

**WEST HAVEN BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**October 15, 2018**  
**Regular Board Meeting**  
**Board Meeting Room**

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Education was held on October 15, 2018 in the Board Meeting Room on the second floor of City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, Connecticut. The meeting was called to order at 6:04 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  
Lauren Aceto  
Robert Guthrie, Vice Chair  
Susan Walker, Secretary/Treasurer  
Patrick Leigh  
James W. Morrissey  
Karen Pacelli  
Rosa Richardson

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:** Patricia Libero

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

**CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:**

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES**

**PRESENT:**

Brendan Carew  
Sumedha Chowdhury  
Julia Walker

**B. Public Portion of Meeting**

Chairwoman Russo opened up public session and asked if anyone would like to address the board this evening. Chairwoman Russo asked three times but there were no speakers.

**REPORTS**

**C.1.a. Administration/Status of Schools**

Superintendent Cavallaro said the Topping Off Ceremony was very nice. Everyone was there and they were excited about the project which is becoming a reality. This will really be good for West Haven. While we are trying to get on our feet economically we can be part of the whole, bigger plan for the city. Superintendent Cavallaro was very pleased

and very proud to see how far it has come and to know that next year at this time we will be utilizing some of the new section of the building. One of the things Superintendent Cavallaro likes about the phasing aspect of the project is that all of the kids below the senior year will get to experience some part of that new building and it will become a reality and it will be great for the city. Mr. Jon Capone is responsible for setting up the booths for homecoming and we will feature a booth with a lot of new pictures and concept drawings of the high school. The original concept of the homecoming festival was to get people there and attract them to the high school and this is a great way to do this. Next month will be the second school presentation will be given by Bailey Middle School.

Dr. Druzolowski was asked to address the finals. Dr. Druzolowski said a short lesson is that assessments are not tests. Assessments are assessing the knowledge and growth of youngsters. Any time you look at assessments from the other direction you never know how much students learn. We adopted NWEA as a group of teachers not as a group of administrators and that was chosen after much deliberation over other assessments. All grade levels were represented by more than one person and the decision was made to use NWEA which is aligned with the PSAT and the SATE and is also aligned with all of the standards and soon to be aligned with BGAA because that is being worked on now for next year. At the high school we currently have mathematics, English Language Arts, and we will have science. Everybody in the district is using NWEA that is a way to standardize the assessment with norms. In the past we had no norms at the high school and we really wanted to get our hands around what the data said about instruction and resources that the teachers needed. As a team we looked at over testing. We weeded the garden and decided that each year we have been looking at the mid years and finals that were rewritten by teachers and found them still lacking in the area which was alignment to the PSAT and SAT. The way of teaching is very different and the way of assessing progress is completely different. In order to start this moving instead of a mid-year test a mid-year assessment is just a change in the assessment. The NWEA for both math and ELA Language Arts is being used and that will be used three times during the year. It will give us baseline data now and almost all of it is in. Then that gives you a midpoint hence mid-year where you then start seeing student growth. That is the most important thing you have to pay attention to because we have to look at student growth and teach that way. If you don't you are just looking at a whole you are not looking at different ways you can convince a child they are getting better and better. If you are in AP and are at the top of your game then you may now have to look at something on a college level. It is this growth that the state uses to rank us and that is how we became Blue Ribbon in one of our schools. The final end is in the norming period which takes place in April to the beginning of June and these norms are set up specifically for those periods and with the same demographics with all the testing done to check on the reliability and validity of this has been done for 15 years so the data bank is filled with scores. What this shows is that we have been assessing kids and doing the best we can for them while they are in middle school so that they will progress. When we don't do that and if a student does not know where they were and where they can go to you are not letting the student take hold of their own learning. They need to feel an obligation just as most of our AP or honor students do and we want everyone to feel that way. The lower you get and don't feel you

are doing well, because you are getting a letter grade, you automatically assume you are not learning. It is also that the expectation of some teachers may be a little too low so we all have to get on the right page of looking at it from the growth model as you heard it called. So there is no change, there are mid-year if you want to call them that but we are not using that language. We are saying it is an assessment of growth which is computer based. They have done the mid-year, they have done the beginning of the year and they are doing the mid-point in the year using the NWEA and then they are doing the last piece. In days that follow they will have time for reflection on what they have learned so far this year and what more they wanted to learn. It is not graded but it is giving them credit for using a process and thinking through it. It will have a type of grade but this will involve a larger group and we haven't gotten that far yet. Basically this is what was taken and misconstrued primarily because when we tend to move fast we move too fast. While this is just for English Language Arts and mathematics, all other areas are going to be assessed during those time period and Dana has worked up language about the type of assessments we want to see.

Dana said we will be modeling what was done in science with PBL's Performance Based Learning. In those areas teachers will be using PBL's of their choice so they can do performance tasks, do a debate, do literacy circle anything that is going to be something authentic and will allow students to apply their knowledge rather than regurgitate their knowledge. We are trying to get away from simply having students sit down and memorize things to then spit it back in the form of answers to multiple choice questions or fill in the blanks because there is really no value in that. We are looking at an opportunity for students to take what they have learned through the year and apply that learning as a PBL and that will be used to take the place of your traditional scan Tron final exam. This not only benefits the students but it really benefits the teachers because there is nothing about a scan Tron that drive instruction. You put it in the machine and you see the score and you really don't know what the kids got right or wrong because you are just looking at the score so you are not using information to drive instruction for the following year. Having students do something that is performance based is better for students and will also provide feedback to the teachers which will drive instruction for the following year so it is really beneficial on both ends. Questions were asked by board members and responded to.

Rosa Richardson asked if we could have some input from our student reps that were present during the board meeting. Sumedha said she thinks this is a very good idea and for AP classes a lot of teachers use this time to take AP tests but for other classes students really dread the mid-terms and finals because you have to stay up all night and study and as everyone has said this is not the point of anything because then the whole class is basically a waste. You want people to learn throughout the class. Dr. Druzolowski said right that is a very good synthesis. Julia said she agrees and with her Spanish midterm last year they literally were given the chapters and told to memorize the vocabulary. The first page was to pick the word that didn't match the other three vocabulary words. Then there was a sentence and you had to pick the correct form of the word. It was just memorization and regurgitation. The AP and Honors classes were still the same thing. The only difference in the AP classes were taking our practice exam because we did take our final for that class in May but we still have time within the school year to do this so

she is in agreement with this. She thinks it will be a good change that we actually are applying what we are learning rather than just regurgitating it. Brendan said that Sumedha and Julia said just about everything.

Chairwoman Russo is glad that this discussion took place because what we heard from you today is what I would want for my children as a parent and educator. She knows we all heard things this weekend from parents, teachers and from students themselves that the whole perception of when they go off to college they will have to be able to take a long time to test and will our students be ready. She feels that from listening today that they probably will be if they can do what you are saying but she just wonders about the perseverance. They are all practicing the longer exam time and by the time they are a senior in high school there are a lot of assessments that require a lot of stamina.

Julia said that is part of the problem that the parents don't understand because not all students are going home and explaining that to their parents or they do not understand that it is not only midterms and finals that are preparing students for those tests and that is something that needs clarification. Even some of the teachers are asking her about it. This needs to be clarified because it is getting twisted in different ways and she feels clarification would help.

Brendan said other parents are also confused thinking that college assessments are the same as they were in the past; not thinking for yourself and explaining yourself instead of just memorization like it used to be. By moving high school more towards this is just smart.

Dr. Druzolowski appreciates their comments and feedback. She asked the students to stop and talk to her when she is at the high school. She receives the best information from them and appreciates this. The students at the high school contribute, they are polite to people, they are not afraid of adults, they speak their mind whether we like it or not you speak your mind, you tell us what you like and what you don't like; it is phenomenal and it is a joy to be there.

It was suggested that a meeting be planned with information about this and it would really help the community understand this better. A further discussion took place.

State Representative Dorinda Borer gave a presentation on school safety after the student Reps gave their report. Pictures were taken. Dorinda spoke with Chairwoman Russo about the School Security Working Group in Hartford and spoke about some of the goals and the mission of the group and she thought it would be nice to share some of this information. This group is a voluntary group which was not appointed by the governor and is not a defined commission but a group of legislators that felt they should get together and continue to talk about school security and not wait until God forbid another tragedy occurs and we are talking about what we could have done. After Sandy Hook there was a task force developed and a lot of good legislation came out of that which was emulated across the country but this will be an on-going working group to determine what we can do by way of legislation to either tweak what we already have or to develop

new legislation. Dorinda wanted to give the board an idea of some of the topics the group is talking about and would like to come back once the legislation process starts when they have a clear definition of what legislation we might introduce. If you have any input regarding these topics or wish to attend any of these meetings which are open to the public you are most welcome. When we started we realized we could not just focus on school security without talking about mental health as well so we are trying to tackle both areas. We had a lot of speakers come to educate on what grants are available, what programs are available and what districts from large and small cities are doing. We had speakers come in that were police chiefs, superintendents, the state PTA organization, guidance counselors, the nurses association and are hoping to have student representation at an up-coming meeting. The first speaker was from the Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security in Connecticut and Brenda talked about the federal grant that schools get for school security which is passed through Connecticut and then districts have to apply for it. There are requirements that come along with this grant. You are required to do an assessment every two years or you lose your funding and you are required to do certain drills as well. We also talk about what are the ramifications if the schools aren't doing their drills and assessments, who sees if they are doing their assessments; do the mayor's know, do the legislators know, do those needing the grant know so we talked about in the future maybe having that report public and providing it to the leaders of the districts. This group continually evaluates legislation that protects our children. Their main goal is to determine what needs updating as well as whether funding is being used most effectively. Our students should focus on education; free from fear of violence in the schools.

As mental health is at the core of much of the violence, we are also evaluating related areas of concern such as how to identify and report when someone is at risk, how sufficient is the mental health support for our students and more. Dorinda will continue to work with colleagues to shape new legislation that will help keep our schools as safe as they should always be. Dorinda hopes to be back in February when they know what bills are introduced and be able to talk about what came from this committee. Dorinda said their goal is to understand what the needs are and what resources are needed and how we can do it in a way that is economically feasible. She knows that our funding resources are limited but West Haven has a very good reputation throughout the state and we are considered a very large municipality and often when talking about policies we are in the lead and are the cutting edge because we have such a large student base and such a large population compared to other cities. The board thanked Dorinda for all the information she shared with them.

**C.1.b. Student Representatives' Report**

The complete report will be found at the end of the minutes.

**C.1.c. Board**

Jim Morrissey went to the beam signing and it was a very nice ceremony. He is very excited about the new high school. It was a nice event. Jim also asked if they still have college credits for the nursing program at WHHS. Yes they do. Jim said it is a great

program and this course really helped his daughter when she was a first year nursing student at Quinnipiac. Great, thank you.

Patrick is super excited about these assessments and thinks it is a great step forward. We shouldn't teach people how to take tests we need to teach them real life skills and how to achieve their education through understanding. Patrick also attended the beam raising and thought it was an awesome event. It was very nice to see the City Council and the mayor and everyone involved in the project there. They brought a piece of the metal to the hospital and had Pam sign it and they tagged it on which was really great. It was a great day.

Karen could not attend the signing but thanked Neil for having her be able to sign beforehand. Karen thanked everyone for their time in explaining the curriculum work you have been doing and for what you are doing with the assessments.

Lauren said she was in communication with the President of the West Haven High School PTSA and she mentioned having all of the board members register for the PTSA and be members. Lauren will get the paperwork to the board members.

Sue Walker attended the beam ceremony and it was very exciting especially when she found out it was the library media center where the beam was going. We may need more staff for that area next year. She went to WHHS and was there only three or four years after it was built so this is really exciting and all her classmates on face book were thrilled she signed it class of "71".

Chairwoman Russo thanked the coordinators, Neil Cavallaro and especially Dr. Druzolowski for your passion in educating our children. Listening to you tonight, I am glad that more attention is being given to our high school especially with the new building. If we are going to have a brand new building we need to fix the inside to and that is what you are doing. You have put a lot of work into this and you have a great passion for it. Our elementary schools, our intermediate school and our middle school have all performed very well so now it is time for the high school. She thinks change is hard for people to accept but she thinks that what you are doing has the kid's best interest at heart. She thanked everyone for taking the steps to improve the performance at the high school. Thank you very much.

#### **C.1.d. Committee**

##### **D.1. Approval of Minutes**

**D.1.a.** The **West Haven Board of Education Special Board Meeting** was held in the Board's Meeting Room, City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, CT on Monday, October 1, 2018 at 5:45 PM.

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to approve the Special Meeting minutes D.1.a.,

Rosa Richardson made the motion to approve the minutes

Robert Guthrie seconded the motion

Discussion: Lauren Aceto abstained as she was not present during the last board meeting.

All board members were in favor  
Minutes are approved

**D.1.b.** The **West Haven Board of Education Regular Board Meeting** was held  
in the Board's Meeting Room, City Hall, 355 Main Street, West  
Haven, CT on Monday, October 1, 2018 at 6:05 PM.

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to approve the Regular Meeting minutes D.1.b.,  
Rosa Richardson made the motion to approve the minutes

Patrick Leigh seconded the motion

Discussion: Lauren Aceto abstained as she was not present during the last board  
meeting.

All board members were in favor  
Minutes are approved

**D.2. Resignations: (Certified)**

**D.3. New Hire: (Certified)**

**D.4. New Business**

**18-84 ED-099 Connecticut State Department of Education Agreement for  
Child Nutrition Programs**

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to approve item 18-84

Rosa Richardson made the motion

Karen Pacelli seconded the motion

All board members were in favor

Item 18-84 is approved

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to adjourn

The motion was made by Karen Pacelli

Rosa Richardson seconded the motion

The meeting adjourned at 7:42 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Marylou Amendola  
Board Secretary

**BOE Student Report**  
**October 15, 2018**

1. This week is spirit week. Each day there is a different theme.
  - a. Monday—Sports Team Day
  - b. Tuesday—Pink Out Day
  - c. Wednesday—Color Wars
    - i. Freshmen—Red
    - ii. Sophomores—Green
    - iii. Juniors—Grey
    - iv. Seniors—White
    - v. Staff-Black
  - d. Thursday—Hawaiian Day
  - e. Friday—Westie Day
2. This Friday is the homecoming football game against Cheshire. There will be a Pep Rally in the afternoon.
3. PSATs went well with little delay.
4. Financial Aid Night is tomorrow night, October 16<sup>th</sup>, in the café from 6pm to 8:30 pm
5. Parent Visiting is on October 22<sup>nd</sup>. There is no school for students. Parents can come visit from 9am-12pm and 6pm-8:30 pm. There will be food trucks available during the evening session in the front circle.
6. October 27<sup>th</sup> is the Fall Festival. Sports Clinics begin at 10am.
7. Some of the Marine Biology students went on a trip to the NOAA Fisheries Lab in Milford last week. Students took a tour of the fisheries lab, met and spoke with scientists, and were able to see the research projects that are currently serving the shellfish aquaculture industry.
8. Congrats to senior class officers:  
Rua Osman - President  
Lydia - Vice President  
Kaitlyn Campos - Secretary  
Brandie James – Treasurer