

**WALLINGFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION
INSTRUCTIONAL COMMITTEE MEETING
Monday – January 7, 2013
BOE Conference Room
Mark T. Sheehan High School**

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Cei called the meeting to order at 7:11 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

J. Cei, C. Mansfield, J. Marrone, R. McKay, C. Miller, P. Reynolds, M. Votto

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT

J. Andreson, R. Backus, E. Cohn, D. Dayo, M. Deptula, J. Guarino, N. Harrington, R. Mancusi, B. McCully, S. Menzo, J. Murphy, K. Ripa, L. Winters

II. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Instructional Committee Meeting minutes of December 3, 2012 and December 10, 2012 were accepted as presented.

III. PRESENTATION

A. New STEP Criteria – STEP Teachers

Ellen Cohn, Assistant Superintendent, thanked Nancy Harrington, Jim Andreson, Karen Ripa, Deb Dayo and Jan Murphy for all their work in putting together this evening's proposal. Ms. Harrington stated there are two populations our district serves in Wallingford – A Gifted Learner or A Creative Learner. Jim Andreson did a PowerPoint presentation - Modifying Criteria for Identifying Academically Gifted Students in Wallingford. The current STEP admission criteria is based on points: 6 points are given for scoring in the 95th percentile on the OLSAT (the school-administered aptitude test given in grades 3, 5, and 7), 0-12 points are given for classroom grades in math and language arts and 1 point is given for task commitment (input from teachers who have experience with a student). A minimum of 17 points is needed for admission to the STEP program.

Mr. Andreson explained changes in the gifted criteria need to happen because the OLSAT (Otis Lennon School Ability Test) is used too strictly as a "gate keeper", there is too little teacher input, we are collecting the wrong data from teachers, there is staff support for a change, and we do not currently follow the best practices for identifying gifted students. There are also limitations of the OLSAT including a "confidence interval" issue, the test is only given on one day and does not measure all aspects of giftedness (it ignores physical, intellectual, emotional and social well-being), it is not in line with Best practices, if a student misses the cutoff there is no route to identification, and as a timed test it does not measure persistence.

All staff was surveyed regarding this change and 91% of staff believes some students are misidentified, we are missing students, we are identifying students erroneously. Staff stated they are willing to "go the extra mile" to ensure accuracy of identification.

Research was conducted on Best practice from a variety of sources and it was recommended using multiple methods for identifying students. There should be a use of more subjective measures than objective measures along with incorporating a rating scale that recognizes most areas of giftedness. There also needs to be a strong teacher/parent/student involvement in the entire process. The use of GRS (Gifted Rating Scales) are most statistically reliable for determining giftedness – they are quick to administer, there is no training needed, there are not affected by length of time a teacher knows a student, and they are inexpensive.

Mr. Andreson stated that based on the group's research they developed a proposed definition of giftedness for Wallingford – *Academically-gifted students are those who stand out among their grade-level peers by demonstrating a combination of high intellectual potential, academic ability, creativity, motivation, or leadership that requires additional exploration and nurturing in the area of curriculum and instruction.* Along with the proposed definition the group proposed an identification process comprised of four stages - Stage 1: Implement a broad screening test, Stage 2: Implement gifted rating scales, Stage 3: Gather additional data, and Stage 4: Assemble a committee who will make the decisions identifying gifted students.

The unanimous consensus of the Board was to send the proposed adoption of the new STEP Criteria to the Board of Education for action at its next meeting.

IV. POLICY

A. Proposed Revision of Field Trips Policy – IICA to Field Trips and Community Service Policy - 6153

Jan Guarino, Assistant Superintendent, stated the revisions to this policy arose from concern regarding unsanctioned trips abroad by employees of the Board of Education. This proposed revision strengthens the language about behavioral expectations proceeding and while on a field trip. It includes appropriate levels of approval for each type of field trip, allowing international travel if properly vetted and approved by the Board of Education. It updates and aligns authorization for medication and disallows the use of private vehicles to transport students. Mrs. McKay suggested there be a standardized checklist of questions the Board should be asking each time a request for overnight or international travel comes before the Board. This checklist should then become part of the policy/regulation. Mrs. Mansfield noted regarding international travel, situations abroad change every day and to protect all interests when security level changes in any destination country or even in this country, she would like to see a stop clause stating the trip is postponed indefinitely until there is a safety level that can be secured internationally. All questions regarding this concern should also be added to the proposed check list.

The unanimous consensus of the Board was to send the proposed adoption of revised Field Trips Policy – IICA to Field Trips and Community Service Policy - 6153 to the Board of Education for action at its next meeting.

B. Proposed Revision of Field Trips Regulation – IICA-R to Field Trips Regulation – 6153a

The unanimous consensus of the Board was to send the proposed adoption of revised Field Trips Regulation – IICA to Field Trips and Community Service Policy – 6153a to the Board of Education for action at its next meeting.

V. DISCUSSION

A. CCSS ELA Update on Middle School

Ellen Cohn stated starting February 7th at the middle school level, the first English Language Arts curricular units based on the common core will be introduced.

B. Security Update

Dr. Menzo stated he added this item to the agenda to address concerns about security issues. During the holiday break he met with the police chief, the fire chief, the principals, and central office staff to update everyone about what had been done in this district. On December 28, 2012 he invited parents who have expertise in law enforcement and security systems along with Chet Miller and Kathy Castelli, to meet and discuss four elements of security. The BOE maintenance department is in the process of installing buzzer systems at both high schools; the only schools in town currently without them. Visitors will have to clearly state their name, purpose and show a photo ID to the security camera before being buzzed into the building. Schools will be issuing proximity cards including photo identification to all staff members. On the back of the cards will be security tips teachers can follow in case of a fire or shooter situation.

Dr. Menzo along with Mrs. McKay, the mayor, the police chief and representatives of the fire department recently attended a state symposium on school security at the Aqua Turf Club in Plantsville, CT which focused on enhancing building security and policy changes necessary to improve school safety. It included resources for talking with parents and covered drills and exercises, vulnerability assessments, and integrating planning for special-needs students.

The Board also addressed concerns about security at basketball games and other after-hours activities on school grounds. Mr. Miller asked if buzzer systems will be used after hours and Dr. Menzo stated they will not be used. He stated it is impossible to lock all buildings 24/7 and schools must maintain a balance of security while still keep the feeling of a community center where students can feel safe. Mrs. McKay suggested having coaches sign something stating they are responsible for making sure the area of a school building is secure before leaving for the evening. Mrs. Mansfield noted it's a "very loose network" of personnel in school buildings after hours. Dr. Menzo stated the issue of security after hours could be resolved if the district hires personnel. He is looking into where fire doors can be installed without violating the town's building code and/or enabling certain areas to be blocked off after hours. All principals have performed security audits of their buildings and have sent concerns about building safety to maintenance, the information technology department and to Dr. Menzo.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairperson Cei adjourned the meeting at 8:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Betsy McCully
Assistant Superintendent's Secretary