

Warwick Community Outreach Educational Committee
Minutes for December 2, 2015

Members Present: Karen Bachus (co-chair), Susan Baker, Sarah Callahan, Nathan Cornell (co-chair), June Marchant, Darlene Netcoh (clerk), Michael Pierce, Donna Travis (in place of Ed Ladouceur), Kathleen Usler

- I. Call to Order:** Nathan Cornell officially called the meeting to order at 6:15 pm. He explained the purpose of the committee and stated that the committee would follow *Robert's Rules of Order*. He also introduced the members of the committee and stated the bodies they represent. Susan Baker stated that she had not been made aware of the last meeting.
- II. Approval of Minutes:** The committee voted to approve the minutes for the meeting on November 2, 2015. The vote was four in favor with three abstentions.
- III. Discussion: Review of Topics of Previous Meeting**
 - A.** Mr. Cornell reviewed the topics the committee discussed at the previous meeting and asked if anyone wanted to add anything.
 - B.** Michael Pierce said that he agreed that getting people to talk face to face was a good idea.
 - C.** Regarding consolidation, June Marchant expressed concern about the process of moving children from schools without a plan.
 - D.** Donna Travis said that she had spoken to the superintendent because she had noticed that there were only two people on some of the consolidation committees. The superintendent said that she could be on a committee. She said that she knows an attorney who wants to be a part of the legal committee.
 - E.** Mr. Cornell said that he sent an e-mail to Bethany Furtado because he wants to be on a consolidation committee, but he received no response.
 - F.** Kathleen Usler said that she knows two parents who would like to be on a committee.
 - G.** There was further discussion of the consolidation process and the committees. One observation was that only administrators are on the committees and that there should be other people to provide different viewpoints and expertise. The business director chairs the scheduling committee. Mr. Pierce reminded the committee about the scheduling issues that a new principal at Warwick Vets had once caused because he came in with his own scheduling plans and did not know what he was doing. Hundreds of students were without schedules.
 - H.** There was a discussion about the proposed junior high school exploratory classes. Darlene Netcoh pointed out that Anne Siesel said that the school department has to implement these classes because they promised the public that if they closed schools and consolidated, they would offer new programs. Ms. Marchant said that the district is telling elementary school teachers that they have to get their middle school endorsement and have enough credits to be highly qualified. However, RIDE says that a teacher just needs to have enough credits for the endorsement. Warwick is the one saying the teacher has to be highly qualified. Mr. Pierce wanted to know if the district has any data or evidence that the implementation of exploratory classes is the change that we need right now.

- I. Ms. Travis wanted to know if the administration or the school committee decided that most of the feeder schools to Vets would be going to Pilgrim.
 - J. There was a discussion about the way the schools are run in general. Many central administrators have not been in the classroom in years and have forgotten about being in the classroom. A strong leader surrounds himself with people who are going to challenge him, like Abraham Lincoln and his “team of rivals.” Administrators went to six different schools to explore “exploratories,” but they did not visit their own three junior high schools to learn about courses, such as robotics, that are already being offered.
- IV. Discussion: Student Participation in School Affairs**
- A. Mr. Cornell explained his idea to create a subcommittee with high school students.
 - B. Mr. Pierce said that that is an example of perspective. If those who run the schools want to know what is going on, they should ask the students.
 - C. Ms. Travis reminded everyone that when Robert Shapiro was the superintendent, he was involved with the Citizens Policing Academy and had students come and tell what they wanted. The students wanted them to stop the drugs in schools. She said that those who run the schools have to listen to the kids and the teachers. They have to sit down face to face and not pass the buck. She said that she liked the idea of a student advisory.
- V. Discussion/Action: Recommendation to the School Committee To Have Members of the Public Serve on the Consolidation Committee and Subcommittees**
- A. There was a discussion about the importance of having people with different viewpoints and experiences on these committees.
 - B. The motion to recommend to the school committee that they allow members of the public to serve on these committees passed 7-0.
- VI. Discussion: 2006 Bond Issue for School Facilities:** Ms. Travis said that she spoke to the mayor. The problem is that the school committee does not say how the money will be used. When the school committee is willing to tell the city how the money will be used, then they can talk.
- VII. Discussion/Action: Creation of a Warwick Students’ Advisory Committee**
- A. Ms. Baker asked Mr. Cornell who he would envision being on this committee.
 - B. Mr. Cornell said anyone.
 - C. The vote to create the committee was unanimous.
- VIII. Discussion: PARCC Test Results**
- A. Ms. Netcoh summarized the many issues with the PARCC test. Briefly, there are two versions of the test: the paper and the computer. All Warwick schools gave the test on the computer, so comparing Warwick’s test results to the results of districts that used the paper version is not accurate or fair. The computer version of the test contained issues that the paper version did not. For example, the English Language Arts (ELA) test on the computer required students to listen to material, such as a Shakespearean sonnet, as part of their literary analysis test, or watch an informational video in addition to reading informational texts as part of their research simulation test. There were three ELA tests in March, and each involved having to write. The boxes in which the students had to type their work

did not always appear, and Ms. Netcoh frequently had to call Pearson to rectify technological problems. On the math test the students had to click in the toolbar to be able to type plus signs, minus signs, and every other sign that they needed to complete their work. In addition to the problems with the computers, the content of the tests was not fair, and there were multiple versions of each test. Some Grade 10 students had to read a poem by John Keats and listen to a Shakespearean sonnet and then answer questions and write a literary analysis, while other students had simpler texts to read. Another issue was that the testing took up too much time. Also, there was an opt-out movement in the state that may have negatively affected the attitudes and scores of students who did take the test. There are many, many issues with PARCC.

- B. Mr. Pierce brought up issues with other tests, such as STAR and the science NECAP test last year. Other districts, such as East Greenwich, bought a remediation program that STAR has. In other districts, Grade 6 students have full-time science.
- C. Ms. Marchant said that just the fact that elementary students had to work on the Chromebooks for PARCC affected the results. They may be able to handle the content, but they have difficulty using the Chromebooks.
- D. Mr. Cornell said that last year he started a petition against PARCC. Many students signed it, and he still has the petition.

IX. Information and Proposals from Committee Members

A. Karen Bachus wished everyone a happy holiday season.

- X. Public Comment:** George Landrie said that the exploratories are the worst thing to happen. There was supposed to be a meeting between the union and the administration. He is concerned about the elimination of foreign language, business, and technology education and the diminishment of art and music in the junior high schools. He said some of this is being driven by PARCC testing. He said that as a person who has been to and presented at middle school conferences, he knows that teachers can integrate writing and math into music. There can be reading, writing, and math across the curriculum. Why are we eliminating all of the junior high subjects? Some programs have already gone by the wayside, such as ALAP, family and consumer science, and marine environmental. Teachers are trying to preserve education.

XI. Next Meeting: January 6, 2016

XII. Adjournment: 8:10 pm.