

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1307

Tuesday, January 23, 2018

7:00 PM

Media Center

Wachusett Regional High School

1401 Main Street, Holden

Wachusett Regional School District Committee

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Kenneth Mills, Chair | Lauren Maldonado (7:17 PM) |
| Scott Brown | Amy Michalowski |
| Michael Dennis | Jon Edward Novak |
| Stephen Godbout | Michael Rivers |
| Susan Hitchcock | Asima Silva |
| Robert Imber | Charles Witkes |
| Linda Long-Bellil | |

Committee Members Absent:

| | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Christina Smith, Vice-chair | Benjamin Mitchel |
| Thomas Curran | Robin Van Liew |
| Harriet Fradellos | Megan Weeks |
| Sarah LaMountain | Adam Young |
| Matthew Lavoie | |

Committee Members Participating Remotely:

None

Administration Present:

Darryll McCall, Superintendent
Robert Berlo, Deputy Superintendent
Joseph Scanlon, Director of Business and Finance
Jeff Carlson, Director of Human Resources
Kimberly Merrick, Administrator of Special Education
Rebecca Petersen, Executive Secretary to the Superintendent

Student Representatives Present:

Philip Baird Donroy Ferdinand

Others present, who desired to be recorded as present (see attached Attendance Sheet – attachment 1).

Chair Mills called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM. Chair Mills announced the meeting was being recorded and will be shown on HoldenTV.com, but it is not streaming live. The reporter from *The Landmark* indicated she was recording the meeting.

I. Public Hearing

Chair Mills read aloud the Guidelines for Public Hearing.

Heidi Lahey, WREA President and Holden resident, read a prepared statement (attachment 2).

Megan Keller, WREA member, read a prepared statement (attachment 3).

Jennifer Drew, WREA member and Rutland resident, read a prepared statement (attachment 4).

7:17 PM Member Maldonado joined the meeting.

Stacey Duffy, WREA member and Holden resident, read a prepared statement (attachment 5).

Megan Hughes, WREA member and Holden resident, read a prepared statement (attachment 6).

Jennifer Lee, WREA Vice President of Negotiations, read a prepared statement (attachment 7).

II. Chair's Opening Remarks

Chair Mills extended condolences to the family of Holden resident and former WRSDC member Robert (Bob) Carter.

Chair Mills mentioned that he, Vice-chair Smith, Superintendent McCall, Deputy Superintendent Berlo, and Director Scanlon will be meeting with administrative and school committee representatives of the Quabbin Regional School District on Monday, January 29, 2018, at 6:00 PM at the QRSD Professional Development Center in Barre. He asked that if any members are interested in sitting in on the meeting that they let him know to be sure there are no issues with a quorum of the School Committee attending.

III. Student Representatives' Reports

Student Representative Ferdinand reported mid-term exams concluded on January 22nd. He also reported that on Saturday, January 27th, the girls' basketball team will be playing Westford Academy at T. D. Garden and that a student bus will be traveling to Boston for the game. Student Representative Baird reported on the 2018 NHS (National Honor Society) induction ceremony held Monday, January 22nd.

IV. Superintendent's Report

A. Discussion of Report

Members were given the opportunity to discuss Superintendent McCall's responses to questions asked at the January 8, 2018 meeting, information that was included in the January 18, 2018 Superintendent's Report. Members were also given the opportunity to ask additional questions or to request additional information.

Member Imber asked what the cost would be to implement full-day kindergarten across the District. Superintendent McCall explained the initial outlay of funds would be approximately \$800,000. In addition to this "seed money," half-time kindergarten teachers would be increased to full-time positions and there is still the issue of space availability in some of the schools.

Member Hitchcock requested Math Standards be shared with the School Committee. Member Hitchcock stated she feels strongly that District Math Standards and professional development to support should be included in the FY19 budget. Deputy Superintendent Berlo approached the podium, explained the Math Standards are ready to be shared with the School Committee, and he agrees with Member Hitchcock's opinion about the importance of professional development.

Member Long-Bellil inquired about students who are going out of District (school choice, charter schools, private school), what schools, what grades, etc. Superintendent McCall explained that the District cannot track students who attend private schools, but data about choice and charter is available and will be provided to the Committee.

Member Dennis asked that Superintendent McCall share his understanding of why students are leaving WRSD.

Member Michalowski asked about cost-sharing, with Devereux, for an Assistant Principal/Devereux Liaison position. Administrator Merrick approached the podium and explained Devereux and LEA (Local Education Agency) responsibilities in connection with students at Devereux in Rutland.

Member Brown spoke about school counselors, reporting that the additional counselor position at Mountview has been extremely beneficial. He pointed out how understaffed this district is in this area.

In anticipation of the February 12, 2018 Annual Budget Hearing, Chair Mills requested the administration prepare a clear and coherent explanation of how student enrollment decreases will impact the budget and MLC (Minimum Local Contribution). He also asked that class size information (per grade/per school) be available for review/discussion at that meeting.

Member Dennis requested members be provided with Resource Allocation Summary, by building, by grade, and that this information be included in the Budget Book.

At the conclusion of the budget/information discussion, Superintendent McCall spoke about this year's Annual Scholars Luncheon, which he attended with WRHS Principal Beando and two WRHS seniors on Tuesday, January 9, 2018.

B. Recommendations Requiring Action by the School Committee

Motion: To award the 2018-2019 heating fuel contract to Santa Buckley of Bridgeport, CT at a firm fixed price of \$2.0611/gl. per the French River Educational Center (FREC) collaborative purchasing bid on 11/13/17.

(S. Hitchcock)
(L. Long-Bellil)

Vote:

In favor:

Kenneth Mills
Scott Brown
Michael Dennis
Stephen Godbout
Susan Hitchcock
Robert Imber
Linda Long-Bellil
Lauren Maldonado
Amy Michalowski
Jon Edward Novak
Michael Rivers
Asima Silva
Charles Witkes

Opposed:

None

The motion was approved unanimously.

V. Unfinished Business

Chair Mills mentioned the way Superintendent McCall included answers to questions posed at the last School Committee meeting being a section of his Superintendent's Report. Chair Mills hopes this sort of follow-up continues.

VI. Secretary's Report

A. Approval of 1306th Regular Meeting Minutes of the Wachusett Regional School District Committee held on January 8, 2018

Motion: To approve minutes of the regular meeting of the WRSDC held on January 8, 2018.

(J. E. Novak)
(S. Hitchcock)

Vote:

In favor:

Kenneth Mills
Scott Brown
Michael Dennis
Stephen Godbout
Susan Hitchcock
Robert Imber
Linda Long-Bellil
Lauren Maldonado
Amy Michalowski
Jon Edward Novak
Michael Rivers
Asima Silva
Charles Witkes

Opposed:

None

The minutes were unanimously approved.

B. Approval of Executive Session Meeting Minutes of the Wachusett Regional School District Committee held on January 8, 2018

Motion: To approve minutes of the executive session of the WRSDC held on January 8, 2018.

(L. Long-Bellil)
(J. E. Novak)

Vote:

In favor:

Kenneth Mills
Michael Dennis
Stephen Godbout
Susan Hitchcock
Robert Imber
Linda Long-Bellil
Amy Michalowski
Jon Edward Novak
Michael Rivers
Asima Silva

Opposed:
None

Abstained:
Scott Brown
Lauren Maldonado
Charles Witkes

The minutes were approved 10-0-3.

VII. Treasurer's Report/Financial Statements

Chair Mills reminded the Committee that if there were questions regarding the Director of Business and Finance's report that Members should contact the Superintendent; if there were questions regarding the Treasurer's Report, Members should contact the Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair.

VIII: Committee Reports

- A. Management Subcommittee (K. Mills, Chair, C. Smith, Vice-chair, M. Dennis, S. Hitchcock)

Chair Mills reported this subcommittee will meet next on February 5, 2018.

- B. Education Subcommittee (C. Smith, Chair, M. Lavoie, Vice-chair, R. Imber, S. LaMountain, L. Long-Bellil, L. Maldonado, A. Silva, R. Van Liew, M. Weeks)

In the absence of Education Subcommittee Chair Smith and Vice-chair Lavoie, Member Imber reported on the January 22, 2018 meeting of this subcommittee. He reported that three amended policies will be brought before the full Committee for first readings on February 12, 2018.

- C. Business/Finance Subcommittee (M. Dennis, Chair, Adam Young, Vice-chair, L. Long-Bellil, B. Mitchel, J. E. Novak, C. Witkes)

Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair Dennis reported this subcommittee could not meet on January 16, 2018 due to lack of quorum. The subcommittee will meet next on February 5, 2018.

- D. Legal Affairs Subcommittee (S. Hitchcock, Chair, S. Brown, Vice-chair, T. Curran, H. Fradellos, Stephen Godbout, Michael Rivers)

Subcommittee Chair Hitchcock reported this subcommittee has not met since the last School Committee meeting. The full Committee will adjourn to executive session at the conclusion of this meeting, to be brought up-to-date on the status of negotiations with the eight bargaining units.

- E. Superintendent Goals and Evaluation Subcommittee (K. Mills, Chair, C. Smith, Vice-chair, S. LaMountain, M. Lavoie, A. Michalowski, M. Weeks)

Chair Mills reported on the January 9, 2018 meeting of this subcommittee. He spoke about the superintendent evaluation process, explaining that on January 24, 2018 Superintendent McCall will share with all School Committee members a Google form which will give members the opportunity to provide input and feedback on the Superintendent's progress on his goals. Members were asked to complete and return the form within a week, by January 31, 2018. Chair Mills spoke more about the evaluation process and the use of the DESE (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) rubric for the final evaluation of the Superintendent, which should be addressed by the full Committee at the second School Committee meeting in April.

- F. Audit Advisory Board (C. Witkes, Chair, R. McCarthy)

AAB Chair Witkes reported on the December 19, 2017 meeting, at which the AAB accepted the FY17 audit. Full School Committee acceptance of the FY17 audit will be on a future agenda. Chair Mills mentioned the need for representation on the Audit Advisory Board from the towns of Paxton and Rutland.

- G. Ad Hoc Subcommittees

1. Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Budget Sustainability (K. Mills, Chair, A. Young, Vice-chair, M. Lavoie, L. Long-Bellil)

Chair Mills reported this ad hoc subcommittee is scheduled to meet on February 7, 2018.

- H. Building Committees

1. Mountview Building Committee

Superintendent McCall reported this building committee has not met since the last School Committee meeting. He additionally reported that there are still issues with the HVAC system at Mountview, which are being addressed.

- I. School Council Reports:

Central Tree Middle School (J. E. Novak), Chocksett Middle School (S. Godbout), Davis Hill Elementary School (A. Silva), Dawson Elementary School (A. Young), Glenwood Elementary School (M. Lavoie), Houghton Elementary School (S. Godbout), Mayo Elementary School (T. Curran), Mountview Middle School (S. Brown), Naquag Elementary School (C. Witkes), Paxton Center

School (B. Mitchel), Thomas Prince School (M. Weeks), Wachusett Regional High School (S. LaMountain/M. Rivers), Special Education Parent Advisory Council (A. Young), Early Childhood Center (L. Maldonado)

Member Silva – Davis Hill Elementary School

Member Rivers – Wachusett Regional High School

IX. Public Hearing

No members of the public wished to address the School Committee.

X. New Business

XI. Adjournment

Motion: To enter executive session to discuss strategy for contract negotiations with all bargaining units (SEIU Local 888 – ABA Program Assistants, Teamsters Union Local 170 (paraprofessionals), Wachusett Cafeteria Association, Wachusett Administrators' Association, AFSCME, Council 93, Local 2885 – Custodial Employees, AFSCME, Council 93, Local 2885 – Clerical Employees, Wachusett Regional Nurses Association, Wachusett Regional Education Association), as the Chair deems a discussion in public session would have an adverse effect on the District's bargaining position, not to return to public session.

(R. Imber)

(M. Rivers)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Kenneth Mills
Scott Brown
Michael Dennis
Stephen Godbout
Susan Hitchcock
Robert Imber
Linda Long-Bellil
Lauren Maldonado
Amy Michalowski
Jon Edward Novak
Michael Rivers
Asima Silva
Charles Witkes

Opposed:

None

The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned to executive session at 8:18 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Darryll McCall, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

DM:rlp

Attachments:

- Attachment 1 – sign-in sheets
- Attachment 2 – statement read by Heidi Lahey
- Attachment 3 – statement read by Megan Keller
- Attachment 4 – statement read by Jennifer Drew
- Attachment 5 – statement read by Stacey Duffy
- Attachment 6 – statement read by Megan Hughes
- Attachment 7 – statement read by Jennifer Lee

SPEAKERS

Attachment 1

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting
Tuesday, January 23, 2018

SIGN-IN SHEET FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO ADDRESS THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE DURING PUBLIC SESSION. THIS SHEET SHALL BECOME PART OF THE PUBLIC RECORD.

PLEASE PRINT YOUR NAME, YOUR ADDRESS, AND THE TOPIC YOU WISH TO DISCUSS, IF YOU WISH TO ADDRESS THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE DURING PUBLIC SESSION.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND REVIEW IN ADVANCE OF SPEAKING, PLEASE TAKE A COPY OF THE *GUIDELINES FOR PUBLIC HEARING* (printed on light yellow paper).

| NAME | ADDRESS | TOPIC |
|--------------------------------|--|---|
| Heidi Lahey | 166 Bullard St Holden | district funding |
| Megan Keller | 43 Rockaway Rd. Auburn, | district Funding |
| Jennifer Dew JEN | 7 Edith Ln Rutland | district funding |
| Stacey Duffy | 150 Beechwood, Holden | Teacher working conditions are students' learning conditions |
| Megan Hughes | 12 Sunnyside Ave Holden, MA | Professional Development |
| Jennifer Lee | 155 School St. North Brookfield, MA | WREA |
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Good Evening. Heidi Lahey 166 Bullard Street Holden, president of the Wachusett Regional Education Association, Special Education Teacher grades K-2 at Houghton Elementary School in Sterling.

We are here tonight to convey our sense of ^{urgency} about the extended contract negotiations for all eight staff unions, and to demonstrate the commitment that staff has to improving education in the Wachusett Regional School District. Across all thirteen schools, we are struggling to provide a quality education due to underfunding. Every school in the five towns is represented here tonight.

It has been the staff's passion for our profession, along with our willingness to spend our own resources that has kept the quality of education from eroding to match our bottom of the barrel funding. The ongoing attempts to manage the lack of funding through reductions and cuts has been impacting students in our classrooms for at least a decade with no end in sight. Over time, those cuts and reductions have harmed students....year after year.

Through contract negotiations, staff have agreed to salary freezes, furlough days, and insurance changes that produced savings intended to help our district maintain education services. They were short term band-aids for a long term problem, and did nothing to address staff concerns.

Our working conditions are children's learning conditions...what we lack- they lack, from textbooks and curriculum to adequate class time for individualized attention. Over the past years, the list of things that are lacking has grown substantially. Several teachers will speak again tonight about the concerns that we see as priorities.

This past year, educators have come forward in increasing numbers to try to raise the public awareness of the genuine needs that exist in our schools caused by insufficient funding.

We worked to support public education through our efforts on the No On 2 campaign, to keep the cap on charter schools which drain money from public school budgets.

We stood out in the spring to support the school budget at all five regular town meetings, then phone banked and stood out again at the two summer town meetings,

To date, teachers and support staff have sent in 438 letters to our state legislators regarding the regional transportation reimbursement, working with the citizen group I Am Wachusett. I have done outreach to 60 other regional school districts, and spoken to 20 regional union presidents, inviting them to join in the letter campaign. We feel encouraged by the citizens who recognize that it will take action from ALL of us for changes in funding to occur at the state level.

Every day, in so many ways, staff puts the needs of the children first. Educators and support staff want to provide a quality educational experience so students can reach their full potential. For a decade, we have been hampered in our mission by the billion dollar public education funding shortfall identified at the state level. Our district is in crisis due to chronic under-funding; a solution must be found beyond the employee contracts and property taxes.

WREA members will resume actions tomorrow across all five towns and thirteen schools, following our public comments tonight. The public can expect that teachers will have an email message on their accounts outside of the school day to inform the sender that emails will be answered during work hours only. It should be noted that the notice does not prevent teachers from reading the email, simply reminds the sender that our responses will come during our work day. We will wear our Red for Ed on designated days in our schools. We will continue in our endeavors to bring attention to the funding crisis in public education which has resulted in stalled contract negotiations and a workload which requires many hours beyond the school day to complete.

My name Megan Keller, I live at 43 Rockaway Road in Auburn and I teach Second Grade at Paxton Center School. As a teacher I want what is best for my students and their education. As an educator it is my responsibility to create and plan lessons for standards that seem to change every year or 2 . I am spending hours outside of my work day to effectively plan for the curriculum and standards that are changing because we do not have the funding or curriculum support we need and I want my students to be successful.

Year after year I find that I have to use my own personal funds so that my students can have everything they need to be success in the classroom.

I have spent my own money for:

- Updated Books to use for my lessons in all subject areas. I have purchased books about landforms, United States Symbols, Books that support the 6 Traits of writing, and books for focus lessons during my reading block.
- I have purchased Books for Social Emotional Learning such as My Mouth is a Volcano. Case of the Tattle Tongue, Personal Space Camp, just to name a few.
- I have had to purchase materials to use for hands on science lessons such as seeds, soil, pots, water bottles, vinegar, salt, baking soda, cups, foam, styrofoam, wood, utensils, plates and these are just a few examples.
- Book bins for my students to store their books for independent reading time.
- Mailboxes/ an easel on wheels
- Materials to make learning centers such as card stock, my own personal laminator, sheets to use to laminate, and ink cartridges for my printer at home to copy centers and lessons.
- And these are just a few examples.

I do this because I want the best and most up to date curriculum, lessons and materials for my students to use, but with the cost of living and health insurance increasing yearly it is becoming more of a financial burden to do. This is one of many reason that teachers need a fair contract. Thank you for your time and listening to my concerns.

Attachment 4

Hello, my name is Jennifer Drew & I am an Environmental Science teacher here at the High School, and have been for a little over 10-years. I'm here tonight to present my opinions on the budget, and just how woefully inadequate the budget, in its current format, is for educators like me. Since my tenure began at the high school, the budget afforded to my department has been cut by more than 50%. In real monetary terms, that means the average science teacher at the high school is left with about \$2 per student per year to run what should be thriving 21st century classrooms. From an academic perspective, that means after 1 or 2 relatively basic labs I'm out of departmental funds. Any other lab or class activity that requires money or materials after that point comes out of my own pocket. Now, I don't know a single teacher who does this job for the cash flow, we do this job because we love our kids and want them to be successful going forward. That said, I have my own young family to support, and I am on a tight budget, so money spent out of my own pocket impacts my family directly. This situation means educators are forced to make difficult choices. I believe that everyone here wants, as much as I do, to help our students get the best education they can; as well as, helping them be competitive with other students in our neighboring school districts, and within the country as a whole. Unfortunately, the budget we've been living with, for a number of years now, is having a deleterious impact on our primary goal – helping the students succeed. Thank you for your time and attention.

Stacey Duffy - 150 Beechwood Rd - Holden

January 23, 2018

Why Do We Teach?

Many ask teachers why we continue to teach, amidst escalating emphasis on the corporate world of standardized testing and required proof of success with data and technology.

Many ask how we juggle the increased needs of students; socially, emotionally, economically, and academically; how we reach children who often seem tired and who spend increasing amounts of time in front of screens and seem to know less and less about perseverance, and caring for, and getting along with others.

Many ask what it's like to budget one's time like some of us budget our paychecks, figuring out what's most important because there isn't enough to go around.


Many ask why would we want a career that requires a master's degree, a professional license, endorsements, proof of professional development, artifacts for evaluations, and time spent analyzing results on standardized testing, when we, as professionals, know what the outcomes will be, and the reasons for them, before the test is taken.

Many ask why we would want a career that provides an opportunity to purchase, create, plan, teach, assess, correct and report on our efforts, 9, 10 or more hours per day, from September thru June, and then open ourselves up to be critiqued by and answerable to everyone, it seems, but the students. Many ask why we continue to teach, amidst a declining sense that human teachers even matter.

Having participated in state and country wide gatherings of educators over the past few years, I have found myself surrounded by people who wish there were more joy and a sense of success and excitement in our classrooms.

We wonder what it would be like to have adequate planning time, resources and support to help ALL students succeed; to reach the neediest and challenge those who are ready to excel.

When morale is low, it's very often because we're ALL under the pressure of limited resources. There's not enough to go around to meet the demands required. Teachers are asked to do more for less, and with less.



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So, why do we do it? Everyone knows it's not to get rich and it's not for the 8 weeks of summer, where we hold down second jobs, take grad classes to maintain our licenses, or plan our curriculums for the fall.

Why do we do it? Many of us feel we were CALLED to teach, because there will always be children who need us, who deserve to have successful, happy lives. We want to spend our careers contributing to these ideas and to feel that those we work FOR believe this too. We teach because we feel it in our hearts and minds. Those who don't, don't last. We teach because we want to see students smile because they believe in themselves and we teachers want to feel the same.

Like lessons learned in the popular book, and recent movie, Wonder, by RJ Palacio, we want students to know it's important to set one's priorities and stand up for what's right, even when it's uncomfortable, and to keep trying to find common ground and common goals with those around us; to create a community where people care about and respect one another. Teachers' work environments are students' learning environments. We teach because we know these kids are important. They are the future. Please help us to feel you believe it too.

Thank you.

Attachment 6

Megan Hughes
12 Sunnyside Ave Holden
Grade 7 science Mountview Middle School

It is with deep concern that I am speaking with you tonight regarding a topic that is quietly crippling our district. It is the matter of professional development. The district has money in the budget for professional development and the calendar has days set aside for professional development, yet the offerings that teachers and staff of our school district have available to them are a far cry from being considered quality opportunities, nor are they considered qualifying events in the eyes of DESE.

Article 16 of the contract we are currently working under states that staff development planning will be developed with input from the Association annually. I am telling you tonight that I have been on every committee that has discussed professional development in this district for the last four years. Not once has there been any follow through with any of this input. These so called action committees have put in many hours just to be ignored. The members of the WREA are tired of not being listened to with regards to the professional development opportunities they have available to them.

Section B of this article says that time shall be planned so as to provide eligibility for credit necessary to maintain professional status. According to DESE this means that every teacher must acquire 60 content PDPs, 30 pedagogy PDPs, 15 SEI PDPs, 15 SpEd PDPs, and an additional 30 elective PDPs every five years. In addition, DESE requires that PDPs be bundled into 10 hours per topic, meaning that for a PDP to be eligible for relicensure consideration you have to have at least 10 hours on that same topic. And to top it off, each PDP bundle must have proof of a culminating product or assessment that knowledge has been gained. Besides the after school Special Education professional development offered and the requirement for all teachers to become SEI endorsed, there has been no professional development offerings that fulfil these requirements.....in at least 10 years. Teachers are looking for help with their content areas. All content areas, not just reading and math. Most everything that the district offers is done in 2 hour snippets with no follow through, product, or assessment. Without some talented creative writing most of our opportunities cannot be bundled into anything DESE considers appropriate. Teachers in our district have been audited and are finding it terribly difficult to prove that they have completed enough to be relicensed. No teacher that participates in everything that the district offers for development should be in the position of not being relicensed, yet it is becoming increasingly difficult to meet the requirements set forth by DESE without going out of district and spending money out of pocket.

The students of this district deserve teachers that are capable of teaching in the 21st century. That means that any teacher with over 5 years of experience needs to be trained to meet the needs of their students and the curriculums set forth by the state, which are ever changing. It's

not enough to get new books without training the teacher how to use all of the interactive supplements that go along with them. It's not enough to order leveled reading programs to have them sit in a closet and wait for some voluntary training. It's not enough to have Chromebooks and smartboards without the training required to have this technology integrated into daily lesson plans across all subjects and all grade levels. Why adopt the Next Generation Science Standards if you're not going to teach the teacher how to properly run an inquiry based classroom?

A friend of mine made the analogy that we have been given all of the parts to build a car engine, but no instructions on how to do it. So what happens? We try to build the engine as best we can, but have no idea if we are doing it correctly. It may run when we are finished, but is it running the way it's supposed to? It may not run at all. Or it may just end up a pile of junk as we continue to use the same old ideas that have been around forever, never moving forward, never advancing, forever putting our children at a disadvantage.

Jennifer Lee
155 School Street
North Brookfield, MA
WREA VP of Negotiations
3rd Grade teacher at Glenwood Elementary in Rutland

Attachment 7

Good evening,

As you have heard tonight, our members have been experiencing a great deal of frustration surrounding the WRSD budget and contract negotiations. We have come before you tonight because we feel very strongly about providing our students with the best education possible. As you have heard repeatedly, our working conditions are your children's learning conditions. The inadequacies in this district have been felt by staff for a long time. But students, parents, and community members have often been unaware of these deficiencies because teachers have continuously picked up the slack. We not only purchase a variety of materials for our classroom out of our own pocket, as you heard a few minutes ago, but we also create curriculum, fill the role of librarians and technology teachers, meet with parents outside of the school day, attend professional development at night and on vacations, and many other things.

For ten years, teachers have seen little improvement in our working conditions, simply so we could help the district repeatedly fill the gaps, because our students' best interest is always at the forefront of our minds. Sadly, within those ten years, the district has done very little to get communities actively involved in our schools that are the foundation of our children's future. At the end of the day, our students are the ones who are suffering, because while we certainly try our very hardest, teachers are not miracle workers and cannot create supports and resources out of thin air.

The effects of the numerous givebacks are now taking its toll on staff members. Teachers are more stressed than ever because we are constantly trying to provide the best education for your children with less and less support and resources. Teachers chose this career path to make a difference in the lives of children. It is extremely difficult to do that when everything is put upon our shoulders with no end in sight.

As the VP of Negotiations, I have seen firsthand the ways our contract affects teachers and students on a daily basis. A contract is an agreement between two parties, and while our members ROUTINELY EXCEED the expectations, the district does not. The WRSD has a terrific reputation and it is because our teachers go WELL above and beyond day after day, year after year. When working conditions are poor, we lose teachers. When new teachers need to be hired in their place, veteran teachers will spend time working with their new colleague because they care deeply about their colleague's success in the classroom, as well as the education of those students. There usually isn't time during the school day to support colleagues in that manner, so most of the time the support and collaboration happen outside of the school day. While Massachusetts mandates that all new teachers be supported by a district-designated mentor, who does receive compensation for their time, oftentimes we support our new colleagues regardless of whether or not we are an "official" mentor. Why? Because we care about our colleagues and our kids. Despite the evidence and general acknowledgement of the additional time, effort, and materials that teachers contribute, in certain areas of the contract,

we are treated unprofessionally and with suspicion of our motives (like personal days, bereavement days, etc.).

Prep time, professional development, morale, class size, adequate supplies, and so much more, all affect students on a daily basis. In the last ten years, the district has not prioritized or monitored these needs. First, daily prep time ensures that lessons are prepared thoughtfully and completely, and at the elementary level, students also attend art, music, and gym classes during this time. Every student deserves to attend these "specials" daily because they are so important in the education of the whole child. Second, when teachers receive QUALITY professional development, it directly impacts students because we're able to use the latest methods and research in the classroom. According to authors, Pamela D. Tucker and James H. Stronge, "Years of research on teacher quality support the fact that effective teachers not only make students feel good about school and learning, but also that their work actually results in increased student achievement." Third, when district morale is high, everyone benefits. In this kind of climate, teachers are trusted and treated as professionals, which means teachers feel comfortable taking risks and making mistakes. This same attitude then trickles down to students - and if we're not encouraging our students to take risks and make mistakes, then we are performing a grave disservice. Fourth, when class size is low, teachers are able to provide immediate feedback on an ongoing basis, as well as more individualized instruction. Fifth, when teachers are supplied with materials purchased by the district, then parents and teachers do not have to spend their own hard earned money buying basic things like pencils and crayons, and instead they can spend their energy on the education of children.

The people standing behind me have now gone 207 days without a new contract. These are the people who take care of your children every day, and above all else we are charged with their education - an incredible responsibility as well as an awesome privilege. No one cares about a child more than his/her family, but I can say with certainty that the people standing behind me come in a close second. Over the coming days, you will see WREA members participating in actions in support of your child's learning conditions. We will continue to fight for more funding from the state, and continue to do what we do best - love and educate your children. Please remember that teachers' working conditions are your children's learning conditions.

Thank you.