

**WALLINGFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION  
INSTRUCTIONAL COMMITTEE MEETING  
Monday – April 1, 2013  
Board of Education Conference Room  
Mark T. Sheehan High School**

**MINUTES**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Cei called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT**

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

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT**

E. Cohn, M. Distante, W. Eaton, S. Lorenzo, J. Guarino, R. Mancusi, B. McCully, Z. Popko

**II. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**

Instructional Committee Meeting minutes of February 4, 2013, March 4, 2013 and March 20, 2013 were accepted as presented.

**III. PRESENTATION**

**A. Guidance/School Counseling Program Review Report**

Jan Guarino, Assistant Superintendent for Personnel, stated in June 2012 Wallingford engaged CREC (Capitol Region Education Council) to begin a guidance audit/evaluation which was completed and presented to Wallingford leadership in January 2013. Margaret MacDonald and Sheila Nussbaum from CREC conducted the audit and reviewed their findings in a powerpoint presentation to BOE members and school counseling staff. The three questions posed by Wallingford's leadership were: 1.) How could Wallingford use best school counselor practices in organization structure, processes, services and a service delivery model? – 2.) What skills and training would be needed? – 3.) How could Wallingford work with stakeholders to implement best practices? Based on these three questions, a methodology was developed to decide what data would be reviewed. The data reviewed was both quantitative and qualitative. Focus interviews were conducted with school counselors, assistant principals and other personnel. Students and parents of grade 11 and 12 students were surveyed. In addition, a review of curriculum documents, materials, processes, websites and programs was conducted. District and state data was reviewed in order to do some comparative analysis.

The Connecticut Comprehensive School Counseling standards which were approved by the Connecticut State Department of Education in 2008 are truly the foundation of any school counseling program. Counselors deliver services and provide skill building and support in three general areas: 1.) Personal/Social Content which includes respect for self and others, goal setting and attainment, and survival and safety skills. 2.) Academic Content which provides skills for learning, school success and academics related to life success. 3.) Career Content encourages students to investigate careers and career success and the relationship of school and work.

The focus of these three areas must be the delivery method of services to students. There are three general areas of delivery – curriculum, individual planning and responsive systems. Typically curriculum delivery is done in the classroom. Professional standards state it should be developmental based on the needs of the students, it should be sequential in all three components grades 6-12, and it should relate to individual success plans created for each student (portfolio). In Wallingford there has not been a needs assessment of students done in recent years. There is a lack of continuity between the middle schools and the high schools, in some places there is a lack of connection between the curriculum and individual planning and there was more curriculum planning in the middle schools than in the high schools. The middle school counselors had better access to students and spent more time in the classrooms.

The next area for delivery of services is individual planning and professional standards state it should be a systematic delivery of planning activities for achieving individual goals. Individual portfolios should be maintained from grades 6-12 which allows counselors to track student progress. In Wallingford there is a need to reassess individual activities and relate it to individual needs, there is a lack of individual record keeping (portfolio), there are more individual planning meetings at the high schools with students and more classroom meetings with students at the middle schools. There also is a need for continuity and consistency aligned to a singular vision.

The last area for delivery of services is responsive services which is probably the strongest in Wallingford. The professional standards state these services should be timely, include appropriate procedures and activities and services should respond to individual needs. Prevention and intervention services are delivered in collaboration with teachers, administrators and student support/clinical services staff through group and individual counseling. In Wallingford policies and procedure need to be reviewed for consistency and documented. School counselors in all schools have good collaboration with faculty, administration and faculty who provide support services.

The next step was to have school counselors do a one-week time study in September 2012 which reviewed how they were using their time. Direct services included individual student planning, curriculum delivery and responsive services. Indirect and non-guidance services included meetings, planning and system support, responding to emails/phone calls and working with staff members on student planning and then any non-guidance activities. The national standards model states counselors should spend 80% of their time with direct services and 20% with indirect services. In this model there is no room for non-guidance activities. In Wallingford at both the middle schools and at the high schools 10% of school counselors' time is spent on non-guidance activities. At the high schools 47% of time is spent on direct services, while 43% is spent on indirect services.

Program management and accountability is the next area reviewed and it was discovered there is one school counseling department at each high school (each with a director) and no director at either middle school counseling department. Middle school counselors report to the building principal. The high school directors don't always agree on policies, procedure and priorities. This results in stalled progress with the integration of technology, professional development needs not being addressed and determining how to address student success plans and what role the counselors will take in their department. Surveys were conducted and 28 % of the 198 parents surveyed are not satisfied with the help they received in the past from school counselors. Of the 375 seniors surveyed, 98 responded to the question on satisfaction with direct service: 26% are not happy with the one to one help and college counseling and 44% are not happy with career counseling. The caseloads in Wallingford are right on par with other districts that are comparable in size which indicates it's not a matter with how many students are serviced but how time is allocated.

It was determined the greatest needs in Wallingford for the school counseling department are to establish a unified vision and mission for the school counseling department which is in align with the schools. There needs to be a greater collaborative and responsive approach with all stakeholders and greater use of and collaboration with community resources. Parents and school faculty need to see school counselors as leaders in their school – taking on leadership roles.

Commendations included in the report saw counselors' responding to immediate needs and concerns of students in all four schools and care deeply for their students. There has been summer curriculum time provided – middle schools have developed well planned sequential activities. Counselors are using Naviance and the curriculum scope and sequence was developed at each level. Both middle and high schools websites provide good information for students and parents.

The recommendations included in this report was for Wallingford to establish a three-year plan involving organizational structure, processes, services and a service delivery model and community involvement. Organizational structure must include leadership of the department which is a high priority. The department needs to increase visibility in both the school environment and in the community. There needs to be a reorganization of counselor time and responsibilities and an improvement of career development services. A career/college center should be added at each high school. There also is a need to improve communication with parents and stakeholders.

Individual and group counseling at all levels needs to become more structured to achieve consistency and continuity. An effective counselor specific evaluation process should be developed so school counselors are not evaluated as teachers. Wallingford needs to implement team-building along with providing professional development activities for the entire department. A needs assessment of students to better determine appropriate services needs to be implemented.

To truly have a service delivery model in Wallingford the district needs to expand the use of Naviance to include career/college development for students, it must establish collaborative programs to meet the needs of underachieving students, the scope and sequence should expand to a sequential curriculum 6-12 once there is a student needs assessment, add part time clerical support to counseling departments and finally provide more counselor access to students in classrooms; especially at the high school level. School counselors should be encouraged to become involved in professional organizations, they need to expand parent programs and encourage their involvement, an advisory committee of parents and community representatives need to be established, establish a job shadowing program for students and start to improve communication with parents and stakeholders.

A vision and an organizational strategy must be in place along with policies, procedures and technology before effective counseling services can be beneficial to all students.

#### **IV. DISCUSSION**

##### **A. Channel 1 at Dag Hammarskjold and James H. Moran Middle Schools**

Joseph Marrone received a complaint from a parent with respect to the content on Channel 1 which is twelve minute program shown to all middle school students in their homerooms each morning. The program content is news items along with commercials which have product tie-ins. Ellen Cohn, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, reached out to middle school principals and library media specialists to get some insight. Channel 1 is actually a product of CBS news and is a child-centered current events news magazine which is very teenage-oriented. It is free programming which includes public service announcements and advertising. Wallingford first secured Channel 1 through a grant and a cable TV news organization back in the early 1990's. The parental concern is there is more advertising than news content and some of the news content is considered politically objectionable from this particular parent's point of view. If the schools decide to disband the Channel 1 program, then each middle school will lose their video feed for the entire school. There is no charge to the district for this program. Mrs. Cohn stated she will gather additional information concerning this issue and report back to the Board at a future meeting.

#### **V. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Chairperson Cei adjourned the meeting at 8:50 p.m.  
Respectfully submitted,  
Betsy McCully  
Assistant Superintendent's Secretary