

**WALLINGFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION  
INSTRUCTIONAL COMMITTEE MEETING  
Monday – March 4, 2013  
VO-AG Community Room  
Lyman Hall High School**

**MINUTES**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Cei called the meeting to order at 5:55 p.m.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT**

M. Brooder, K. Castelli, J. Cei, C. Mansfield, R. McKay, C. Miller

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT**

R. Backus, E. Cohn, P. Flinter, J. Guarino, S. Menzo, R. Mancusi, B. McCully, S. Wong

**II. DISCUSSION**

**A. Discussion and Video Conference with Carole S. Dweck, Ph.D. @ Stanford University – Author of *Mindset, The New Psychology of Success***

Chairperson Cei welcomed the audience to the meeting and introduced Dr. Menzo, Superintendent of Schools, who informed everyone that Dr. Carole Dweck would be answering nine questions which he has prepared as part of the video conference. Dr. Dweck is one of the world's leading researchers in the field of student motivation. Her research highlights the critical role of mindsets in student achievement and shows how praise for intelligence or talent can undermine motivation and learning. After she was done speaking and addressing Dr. Menzo's questions, she answered several questions from the audience.

Dr. Menzo also thanked our sponsors – MidState Medical Center, Anthem Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Quest Diagnostics, Component Engineers, Gale Development Services and White Way Cleaners – who have been very kind and generous this year to the Wallingford Public Schools through providing donations which has allowed the district to have an Innovation Team. He thanked all the pizza restaurants who graciously provided pizza for this event - Amore Apizza, Stella Restaurant & Pizza, Family Pizza, Colony Pizza House and Restaurant, East Side Pizza Palace and Oakdale Pizza. The Innovation Team members were introduced by Dr. Menzo – Jan Murphy, Kate O'Donnell and Patty Pursell. He noted these three staff members have surpassed all his expectations when this project was first discussed last year. The Board of Education was immediately “on board” and supportive from the very beginning of this initiative.

Dr. Menzo started the presentation by asking Dr. Dweck what mindset is. Dr. Dweck stated mindset is a belief that humans have basic talents and abilities. Often people think their basic talents and abilities are comprised of a certain amount of fixed traits. This is a fixed mindset which makes children afraid of learning. They become so worried about appearing dumb they often stop learning. Children/students with a growth mindset believe the most fundamental capacity to learn can be transformed through education and will help to develop their abilities throughout their lives.

When children have a fixed mindset they are continually worried about looking smart and not looking dumb. They stop working, develop a belief that effort is not good, and truly believe their peers who have ability require no effort to achieve and become successful.

Once these children experience setbacks and mistakes they start to believe they have no ability to learn. Students who have a growth mindset have a desire to learn and develop their abilities. They also value and like effort – they believe even geniuses have to work hard for their great discoveries. When these students experience setbacks, they look at each experience as a learning tool for future challenges and tend to focus on the process as a means to success in the future. Dr. Dweck stated one area mindset comes from is the praise we give to children. She has researched over a dozen studies and found that praising children’s intelligence puts them in a fixed mindset and makes them vulnerable. She continued to state children should always focus on the process of learning; which guides them how in becoming successful in the future.

When students are taught about a growth mindset they learn about the plasticity of the brain. Each time a child pushes out of their comfort zone to learn new things, their brains form new connections and over time these children become smarter. This teaches them that effort and difficulty are actually making them smarter. Students who gain in IQ points show greater density of the neurons in the relevant parts of the brain. Those who lost IQ points show decreased density of the neurons in the relevant parts of the brain.

Dr. Dweck continued by stating mindset is measured by asking students very simple questions where students must agree or disagree. Through a series of questions it is determined which mindset they agree with consistently. She has worked with students to change mindset through a program called “Brainology” which teaches a growth mindset to adolescents. Guidelines to begin to change one’s mindset are as follows. She suggested try and hear that fixed mindset voice in your head. Recognize there is a choice how to interpret challenges, setbacks and criticisms in a fixed mindset manner or in a growth mindset manner. Developing a growth mindset in students is not just about their academic achievement. Students with a growth mindset display less aggression than students with a fixed mindset. Everyone has the potential to change. Growth mindset is about teamwork; people at all levels coming together to create a growth mindset community in which everyone believes in their own potential for growth and development. Dr. Dweck spent the last half hour of her presentation answering several questions from audience members.

## **V. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Chairperson Cei adjourned the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Betsy McCully  
Assistant Superintendent’s Secretary