

## Wilbur Cross High School

### School Governance Council Meeting - April 6, 2011

Present: Peggy Moore (principal), Rosa Rodriguez (parent), Ronni Rabin (parent), Sheree Thompson (parent), Valencia Goodridge (parent), Carolyn Wilson-Carr (parent), Kathy Monahan (teacher), Chris Kafoglis (teacher), Ashley Yanyac (teacher), Derek Stephenson (teacher), Joe Rodriguez (Connecticut State Department of Education resource person)

Peggy Moore called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m., saying that Joe Rodriguez would be co-facilitating this meeting. Joe began with a discussion of the legislation.

#### Responsibilities

School Governance Councils were created by the state's recent education reform law (Public Act 10-111) to enable parents, school staff, students (where appropriate) and community leaders to work together to improve student achievement in the state's lowest performing schools. School Governance Councils serve in an advisory capacity and are charged with assisting the school administration in making programmatic and operational changes to improve the school's achievement.

(<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2678&Q=322630&sdePNavCtr>)

Joe then discussed the members and their respective terms:

Principal	(non-voting member)	Serves for the entire time of the principalship
Students (2)	(non-voting members)	Serve 1-year terms
Teachers (5)		Serve 2-year terms
Parents/Guardians (7)		Serve 2-year terms
Community leaders (2)		Serve 2-year terms

By law, School Governance Council members can be re-elected once. Furthermore, parents/guardians on the SGC must have children enrolled at the school. Because it is better not to have the entire slate of members be replaced in any year, the SGC will have to decide which of this year's members who would ordinarily serve 2-year terms will serve for only 1 year. This discussion and decision was reserved for a later meeting. Also, it was agreed that the 2011 – 2012 school year will be considered the first year of the members' terms.

Joe Rodriguez provided an overview of the School Governance Council (SGC) legislation, the purpose of a SGC, which he noted serves as an *advisory group*, the topics that are appropriate for a SGC to discuss, the topics that are inappropriate for discussion by a SGC. He also said that parents on the SGC must be elected through a process that is open to all parents at the school, and students on the SGC are similarly elected by a process involving all students at the school.

Areas that *are appropriate* for a SGC:

- Analyze student data as it relates to the School Improvement Plan (S.I.P.)
- Review the draft of the school's annual budget before the principal submits it
- Participate in the interview process for the next principal of the school and for the hiring of any other administrators for the school, and reporting on the interviews to the superintendent and the board of education
- Assist the principal in making programmatic and operational changes that may result in improved student achievement
- Develop and approve a written parental involvement policy that outlines the roles of parents/guardians
- Work with school administrators in developing and approving a school compact for parents, legal guardians and students that outlines the schools goals and academic focus and that identifies ways that parents/guardians and school personnel can build a partnership to improve student learning

Areas of discussion that are not appropriate for a SGC:

- Managing the school
- Supervising the staff
- Entering contracts or making purchases
- Discussing matters among individual teachers or students or parents
- Matters involving student admission to the school
- Matters involving classroom allocations or student assignment

One SGC function that does not apply to Wilbur Cross is the power to vote to recommend reconstituting a school if the school isn't performing to the satisfaction of the SGC after three years. This does not apply to the Wilbur Cross SGC because Cross has already been reconstituted through the assignment of a new principal and the reorganization of the school.

The community leaders are elected differently. One SGC member asked for a definition of "community leader," and Joe suggested that a working definition is a person who would likely be known by many people within the school community. In the case of Wilbur Cross, since students come from many neighborhoods throughout the city, there is less of a geographic sense of the definition. However, Peggy Moore and others suggested that Fair Haven, which is the home of many Wilbur Cross students, and which has a number of community leaders, might be a place to seek candidates. She added, however, that we want to try not to have both representatives come from the same area of the city.

There was some discussion of the process for identifying community leaders candidates. Joe first suggested that people ask individuals if they might be interested in being nominated, but the SGC decided not to do it this way, since it would be awkward to ask someone to run and then explain to one or more candidates that they had not been elected. Outcome: The decision was not to contact potential candidates in advance of the election, but to bring names to the next meeting, and the group will decide which are acceptable candidates. It will then vote for the two seats on the SGC. Peggy Moore will then notify the candidates of their election. In the event a candidate declines the seat to which he/she has been elected, the SGC will have an alternate that it will appoint.

One of the roles of a SGC is to analyze data with regard to the School Improvement Plan (S.I.P.), and so Peggy Moore raised the discussion of some data that she considers especially important: student attendance, specifically, excessive absenteeism. She provided handouts of average daily attendance for the school (approximately 86%), and she also provided the same data by grade level and demographic subgroups. In addition, the percentage of students with excessive absences (10 or more) is nearly 1/3 of the school. All of these are particularly important because if students are not in regular attendance, they won't benefit from the instructional and programmatic improvements that the school will offer.

There was a discussion about reasons for student absences, as well as the interventions that school staff employ, including the efforts of the truancy officers. This is a discussion that the SGC will continue at the next meeting.

Ms. Monahan discussed a credit retrieval program for Wilbur Cross seniors who are short credits for graduation, thereby increasing the graduation rate and reducing the number of potential school dropouts.

The next meeting is scheduled for 5:30 p.m., on May 4, 2011. Peggy Moore will invite the school's truancy officers to attend. Teacher Derek Stephenson and parent Carolyn Wilson-Carr have been selected to co-facilitate the SGC meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

(These minutes were written by Kathy Monahan and Joe Rodriguez.)