

TEAM Westport Meeting Minutes
June 7, 2011, 7:30 AM
Room 201
Westport Town Hall, Westport, CT

Attendees: Susan Killian, Catherine Onyemelukwe, Judy Hamer, Harold Bailey (Presiding), Bernicestine McLeod, Patricia Wei, Nick Rudd, Steve Daniels, Dolores Paoli, Barbara Butler, Brian Fagan

The meeting was called to order at 7:35AM.

New Business

What's Up?

1. Catherine will be attending the Universalist General Assembly soon. Tim Wise, who is one of the best with reference to white privilege, will be speaking. We would still like to have him come to Westport at some point to speak.
2. Watch for the RTM vote on whether there will be senior housing at Baron's South.

Old Business

Program Committee

1. Our focus has been around trying to get parents engaged. Harold, Judy, and Patricia have talked to the PTA leadership to plan future activities to achieve this objective.
2. We are tentatively planning for our next community conversation to be held after school starts again. We discussed 'bullying' as a possible theme. Westport has addressed bullying on many levels.
 - a. The Anti Defamation League (ADL) has been involved in the school system for years. There is a curriculum on cyber bullying in grades 3, 4, and 5 including an internet cyber safety class for parents.
 - b. The organizations Positive Youth Development (PYD) and the Youth Commission have also been involved. It's a topic that has been 'vetted' and continually addressed but it can be approached differently especially if the parents are more involved.
 - c. Maybe bullying is not the proper description. Judy sees bullying as against people who are different and can be a group action versus that of an individual. Racial bullying is not particularly an issue in Westport because it is so homogeneous here. Nice kids can, however, use cyberspace to spread hate and kids often reject "the other" (people who are not like them) in trying to find themselves. Do we go back to the college theme and use the video we showed at our April 6th session with the college student from UCLA "ranting" about Asian/Asian American students? Could it happen here? What was her background? What do people think? Bring back comments that were said at the first session. If we focus on the UCLA video, we could raise questions such as whether that

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young woman could come from a place like this. How do we help our children make steps to a bigger world or how do we make those steps here? Do we talk about people who don't make the transition to college and to the workplace with regard to such issues? We're in an age where we should not shoot off our mouths and publicize what we say; however, we're also in an age where this is so easy to do and many more people are doing it.

- d. We could do something additionally for teachers with reference to handling diversity. Something is being done now in the school system, but our perception is that it is not a top priority. What we are thinking about can fit under the umbrella, however, so as to not disrupt the teachers as they go about performing the other demands upon their time.
- e. The best way still is to hire teachers and administrators of color. It also might be helpful to have kids talk to new teachers during their orientations versus or in addition to whatever information ADL now provides teachers. How do we draw in people (or different people) to have this conversation? Can the PTA help? At any rate, we should send out a link to the UCLA video to get people engaged.
- f. In lieu of hiring teachers and the stated difficulty in doing so, maybe a magnet school approach should be explored.

Expressions of thanks were directed to Brian for being a part of the group for the past two years as well as extensions of best wishes to him in his retirement. Brian has been instrumental in positioning a Title III Grant to the school libraries for the purchase of books related to diversity. The final selection has to be determined by June 30th so there's still time to adjust what titles are being ordered. Several members of TEAM Westport have collaborated with Brian thus far to make the selections. The books will be promoted somehow.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 AM.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 5, 2011, at 7:30 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Bernicestine McLeod
Secretary