

**Special Meeting**  
**WEST HAVEN BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**February 4, 2019**  
**Board Meeting Room**

A Special Meeting of the Board of Education was held on February 4, 2019 in the Board's Meeting Room on the second floor of City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, Connecticut. The meeting was called to order at 5:45 PM by Rosemary Russo, Chairwoman of the Board of Education. The meeting opened with a pledge to the flag.

**BOARD MEMBERS**

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Rosemary Russo, Chairwoman  
Robert Guthrie, Vice Chair  
Susan Walker, Secretary/Treasurer  
Lauren Aceto  
Patrick Leigh  
James W. Morrissey  
Karen Pacelli  
Rosa Richardson

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:** Patricia Libero

**ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:** Neil Cavallaro, Superintendent of Schools  
Dr. Anne Druzolowski, Assistant Superintendent  
Matt Cavallaro, Finance Director

**CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:** Mayor Nancy R. Rossi

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES**

**PRESENT:**

Brendan Carew  
Sumedha Chowdhury  
Julia Walker

**Mackrille and Washington School Presentations**

It was decided they would begin alphabetically and Mackrille would present first. Chairwoman Russo said that you are not limited to 15 minutes. If you need more time we can start our next meeting a little bit later so please don't rush through; we really do want to hear what you have to say.

Judy Drenzek, who has been Principal at Mackrille School for seven years, said she is really enjoying her time there and is honored to be here tonight. All six of the elementary schools are different and we are all doing fantastic, really amazing things in the different buildings. Tonight Judy is highlighting what Mackrille is doing but every building has

their specialty that they are working on. Judy has a great staff that is very hard working and many times come after hours to do family nights etc. Judy projected pictures of the many things they have done during the school year at Mackrille. They had guest readers for their reading challenge. Reading is very big and they have a monthly challenge. They have a board and “Cross a Bridge Into Reading” is a theme so the children that read put little figures on it and they have papers they highlight every month. They started out the school year and Character Ed is very big and they did a book called The Dot Make Your Mark and See Where It Goes. They want to encourage the children that they have a talent, no matter what it is, so let’s talk about it. Each child in the building participates and the board has 325 little dots with a child’s drawing on it. We have one Character Ed Assembly every month and the children actually perform for those assemblies by doing a little skit, or a book is read. This month they are doing citizenship and do essays and share them. We have kids involved because kids listen to kids sometimes more than adults. Family Night information was passed out to the board. They have one almost every month with different activities parents can come to and they also have a couple of after school activities. During Family Art Night parents go to different stations with their children and create activities with stencils, drawings and they do a lot of different activities and can move from station to station. They combined Math and Literacy Night and had a nice turnout. The gym has activities for reading on one side; literacy and math on the other. Many hands on things that support what the children are doing in the classroom were done. They have two luncheons a year; one at Thanksgiving and the little ones K-1 dress up in their Indian Costume or Turkey Costume and the parents have lunch with the children during a 30 minute period throughout the day so all children have this opportunity to sit and eat with their parents. They also have a spring luncheon. They have a garden in their courtyard and in the spring the science teacher plants everything from seeds that were given to them by the American Heart Association. Every year from Pre-K on up students get to plant tomatoes, green beans etc. and during the summer we get to harvest them. We have students from the high school that come to help us weed. Meg Kingston who is in charge of our lunches comes in during the fall and cooks with our students and sometimes they can bring home a couple of things to share with their family. Writing goes along with this too and we are always writing about how the seeds grow and we draw pictures of this. When children do sit ups or other exercises, they sometimes have difficulty doing them so we have Fitness Friday and Judy does an exercise in the morning with them. They have a running club that they did in the fall and they actually ran a 5K and Judy ran with them. Judy’s staff is always coming after school to do activities with the children. They made Gingerbread Houses after school which was actually a teacher’s idea, Miss Memmott started it. The fourth grade got all the materials together and all the children from K through 4 came and created Gingerbread Houses after school which was a fun activity. Writing is very big at Mackrille and they integrate it with math projects, science, social studies and literacy. Sometimes children who don’t express themselves well verbally can really express themselves well in writing so we give them a lot of opportunity. Various other activities were shown and discussed. Another theme is Kindness and How You Treat Others. They always talk about this in school and one of their activities last month was to create a heart and put it on their kindness tree. Three of her fourth grade teachers, Ms. Memmott, Ms. Alves, and Ms. Hummel said it is an honor to be representing our school and thanked the board for honoring them. They

work very collaboratively but also work with everyone else in their building. Their project this month began with the non-fiction unit in November and they taught the children the different text structures that are in non-fiction texts. The children were given different examples and showed different graphic organizers to use to distinguish between the various types of text structures there are. We then broke them into different groups with a different passage for each group and they had to identify the text structure by designing their own graphic organizer or some students wrote mirrored essays to culminate whatever they had read about. They did topics like Komodo Dragons which are of high interest. In social studies they are learning about Native Americans and compared and contrasted long houses vs. teepees; they also did a sequencing activity where they had to explain how to build a totem pole in a sequential way. Now they are learning about natural disasters in our writing unit so we taught them about The Great Chicago Fire and they showed what the cause and effect of that was and we used a Tsunami which is a problem and they had to come up with the solution of how to help people who were impacted by a Tsunami. There are different levels of work for remedial, Special Ed students, enrichment, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade level students in our 4<sup>th</sup> grade classes. Judy mentioned other upcoming dates at Mackrille and said tomorrow is the 100<sup>th</sup> day of school and the kids are going to have a parade and we asked the children to dress like they are 100 years old...laughter. The board gave thanks and applause followed. Chairwoman Russo said these are the things that the kids remember later on so thank you very much for all the time you and your staff put in for the kids in West Haven.

Twana Shirden has been Principal of Washington School for two years and said time flies when you are having fun. Twana thanked the board for allowing her the opportunity to stand and represent Washington School. She is very happy to see a lot of the staff as well as the students and their parents here tonight to support our spotlight teacher. We just celebrated the Super Bowl and we did a Super Football Challenge which is a good way to challenge students to read every night. The day after Super Bowl the class that read the most for two weeks leading up to the Super Bowl gets a special treat sometime this week. Kindergarten through fourth grade participated. Tomorrow we will be celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> Day and every teacher in every class is going to do something fun and Twana was awarded her crown so she can go home tomorrow after school and color and relax and wear her crown. On Valentine's Day teachers will be doing something fun in the classroom to show their love for learning and by coming to school each and every day. This year we started showing unity throughout the school. On the first PD Day she gave each staff member a link and they talked about how important it is for us to work together. Every link represents bringing our students together in unity, bringing our parents together in unity, and bringing our staff together in unity. The link is posted on our bulletin board and we have our unity pledge at our All School Assembly to let the students know that we are all different but we are all the same and we are all here to learn. This is a big push that she has been putting through and everyone knows I end all of my emails to my staff Unity Every Day because it is not just wearing Orange in October for Unity Day Against Bullying; we voice for that a lot each and every day. In February we have a lot of activities and field trips going on. On February 15<sup>th</sup> the PTA Council will be sponsoring the Henry and Mudge Theatre Works over at Carrigan School for the third and fourth graders so they are excited to do that. On February 21<sup>st</sup> we will do

our math night at Savin Rock School. It is a great pleasure to work with Mrs. Driend and do our math and literacy nights together. We will do our Literacy Night in April and we also did one in November. Read Across America is in March but is happening on a Saturday so the United Way reached out to us and said they are available to come to our school with volunteers to read to the classes so they will come to Washington School on February 27<sup>th</sup> to read and you are all welcome to come by and pick a class to read to. Students get a kick out of seeing Twana walking around in her tutu as she is a female version of Cat in the Hat. It is a fun day of reading and fun. We are always fostering reading and writing across the curriculum so the PTA wanted to do an assembly for the students so on February 15<sup>th</sup> the PTA is doing a Reading Rocks Assembly which will lead right into our Write Across America on the 27<sup>th</sup>. On the last day of each month we do our All School Assembly where teachers chose a Student of the Month. That student is honored with a certificate and the teachers do a nice write up about them and they come up and we take pictures and Twana reads a little blurb about why they were student of the month which shows their character in showing respect for themselves and others in the school. Last year they implemented the Red Nose because Miss Stevens was kind enough to get some donations of the Red Noses from Walgreen and we came up with the idea through our school climate committee of showing the students that are always making the right choices; the students who are quiet leaders, the students who are pleasant and the students who come in and make the right choices all the time. So we do our student of the month and we do our red nose student. This is something to show that they have been working very hard and they can take their red nose home with them. This is another part of our unity in showing we are one. Black History Month started so each morning we have our fourth graders read a Black History Fact when they do the morning announcements for the month of February. As we move forward into March which is Women's History Month, we have our student's read some facts they have learned about women for Women's History Month. We always try to incorporate their reading and writing because a lot of students are doing the research themselves to share with the rest of the school and the fourth graders really enjoy doing that each morning. On March 19<sup>th</sup> we have our Parent Teacher Conferences and on March 22<sup>nd</sup> our third grade students will have their Living Museum. They do a lot of research and find information and write about someone they like or think is a hero or someone they really admire. These students have the Living Museum and dress the part as if they are the famous person they are writing about. This year we are trying something new with our School Government Committee we are going to do our first Multicultural Day which will also be on March 22<sup>nd</sup>. More information will follow on this but we have already reached out to the high school and the drill team has agreed to perform during activities for this. On March 25<sup>th</sup> our third graders are going to the Eli Whitney Museum and on March 26<sup>th</sup> our fourth grade students are going to Woolsey Hall for the musical concert. They are doing a lot with reading and math and will do their first math challenge and it will be called March Math Madness. Students will have a challenge each night and Mr. Giglietti will tally it up and graph it on the bulletin board and come up with great prize for the student who wins. This is just a way to challenge them to keep practicing their math facts. We figure we will tie in some basketball hoops with that like we did with our Super Book Bowl with reading.

Twana said her staff is great and are always open to her ideas. Anything she asks of them they are willing to step in and do and the parents come out and help in any way that they can. We have math night, literacy night, and we had a craft night in December where students and their families came out and really enjoyed participating with the staff as they come out as well. We will continue with incorporating reading, writing, listening and thinking across the curriculum because that is very important. All the staff and students know that when you are reading you are writing, and when you are writing you are speaking, and when you are speaking you are listening; so we are always fostering that in everything that the students are doing. Twana wanted to focus on Ms. Brook Baldwin a teacher who has been at Washington School four years and never ceases to amaze her as do all her teachers. They all do a great job, they collaborate and work hard and come up with ideas. If they come to her with a situation they also have a suggestion of how to make things better for our students. Ms. Baldwin has a Master's Degree in Literacy and I have watched her incorporate this particular skill set into math and it was amazing because some of the students who were participating were students that socially and emotionally usually shut down but they were participating, speaking and being engaged in the lesson. The board gave thanks.

Miss Brook Baldwin came up and talked about accountable talk and some of the fabulous Washington Wildcats displayed what accountable talk is like. Accountable talk is when you have an academic conversation among yourselves using sentence stems like the following: I agree with what you are saying when you said; or I respectfully disagree when you said this because.... Each student has an accountable talk book mark in their book box. This is an easy way to get started in a conversation if a student feels hesitant or unsure. This can be done in math, reading, social studies and science; it can be done across the curriculum. This has them talking to each other respectfully but also academically about a text that they have read or a math problem they have had to solve. This is an easier way than just jumping into a conversation because even as adults we have a hard time jumping in on particular topics especially if we are not feeling competent. A discussion of how students would talk to each other and solve a problem was given. Students were able to use the bookmarks to talk about a topic and they started with math. They talked about the best way to solve a 2 x 2 multiplication problem. When it became time to talk about it students had different ways to solve the problem so they were able to have an academic conversation about the topic without straying off and they learned different strategies. Students in the audience came up and did a Fish Bowl presentation on should you be forced to flee during a national disaster or should you be allowed to stay. They used their sentence stems and talked about each other's ideas. Both sides of the argument were discussed and at the end they were able to say yes I agree or no, I do not agree, or maybe a little bit of both. The people outside the fishbowl can listen to what they are saying and jot some notes down or disagree with what they are saying and when they get to go in the fishbowl they can talk about the topic and agree or disagree. Students are using what they had read; they are writing about it and using all these literacy topics to really explain to each other and to the rest of the class why their idea is the best idea. This is done in a respectful, academic way and the children always ask to do the fish bowl and really enjoy it. It was a great two minute presentation. Applause ensued. The board gave thanks.

Jim Morrissey wanted to thank Washington School and Mackrille School for coming this evening and giving great presentations. He thanked the two principals who came this evening and the teachers who are very dedicated and he sees they arrive an hour or more before school starts and they stay late after school is over. This shows the love you have for teaching and the love you have for our students and he wants to thank them. He also wanted to thank the students who were here this evening; they did a great job and we are so proud of you. Jim also thanked the parents because as a board member it is great to see the involvement of the parents. Each board member adopts a school and his is Savin Rock and he is active in their PTA and he can see that often the staff is there for over an hour after school ends and this shows the dedication and love you have for education. Thank you all for all you do for our students. Applause.

Chairwoman Russo would like to piggyback on what Mr. Morrissey said. Thank you so much for coming. This is really the fun part of being on the board. You get to see the kids come in and show us what they are doing in the classroom and that means a lot to us. The future looks great and you all did an amazing job. Rosemary thanked all the teachers, principals, parents, staff, students and anyone that she forgot for coming tonight.

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to adjourn.  
The motion was made by Karen Pacelli  
Rosa Richardson seconded the motion  
The meeting adjourned at 6:25 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Marylou Amendola  
Board Secretary

**BOE Student Rep Report**

**February 4, 2019**

1. There is a half day this Wednesday for professional development.
2. Honor society will be selling carnations for Valentine's Day.
3. The three of us are going to start meeting with WHHS students to hear what issues they fac around the school starting this upcoming advisory (Feb. 13<sup>th</sup>).
4. The Science Olympiad Team will be competing in the Sacred Heart Invitationals this Saturday.

