

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
Woodstock Academy Board of Trustees
Academic Committee
September 14, 2009

PRESENT: K. Caron, A. Cormier, P. Harrington, P. Paquette, R. Rhault, H. Singleton, A. Spalding, T. Stokes

GUEST: Dr. Frank Baran

ABSENT: H. Barlow, B. Child, P. Green, J. Miragliuolo, S. Young

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Philippa Paquette at 5:32 p.m.

ALGEBRA 1 PLACEMENT

Mrs. Singleton reported on the placement of freshmen last year into math courses and how we fared in the transition year without a fully aligned curriculum. Freshmen were offered the opportunity to place out of Algebra 1 and move into Geometry if they qualified. Mrs. Singleton presented a report by town. A total of 14 students were placed into Geometry; of the 14, 4 students opted to repeat ACP Algebra 1; 6 students were given the opportunity for a placement meeting; and 10 students qualified according to the criteria.

Mrs. Paquette asked what the feedback was from the sending school curriculum coordinators or teachers. Mrs. Singleton stated that she had had the most connection with Woodstock, as their program was the most aligned and somewhat ahead of the others. She stated that it was a positive experience overall and the adults were unified in making decisions for kids in the placement meeting format. She stated that some meetings took place with counselors alone and went smoothly. There was good dialogue with parents and students involved in the decision making process. She stated that she estimated that 5-10% of the freshmen population will have completed through their geometry sequence and that number turned out to be fairly accurate. She added that the Academy should be aligned with all towns this year. They all have the materials and ongoing discussion and conversation will take place.

ACADEMIC REPORT

Mrs. Singleton gave a snapshot of the key components of the presentation that will be given to the full Board at the September meeting. The report included results of Academy students' performance across major test assessments.

Mrs. Singleton noted that results in CAPT scores for at goal were a bit disappointing this year, particularly given the strength of the class of 2008. The class of 2009 is not quite as powerful. This has resulted in an up and down trend for math and science; writing is still above where we started; but reading scores are the most disappointing and puts us in a position to respond immediately. She stated that it highlights the urgency to look and the reading and writing culture at Woodstock Academy. It continues to fall and puts us in an alarming situation.

Mrs. Singleton stated that not only did Academy scores fall, but they fell across the state. She is not sure what that is indicative of but the test itself is being looked at. She is also looking at CMT scores of this class to see if there is any correlation. Mrs. Singleton stated that science scores showed a shift down; response to literature scores were solid; and reading for information is still not our strong point.

Mrs. Singleton reviewed some of the actions WA is taking with respect to reading. There is a new reading instruction program that will be done during faculty time, beginning with an explanation of what the reading CAPT test is all about. Many faculty assume that is the responsibility of the English Department. Mrs. Singleton stated that this is not the case and it needs to be addressed across the curriculum. Reading for information needs to be address in all courses. Faculty will be given a guide of what the test is asking for and resources for them to use. There will be a follow-up to see how they are doing. Mrs. Paquette asked if this would be part of their professional development goals as well. Mrs. Singleton sated that it would.

Mrs. Singleton discussed the writing scores, noting that while scores fell at goal, we did a good job at moving more students toward proficient. We are doing respectably in CAPT scores in our DRG and against those schools that are most similar to us, with the exception of reading. We fall below the DRG and state and this creates some urgency to create some effective changes. Mrs. Singleton concluded with CAPT scores at proficiency where we are still above the state and DRG in all areas except reading.

Mrs. Singelton reviewed SAT results. More students are taking the test with critical reading scores going up as well as math. Writing scores were down slightly. Relative to the state, we are up and above the state in critical reading and writing and slightly down in math.

Mrs. Singleton also presented achievement in physical fitness testing. The PE Department put together a program and realigned their curriculum. We went from below the state to 50% meeting the standard in all four tests. This is a great achievement by the department.

Scores on subject tests are way above the state; ACT scores are back up and have increased to 100 students taking the test (one third of the class); AP scores are the best we have had in along time and show the changes that we have made in sequencing, particularly in biology. This is evidence that it worked with no sophomores getting below a score of 3. Chemistry did a bit lower but Mrs. Singleton felt this should not be disappointing. It included a greater range of students who pushed themselves in taking the course and it was good to see this happening, although it may skew the results a bit. In calculus, there were no scores below a four. Mrs. Singleton stated that overall, 92.2% of all of the tests taken scored at least a 3, which she felt was phenomenal results.

Mrs. Singleton discussed plans for interventions with respect to addressing the reading scores particularly. There will be imbedded professional development; Mrs. Carpenter will focus on research and being available for teachers to help them with assignments that are content based and practicing for reading for information; working on changing the culture to a larger reading culture; holding celebrations of literature and related activities such as International Literacy Day which was held today; starting a book club; revival of the Library Club; and restructuring sophomore writing workshop to incorporate more literary reading skills.

Dr. Baran asked several questions with regard the sequencing and offerings for English literature at the Academy. Mrs. Paquette asked about the types of initiatives done for reading in the 9th grade. Mrs. Singleton stated that there are CAPT practices imbedded in the curriculum. The Curriculum Coordinators are going to do some date collection to see what works. She stated that the structure of Mrs. Carpenter's developmental reading class has been changed. It will meet more regularly over a longer period of time, over a year as opposed to the current semester setup. Mrs. Spalding asked if other schools have dropped in their scores as we have. Mrs. Singleton stated that we usually position around 4th in comparison in our DRG and now are 6th.

INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY

Mrs. Singleton shared a video made by a student, John Sherman, to promote International Literacy Day. First period classes were asked to view it today in addition to a handout.

ATTENDANCE POLICY – UPDATE

Mrs. Singleton reviewed changed made to the attendance policy. The Academic Committee had requested that it be reviewed last year. The language has been tightened and loopholes filled. Mr. Grossman was the administrator in charge of addressing the policy. Unexcused absences were redefined for clarity, types of excused absences also clarified, and clarification made between verified and unexcused absences. With respect to procedures, parent conferences have been added to the structure to address unexcused absences. How we handle truancy was also refined adding a parent meeting into the structure early in the process. Mr. Grossman is also looking at daily attendance. Mrs. Singleton stated that we are now in a place as an institution where things are running smoothly and the Dean of Students has the opportunity to check attendance each block. Reminders are sent according. Progress is being made as things improve.

Mrs. Paquette asked how often the Student Assistance Team met. Mrs. Singleton stated that they met bi-weekly. Mrs. Paquette noted that the concern of the Academic Committee last year was that students were missing too much time without being penalized. She stated that there is now clarification of the language so that everyone understands. Mr. Cormier noted that the addition of in-school suspension will also make a difference. Adding the social isolation is critical. Discussion took place about the program and how it is running.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristen Willis
Board Secretary