

Warwick Community Outreach Educational Committee
Minutes for April 6, 2016

Members Present: Karen Bachus (co-chair), Susan Baker, Nathan Cornell (co-chair), Ed Ladouceur, June Marchant (arrived at 6:30 pm), Darlene Netcoh (clerk), Anthony Sinapi (officially appointed now)

- I. Call to Order:** Nathan Cornell officially called the meeting to order at 6:15 pm.
- II. Vote to Approve Minutes:** The committee voted to approve the minutes of March 2, 2016. Susan Baker abstained because she had not been at the March 2 meeting.
- III. Discussion: Review of Topics Discussed at Previous Meeting.**
 - A.** Most of the topics are still on the agenda.
 - B.** Ed Ladouceur had questions about special education.
 - C.** Darlene Netcoh reviewed some of the changes, such as the elimination of resource, the elimination of some IEPs without a parent's consent, and the elimination of intensive education at the junior high schools and co-op (intensive education with a special education teacher and a highly qualified content area teacher) classes at the high schools.
- IV. Discussion about Changes in Special Education**
 - A.** Anthony Sinapi said that a lot of what they are doing sounds bad but is also illegal. He reported that at a special education meeting a mother said that the team recommended services for the student, but the administration unilaterally denied services. He said that they can't ignore parents, can't ignore the team, and can't eliminate IEPs based on cost. They can't switch IEPs to 504s.
 - B.** Karen Bachus said that a 504 is an accommodation, not an individualized education program.
 - C.** Mr. Sinapi said that that someone switches IEPs to 504s if that person wants to get away without providing intensive support. At the special education forum and consolidation forums, the director of special education would not answer questions.
 - D.** Nathan Cornell brought up that they are basing the elimination of IEPs on STAR scores.
 - E.** Ms. Netcoh reviewed what a parent had told her about her experience with her son. Last year at the junior high her son had had an IEP, and he had done well in his classes because of his resource teacher and his resource period.
 - F.** Mr. Sinapi said that at the federal level a student's improvement can't be held against him. The student still has a learning disability.
 - G.** Mr. Ladouceur asked him what can be done if this is illegal and under the radar.
 - H.** Mr. Sinapi suggested that the council pass a resolution to look into it. He said that the city charter says they can. He also said that lawsuits would be very expensive for the city.
 - I.** Mr. Ladouceur told Mr. Sinapi to draft the language and give it to him.
 - J.** There was a discussion about special education evaluations. Central administrators in special education are conducting observations of special education teachers and purposefully giving them low marks. Ms. Netcoh reported about a special education teacher who was out of school at the hospital with a sick child on the day a special education administrator visited that teacher's co-op

classroom. The administrator sent a nasty e-mail about her not being in the class to the teacher, even though she had properly notified human resources that she was going to be out.

- K.** Mr. Ladouceur said that he met with two teachers and an aide.
 - L.** Ms. Netcoh provided more examples of central administrators using the evaluation system to harass teachers.
 - M.** Mr. Sinapi said that these look like coordinated attacks and that this is happening in other districts. Mr. Sinapi asked Steve Ruscito, the director of secondary education who was in attendance at this meeting, if it were true that the special education director was eliminating IEPs.
 - N.** Mr. Ruscito said, "You can't change an IEP without a team." He said that if this is true then it is problematic. He said that the district has a lot of work to do about letting people know what is going on in the district. He also said that the superintendent told him to come to this meeting and listen and only respond if asked.
 - O.** Mr. Sinapi said that it was normal for the special education director to not answer questions.
 - P.** There was a discussion about the various forums that had been held and about the fact that the director of special education had refused to answer questions such as, "Will there be resource next year?"
- V. Discussion about Reading Recovery**
- A.** Ms. Bachus explained Reading Recovery. She cited research and discussed Warwick's experiences with Reading Recovery.
 - B.** June Marchant explained the role of Reading Recovery in the instruction of younger students.
 - C.** Ms. Netcoh brought up the fact that the district had cut in half Tier 2 Literacy instruction at the junior highs and that elimination of Reading Recovery was to be able to eliminate teachers.
 - D.** There was a discussion about the importance of reading, even in math. People don't want to admit that they can't read.
 - E.** Mr. Sinapi asked for the administration's view.
 - F.** Ms. Bachus said that she called the superintendent's clerk to have Reading Recovery placed on the school committee agenda. The clerk called back and said that the chair of the school committee and the superintendent did not want it on the agenda. Ms. Bachus called Eugene Nadeau, who is on the school committee, and she said that he said he wanted Reading Recovery on the agenda.
 - G.** Ms. Netcoh mentioned all of the money this district is wasting, especially on the "Common Core Coach."
 - H.** Mr. Ladouceur wanted to know how many students are in the district. Mr. Ruscito said that as of October 1 there were 9006 students. Mr. Ladouceur wanted to know the number of teachers that have been eliminated and the number of administrators that have been eliminated. Mr. Ruscito said that it may not be fair to look at 1970s administration and 1970s classrooms. Mr. Ladouceur wanted to know about the total number of administrators.

- I. There was a discussion about West Bay Community Health and the \$3 million stop-loss amount that it had from the district at the same time the district was asking for more money.
- J. Ms. Netcoh explained the 2010 scenario in which the school department claimed in August that it had an almost \$10 million deficit, and then in October it claimed it had an almost \$6 million surplus, for an almost \$16 million spread.
- K. Ms. Marchant said that people are burned out and frustrated.
- L. Mr. Sinapi asked for the administrator's perspective on the elimination of Reading Recovery.
- M. Mr. Ruscito said that he was not involved, but he agrees that we have some students below reading level in high school. He questioned the quality of the reading program before the students get to the high school. He said that the district needs a stable, robust reading program. He wants someone to show that Reading Recovery has been successful. He said that some districts retain students at Grade 3.
- N. There was a discussion about regression. Mr. Ruscito said that we should expect a year's growth in a year's time. He said that something may interfere with having a year's growth and that schools are complex.
- O. Mr. Sinapi said that if the issue is reading instruction then do not eliminate the program.
- P. There was further discussion about reading instruction. Mr. Ladouceur asked if there is an evaluation, and Ms. Marchant explained that the district uses Fountas and Pinnell. Students at the end of each grade in elementary are supposed to be at a certain level.
- Q. Mr. Ruscito said that the data does not support holding students back.
- R. Ms. Netcoh pointed out that only in Grade 9 do students get held back. No one holds them accountable until Grade 9.
- S. Mr. Ruscito said that there is social promotion until Grade 9 nationwide, but if the students get held back, they are going to drop out.
- T. There was a discussion about Algebra II.
- U. Ms. Bachus said that students kept back in the early grades will do better.
- VI. Discussion about PARCC Testing and the "Cyber Attack"**
 - A. Ms. Netcoh brought up the various issues about the test and about the technology.
 - B. Mr. Sinapi asked, "As far as administration goes, was it a cyber attack?"
 - C. Mr. Ruscito said that it was and that it is under investigation with the state police.
 - D. Mr. Sinapi compared the situation to taking the bar exam. Everyone tried to go online at once, and the system crashed.
 - E. Ms. Marchant explained the difficulties that elementary students, especially Grade 3 students, have with taking the test on computers. They have difficulty even manipulating the device. Using the computers is a challenge.
 - F. Mr. Ladouceur said that he got calls from parents.
 - G. Ms. Marchant said that it was a difficult test in the first place.
- VII. Discussion about 2006 Bond Issue**
 - A. Mr. Ladouceur said that at this point there is not a lot to update. The city council requested that the finance director come before them, and Mr. Ferrucci did so in April for discussion. Mr. Ladouceur said that if the city is going to pick up a

portion of the debt service, he wants to be reimbursed by the state. He is going to be looking very closely at the school budget.

VIII. Discussion about the Superintendent's "Blueprint"

A. Ms. Netcoh said that the committee had already discussed it.

B. Mr. Sinapi said that if it is a blueprint it should be looking toward the future. He said that in Boston they are realizing that they have to consolidate schools, but the sides there seem to cooperate.

IX. Information and Proposals from Committee Members: Mr. Sinapi said that he wrote a resolution, and he wanted to clarify the members of this committee. William McCaffrey is the administration representative, and Susan Baker is the Mayor's appointee.

X. Public Comment: There were no members of the public present.

XI. Next Meeting: May 4, 2016

XII. Adjournment: 8:15 pm