

These minutes were sent to all members of the SGC, affording them the opportunity to correct errors, but they will not be official until the SGC members formally vote at the next meeting, September 7, 2011.

Wilbur Cross High School

School Governance Council

Minutes of Meeting, June 1, 2011

Present: Kelly Barrick (parent), Valencia Goodridge (parent), Chris Kafoglis (teacher), Kathy Monahan (teacher), Peggy Moore (principal), Carol Orr (parent), Ronni Rabin (parent), Sheree Thompson (parent), Derek Stephenson (teacher), Anthony Verderame (teacher), Abraham Lincoln (parent), Ashley Yanyac (teacher)

Also in attendance: Jaime Ramos (assistant principal), Joe Rodriguez (Connecticut State Department of Education resource person)

Absent: Rosa Rodriguez (parent), Carolyn Wilson-Carr (parent)

Derek Stephenson called the meeting to order at 5:40. He noted that no one had emailed any corrections to the draft minutes Joe Rodriguez had sent, and so he asked for and received approval of the minutes for the May 4, 2011, School Governance Council meeting. As a reminder for everyone, Derek then reviewed the meeting norms we agreed to accept at our last meeting. He added that while meetings are scheduled to last one hour, we may agree occasionally to extend the meetings by 15 minutes. An alternative to this is to table an item for discussion at the next scheduled meeting.

Although parents and teachers are to serve two-year terms, in order to avoid drastic SGC membership turnover after the first two years, Derek then asked for volunteers to serve one-year terms. The parents who volunteered to serve one-year terms are: Ronni Rabin, Carol Orr and Sheree Thompson. The teachers who volunteered to serve one-year terms are: Chris Kafoglis and Anthony Verderame. Going forward, terms will be for two years.

The next discussion was the election of community representatives. At the last meeting, members voted for nominees, agreeing that Peggy Moore would invite to SGC membership the two nominees receiving the greatest number of votes. Dr. Fay Brown will be one representative. However, two nominees tied for the next highest number of votes, and so there was a run-off election. The winner was Erik Clemons, whom Peggy will invite to membership on the SGC.

The next discussion was for student representatives. Derek said that the interested students are current seniors, and therefore they are ineligible. The student council will run an election, open to voting by all Wilbur Cross students.

Derek then returned to the SGC discussion about truancy, first reviewing the previous meeting's presentation by the truancy officers. He discussed a recent SGC workshop, at which presenters discussed the value of home visits in addressing truancy. He added that student surveys reveal issues that students have with school, thereby informing the adult decision makers about concerns they might address. Another area of concern is the transition year, grade 9, which is such a difficult year for students who have been used to closer attention and more intimate environments of their elementary schools. A

These minutes were sent to all members of the SGC, affording them the opportunity to correct errors, but they will not be official until the SGC members formally vote at the next meeting, September 7, 2011.

strategy to consider is meeting with grade 8 students and talking to them about the importance of attendance. The workshop also discussed as valuable parent resource centers, as well as informally meeting and greeting parents as they drop off their children at school, having a quick few words with the parents about the SGC. Spirit days with parents and other parent-student activities were suggested.

Derek also discussed ideas for making ours an effective council, one of which is serving as a bridge for all of the school's committees. The SGC can also be a communications tool for the school, letting parents feel like part of the community. It can also convey the shared vision of improved attendance and it can share good news, fostering the celebration of what is good in the school.

Ronni Rabin followed up on the suggestion about meeting parents when they drop off their children. She mentioned years ago that all administrators would be outside the school and would make personal contact with students and parents, and she said that the principal knew all of the students by name. She said that this matters to both the students and the parents. As a parent, she felt a sense of friendliness and safety. Carol Orr responded in kind, saying she would like to see the principal out there saying good morning. She suggested having someone at the city bus stop to keep students from getting off and going in the wrong direction (away from the school) in the morning. Kelly Barrick said that kids notice the small things and they enjoy being noticed. She asked about statistics on parent-teacher nights. Peggy said that parent turnout is about 25-30%, very low. She talked about incentives to students that the faculty offered, but the resulting parent turnout wasn't much improved.

Kathy mentioned a spirit day (or night) with various types of enjoyable games and competitions so that students might see adults in a different role. Joe Rodriguez mentioned the great success of just such a program at his former school. Anthony Verderame mentioned a variety of activities to entice parents to the building, suggesting a cooking demonstration by the culinary arts teacher as an example.

Derek talked about improving morale by having school bumper stickers, but not only for honor roll students. He even suggested stickers to demonstrate teacher pride in the school: "I am a proud WCHS Educator." Kelly Barrick suggested awarding pins to students for various accomplishments and allowing the students to wear their accumulated pins on their graduation robes. Kathy Monahan suggested that such pins not be limited to academics because the goal ought to be to raise the morale of all students, including those who are not as successful in academics.

Ronni suggested a student survey before deciding about incentives so that we can learn about what would best motivate students. There's a need to generate as many creative ideas as possible. Derek suggested tackling a survey as soon as possible next year, making one of the first SGC tasks the generation of survey items. He said that the students want Cross to be a good school, and they want to succeed. There was some discussion of when to conduct a survey. Ronni said that there is a need to find out what the students are thinking. Joe Rodriguez suggested using the student survey results from the recent district school climate survey as the starting point to find what concerns students, using those results to probe further into the issues.

These minutes were sent to all members of the SGC, affording them the opportunity to correct errors, but they will not be official until the SGC members formally vote at the next meeting, September 7, 2011.

Derek mentioned the State Department of Education School Governance Council program that will take place in Cromwell on June 15, asking those interested to let him know after the meeting. At least eight people are interested. Derek will make the necessary registration arrangements.

Derek said that the district is developing district SGC by-laws that the Wilbur Cross SGC can tweak as necessary. He also mentioned a major task for the SGC next year will be development of a parental involvement handbook.

Valencia Goodridge asked about posting minutes on the website. Joe responded that the first meeting has already been posted and the second meeting would be posted after this meeting because he didn't want to post them until after they had been approved by the membership. Valencia also asked if the SGC will address the achievement gap. Peggy said that we first need to see the CAPT results and we need to address attendance concerns.

Derek announced that the next meeting will be on September 7, at 5:30 p.m.

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