benefits in talking about student issues, curriculum etc. 20 kids learn 20 different ways and now we have more teachers looking at different ideas and ways to help the kids.

It was stated:

- this is the first time that we have been allowed departmental time to plan and this means a lot. We are doing a portfolio for each student that will be given to them at the end of the year. Teachers are open minded and ready to give of themselves.
- there is a wealth of knowledge in the teacher right next to you and by sharing it with each other you become better teachers.
- we will track student's success

Rob Saley asked how many freshmen were in the incoming class; true freshmen = 320 in the Freshman Academy. There are 450 kids total with about 130/140 with less than 6 credits that are not true freshmen.

Board member Eric Murillo asked if teachers were able to get together on the Professional Development component since they last met. Yes, last Monday was the reply. Eric asked if they planned to meet again in school or outside of school. Neil stated that it is a contractual thing. We have 182 school days for kids teachers have 185. He would like to drop it to 180 days and make 3 full professional development days throughout the school year. If you give people notice I think we would really reap the benefits of more built in professional development in our calendar year.

Eric Murillo asked if they were looking at collecting data to see what works and what doesn't work. How often do you get together? Departmentally we get together once a week and team wise 3 times a week.

Christine said every department is collecting data and assessing it. In math we are looking at what was taught and if results are better in one class we can see how that class was taught, what strategy occurred and use that in other classes.

Howie Horvath stated that data is usually looked at in the end and this is on-going.

Neil asked Scott to talk about the role Naomi will play. She works out of Southern and has contracts with many school systems throughout the country. She has a great interest in what we are doing as she said we are constructing it unlike any she has ever done. We are routing it directly into curriculum. The ninth grade has re-written their curriculum to fit what we need for student success. We will be looking at data when she comes in from that data we will see what student's impressions are and the teachers and the subjects at the very beginning of the year and throughout the year. She wants to make this not only well know in West Haven but well known throughout Connecticut. She wants other schools to come to WHHS and look at what we have done so they can model it in their schools. Within the next three years Scott feels it will be one of the most talked about things in Connecticut.

Eric Murillo asked if the students that went to summer school and did pass are part of the Freshman Academy. Ron Stancil said most are in separate sections that are not in the academy. We try to keep the Academy for new students.

A further discussion ensued.

Mark Palmeri asked Mr. Shand if we were going to have any type of booth for Freshman Academy during the Homecoming Festival on the 27<sup>th</sup>. He stated that this would be a great way to showcase the high school and what it has to offer. A lot of Carrigan and Bailey students come to this. We have lost about 1/3 of our class to outside schools this year. We need to draw these students back into our district. Since it is from 12:00 to 4:00 perhaps you can showcase one group an hour. Scott replied, yes we can put

freshman groups there and let the students in the middle schools see what is happening. He said there will be a 30 – 35 minute presentation, teacher interviews, some freshmen will also be there. Mark stated you also need the parent involvement to show them that their children will be safe in our district.

The board gave thanks.

Neil asked that a copy of the entire presentation be given to Patti Fusco. Mark said a copy might be included in the newsletter or certainly at least a write up.

**B. Public Portion**  
**There were no speakers.**

**C.1.a Status of Schools**

Neil said we had a very good opening and complimented everyone at the high school for making it a good opening day. We had good luck with our busses and kids getting picked up on time. One of our struggles is that the first day of school is a half day. At some point we need to work with the union and switch that around. It would be more beneficial to have parents learn what time the busses will arrive and what time students will get out and what time parents should be at the bus stop. It is time we addressed this.

Our professional development day last Tuesday went very well. Last Thursday the entire school district was introduced to Courageous Conversations and activities were planned. This was very well received by all the buildings. Neil stated that Tom Hunt, Principal of Forest School said we have professional development that is available to us. Neil said for those not familiar with Courageous Conversations it is conversations about race and how you address the issue of race and seeing kids differently in class and understanding the background and ethnicity of individuals. Believe it or not it is sometimes a hard concept to grasp because the immediate reaction is I don't see color. Sometimes you need to see color and understand where kids are coming from and understand. He asked Eric if he wanted to add anything as he has had more training.

Eric thought we have come along way and we are very dedicated and passionate about this. This teaches us to see things in a different perspective; especially in knowing the cultures of different students. As we know the cultures we know how to approach the family. This is the most important thing to involve the family. It is important to relate to the parents. We have a way to go but progress is being made and the equity committee is very talented and dedicated. Hopefully our board can get involved also in the next couple of months or so.

Neil wanted to talk about school choice. We have two schools where we had to offer school choice as a result of the 2007 Mastery Results: Forest and Carrigan. Both schools probably made some of the largest gains in our district but because of the results last year and the standards for scoring at the proficient level were raised Carrigan is at year 2 in need of improvement and Forest is in Safe Harbor but in year 1 in need of improvement.

To all families of the students in these schools we had to offer school choice. For Carrigan the only alternative is Bailey (which is limited in space - and can be taken into consideration; we also have to take into consideration class size and family needs) We want to make sure we are in compliance with the state while we are implementing this and Dave Russell did a great job communicating with the state on this.

You are obligated by law when sending a letter to the parents to let them know not only what their school scored but also what the choice schools scored as well. Carrigan would receive the results of the only other middle school Bailey. Forest parents receive the results of Haley, Mackrille and Savin Rock. Forest had about 15 responses from parents who opted for school choice out of 446 students. Forest is a well run, safe school and Tom Hunt spoke with parents and explained that if you leave a Title I school and attend another you will not receive the same services you will get from a Title I school; about 4 parents still wanted to change schools.

Carrigan had 60 families who asked for school choice. Bailey is really crowded and we can only accommodate 30 spaces as Bailey has fewer teachers than Carrigan. Parents were told we can send your child to Bailey but chances are they will be in a larger sized class, it is not a bi-lingual school so there is not necessarily a bi-lingual teacher there. Carrigan has a Title I math and reading teacher and the class size is smaller. The educational program is there and the opportunity to be successful is there; it is a very safe environment. We are accommodating 30 of the 60 requests. I have to compliment Dr. Cordone as he is tight for space and is making a new schedule to accommodate these students. Mr. Winkle will also make a new bus schedule as we have to provide the transportation for these kids from Title I monies. We want to have a schedule ready for them and a bus stop itinerary so the students feel welcome when they go to the new schools.

Eric Murillo asked if we have Title I money going to the schools. Neil said for the transportation. We have to set aside money to transport the students. Eric asked if you have an ESL child and there is no bi-lingual teacher how are parents told about this; Neil said there is an ESL teacher but it is not a bi-lingual school. You can not use Title I money to pay for that teacher. We as a school district are obligated to offer the choice and we are leaving it up to the teachers and administrators at those schools to talk to the parents and give them the pros and cons.

Howie Horvath said it sounds like you can say no if there is a space issue. Neil said yes, you can limit it. Also what we did was we give kids who are economically disadvantaged: black, ESL and other sub groups the opportunity to go before giving kids who are scoring at goal or being successful the opportunity. Eric asked why take the economically disadvantaged first. Neil said because most of the other subgroups fit into that subgroup and that is also what makes you qualify as a Title I School; free and reduced lunch.

Howie asked about the 30 that didn't go was it of their volition? No, we picked the criteria and they were sent a letter saying they were not chosen for various reasons.

Howie said it sounds like the only reason you can say no is due to space and asked if there were other reasons. No, the space, number of teachers and classroom size would be the only reason I know of. My sense is there is room in the school but not enough teachers is that right? Neil said when they did the budget we wanted to keep class size down in Carrigan so Bailey for the first time in 22 years has more kids than Carrigan. Howie said it is not physical space it is teacher student ratio is there a cap? Yes you can't go over 30 per classroom. The 6<sup>th</sup> grade class at Bailey has about 250 kids. We are working closely with the State because this is the first time we have been faced with this issue. Bailey will receive the students next Monday.

Year 1 in need of improvement entitles us to professional development 5 days at each school and 5 days central office training. The state put out this initiative. This is the state's effort to promote systemic school and district improvement. This will help the two schools involved and when the coordinators and central office people go through the training it will benefit the other schools and will get the whole district involved in this initiative.

Howie stated lets hope this doesn't happen but what would year 3 entail? Year 3 is when you actually start some school restructure. We really want to focus on this now. Good news is the standards stay the same for the next two cycles so we have a good opportunity to meet those proficiency requirements.

Because Carrigan is at year 2 we have to offer supplemental educational services. We can offer after school programs or programs that take place during the school year. We are looking at 2 possibilities. The State has contracted with and approved Sylvan Learning Center and A+ Learning Center and we would pay out of our Title I money.

Toni Paine asked if the Community House program qualified. No was the response.

Sylvan doesn't come to our facilities we would have to pay transportation costs. A+ Learning Center in New Haven on Whalley Avenue out of Shelton will come in and train our teachers to use their system. This would be to our advantage for our teachers to offer the services after school.

Howie Horvath asked if Neil had heard about RTI Program (Response to Intervention) Yes, they are ready to send a team of teachers to a 3 day training session in Philadelphia. He also has received information from ACES on what they are offering. Howie stated he was in Philadelphia meeting with the Superintendent and would be very happy to share information on the program they are running with Neil if he gets him the information. Howie stated this is a very effective program and he will be going there on a regular basis and will be happy to help.

Jerry asked if the children that move to another school will they have the opportunity to remain in that school. Yes, once a student is moved we do not like to move him/her back.

A further discussion ensued.

### **C.1.b Board**

Sean Maher congratulated Mr. Cavanno and the rest of the team for the great stuff that happened last week at Freshman Academy.

Please stop by and see the progress being made at the high school and the progress that has been made. Everything is being done so methodically it looks terrific.

Toni Paine stated she was unaware that the Winkle Bus Company does a trial run the day before school opens rather than have the students standing their and I am very impressed by this. This has been done for a number of years and I am impressed with the Winkle Bus Company.

Eric Murillo is uncomfortable with the children who are being transferred to different schools. He would like to be more informed about who they are and their backgrounds because he is concerned they will be lost in another school if there are no resources for them. Neil said he would give Eric a list and stated that nobody wanted to loose any kids and they did their best to convince them to remain where they were able to receive more resources. He agrees with Eric that is always a risk when you move a child.

Mark Palmieri stated there was a correction to be made under information F-1 Theresa Holland will be at Bailey not Forest as stated. (Correction made to agenda).

This Saturday at 10:30 at Pagels Field they are having a dedication of the field for John A. Vinci and Michael J. Galbicsek.

On Saturday, September 27<sup>th</sup> at Oak Grove, from 12 to 4:00 PM they are having the Homecoming Festival which does raise money for all the clubs and sports but the main reason is to showcase the high school.

I am sure all the board members have received letters from anonymous about a complaint which Mr. Cavallaro has addressed with DCF as DCF was also written to. We have stated numerous times that anyone who writes letters and threatens to go to the paper because we are not doing anything should know that they didn't give their name or put what the problem was so we can not follow up with them. The person they complained about also wrote a letter. We don't address this type of issue. If a person wants to put their name or come before this board we will address it; that is what terrorists do they make threats and we don't accept threats.

The other issue that I want to address is to Mr. Cavallaro with regard to his status with Dr. Ann Druzolowski. She is fine with the contract as it stands. The two areas we have to adjust will be the start date of November 1, 2008 and the salary will be pro-rated and the percentage of raises 2<sup>nd</sup> year 2.84% and the 3<sup>rd</sup> year is 2.77% consistent with the raise in the administrator's contract.

Toni Paine made the suggestion that seeing that we all have the contract and if there are no objections we can add it to tonight's agenda.

Toni Paine made the motion 08-197 to add the Assistant Superintendent's contract to tonight's agenda

Jerry Calabritto seconded the motion for discussion purposes to get it on the agenda

All in favor

Motion 08-197 Assistant Superintendent's Contract is added to tonight's agenda.

### **C.1.c. Committee**

Rob Saley again mentioned he thought it would be a good idea to move some board meetings to various schools to get better parent involvement. He was told we did try this but it was less successful than expected and there were less people present at the board meeting. There is also a problem with necessary equipment to record the minutes and the microphones necessary to hear board members and public speakers. If it was advertised properly Rob thought this would work. We could publish a schedule. Just a couple of board meetings throughout the year would be OK. When we publish our meeting notice we will note it then and also post it in the school itself.

He would also like more board members to get involved in the Breast Cancer plunge this February. Last year two board members came. It is for a very good cause.

Eric looked at the space in the basement of Carrigan School (IT Room) that the Superintendent mentioned and was very impressed. The good news is that it may be a reimbursable project from the state. The engineers will be involved shortly.

Howie Horvath thanked Student Representative Shamsi Aysha for attending tonight's meeting and asked her the upper class members' impression of the Freshman Academy. Shamsi stated that at first there was negative feedback but now her feeling is that it is a good way to introduce the kids to their new environment and get them to come together and bond.

Shamsi stated she participated in (Mr. Stancil stated she was chosen) a six week program at Yale Med School and she made a presentation on obesity. She was asked to come back to a board meeting and give this presentation. She will do this. (applause)

### **D.1. Approval of Minutes:**

**D.1.a.** West Haven Board of Education Regular Meeting, August 18, 2008  
7:00 p.m. at the Blake Building (enclosure)

**D.1.b.** West Haven Board of Education Special Meeting (Technology),  
August 18, 2008 6:00 p.m. at the Blake Building (enclosure)

**D.1.c.** West Haven Board of Education Special Meeting (Assistant Superintendent), August 22, 2008 6:00 p.m. at the Blake Building (enclosure)

**D.2. Resignations (Certified)**

**08-191** Scott R. McFarland, Special Ed Teacher Inclusion  
Effective: August 26, 2008  
Reason: Personal

**D.3. Resignations (Non-Certified)**

**08-192** Jeanne Joiner, Para-Special Ed – Washington  
Effective: August 20, 2008  
Reason: Personal

**08-193** Lisa Hansen, Para-building – Washington  
Effective: September 2, 2008  
Reason: Personal

M. Toni Paine made a motion to approve D.1. – D.3. inclusive

T. Sean seconded the motion

No discussion

All in favor

D.1. – D.3. inclusive is approved

**D.4. New Hires (Certified)**

**08-194** Raffaella Fronc, 63 Chalker Road, Durham, CT 06422  
K-12 Science Coordinator  
Effective: September 3, 2008  
Salary: \$88,124.55

Mark stated we had a recommendation from the Interview Committee earlier this evening.

M. Toni Paine made a motion to approve D.4. 08-194

Eric Murillo seconded the motion

No discussion

All in favor

Item 08-194 is approved

**08-195** Christopher Onofrio, 600 Washington Avenue, Unit B8,  
North Haven, CT 06473  
Math Teacher – Carrigan Middle School  
Effective: August 26, 2008

Salary: \$60,234.84 (Step 9 BS+60)

T. Sean Maher made a motion to approve D.4. 08-195

Andy DePalma seconded the motion

Discussion: Rob Saley asked if this was one of those special shortage areas. Neil stated yes, this is a math position and this person had many years of experience and wanted to come back to teaching and we had to entice him with more money. We were getting to the last week of school and didn't have any person certified to teach math at Carrigan.

All in favor

Item D.4. 08-195 is approved

#### **D.5. New Hires (Non-Certified)**

**08-196** Joyce Pagano, 383 Benham Hill Road, West Haven, CT 06516  
6 Hour Production Worker – WHHS  
Effective: September 3, 2008  
Salary: AFSME Contract (Step 1)

T. Sean Maher made a motion to approve D.4. 08-196

Patrick Egolum seconded the motion

Discussion: None

All in favor

Item 08-196 is approved

#### **E. New Business**

#### **F. Informational**

Correction to F.1. was made earlier.

Mark Palmieri asked for a motion to go into **Executive Session**

Jerry Calabritto made the motion

Sean Maher seconded the motion

All in favor

Meeting went into **Executive Session** at 8:45 PM

Andy DePalma made the motion to end **Executive Session**

Patrick Egolum seconded the motion

All in favor

**Executive Session** ended at 9:13 PM

Board Meeting resumed at 9:14 PM

Mark Palmieri asked for a motion to approve 08-197 Assistant Superintendent's contract

Andy DePalma made a motion to approve 08-197 Assistant Superintendent's Contract

T. Sean Maher seconded the motion

No Discussion

All in favor

Assistant Superintendent's Contract is approved.

Mark Palmieri asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting  
Andy DePalma made a motion to adjourn the meeting  
T. Sean Maher seconded the motion  
All in favor

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Marylou Amendola  
Board Secretary