

**TEAM Westport Meeting Minutes**  
**June 4, 2013, 7:30 AM**  
**Room 201**  
**Westport Town Hall, Westport, CT**

**Attendees:** Susan Ellis, Judy Hamer, Catherine Onyemelukwe, Brett Aronow, Harold Bailey (Presiding), Bernicestine McLeod, Maggie Mudd, Steve Daniels, and Dolores Paoli

**Guest:** James D'Amico, Westport Public Schools Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator for Grades 6-12 and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Project

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 AM.

**New Business:**

Harold framed the discussion for today: Where are we, where are we going, how can we work with Mr. D'Amico and the schools? Also how do we leverage what we have put in place for programming with what he might want the students to experience?

**James D'Amico:**

- 1) Feedback from TEAM Westport helped with developing the new Social Studies curriculum.
- 2) This is the 4<sup>th</sup> year of grades 6-12 Social Studies coordination. Before students could graduate with only one semester on topics outside of the Western world. The ultimate goal of this curriculum is to give depth and exposure by bringing Social Studies to life on the student's level. Kids today will move on to something they're interested in and there are tons more options. Now info can be obtained very easily; however, guidance as to what information is correct is more necessary. Now history is taught in themes vs. facts. There is no more chronological memorization of the presidents. Testing no longer consists of answering multiple choice questions.
- 3) The ninth grade course deals with global themes and a diversity of themes that involves solving corporate, cultural, humanitarian interests and problems. It's amazing what the students did. Teachers will continue to research and work on course.
- 4) The 10<sup>th</sup> grade course is US History in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century (covering social issues in the US and more recent civil rights issues and history such as gay rights, women's rights, and counter movements).
- 5) For the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades, the curriculum includes a discussion of the American Government, an AP course on US government and politics, and Area Studies (African American, Asian American, Latino/a American) that can be used as an elective – a 1 semester minimum elective. For example, a teacher will be attending a work shop with the American Red Cross to be able to include humanitarian aspects in courses.
- 6) For the middle school, a revised guide will be coming out. It used to be a 3-year course covering American history. This course did not match state requirements. Students learned a lot about the US. Currently,
  - a. In 6<sup>th</sup> grade, they study world geography and culture.
  - b. The 7<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum will be new next year covering an introduction to history, the formation of nations and industrialization and its impact on people.
  - c. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade covers US history. Now it will cover post-World War II and human rights (Civil Rights). It will start with the Civil War and come up to the current day. This will

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not study the civil rights movement as a standalone and emphasizes the context of modern events.

Questions:

How can we (TEAM Westport) help with programming in the school system?

- There are lots of people in the community and on TEAM Westport with first-hand experience. There are ways for us to interact via pre-arranged sessions.
- Documentaries are good, but it is great for students to have firsthand info.

Frameworks come from out of the state, so is something potentially missing from the curriculum?

- The school systems use software called Atlas to look at core curriculums and make connections with the community and each other.

Do you address humanitarian conflict prevention and crisis resolution in the curriculum? What efforts are there to teach how to prevent conflicts and the role of NGOs and multinational corporations and their political importance?

- The staff is now looking at the American Government course as the best place to cover this. Currently, it is very traditional and has been around 15-20 years. We want to make it more focused on citizen activism.
- To fulfill the curriculum, traditional textbooks don't do the job so we need to supplement with other Social Studies materials primarily from the web. Stories from 'real people' are more interesting than the fiction.
- James Basker, President of the Gilder Lehrman Institute, is very good and is very willing to possibly partner with the school system.
- Technology has helped us tremendously.

What's the best way for us to coordinate with you and the school system?

- Timing is always the issue. It is necessary to try to take what people are passionate about and make it relevant to the curriculum. It would be a great start to have our backgrounds on file. One step is to reintroduce the teachers to TEAM Westport. Julie Heller is the English department head and is very interested in outreach.
- We have an extended group within this community. In general, we need to have plans in place before November. We need to get information together during the summer for the coming school year.
- What format should we use?  
Action: Create Google form to collect our backgrounds and book recommendations. We can consult with each other via email.
- Should we speak with Julie Heller? Yes. We can come together in the fall with a goal to work together in the middle school especially.

If we are involved with other organizations, are there ways to encourage others to work with the school?

- The schedule drives everything. It's easier to work with the middle school and very difficult with the high school.

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What about night time events?

- Maybe some will work such as presentations in the Library. An example might be congressional campaigns. We can also create and use video tape to be shown to the classes. We can tell the TV class. They will film and attend events in the community – Jim Honeycut. They are always looking for a project as an internship opportunity. Podcasts created by the Westport Library are good. Students can take advantage of the concept of a ‘flipped classroom’ where they can watch a lecture; then discuss and interact in class.

**Old Business:**

**Programming Strategy and Game Plan:**

- 1) Look at inviting Ayad Akhtar, author of American Dervish. His book is about growing up Muslim in the heartland. He currently teaches at Bard. He also won a Pulitzer for the play *Disgraced*. His premise is that adaptive behavior is inimical to self-knowledge. He discusses how to be true to yourself and get along successfully.
- 2) Eboo Patel wrote a book about religion in America. He is not an academic; he engages in an interfaith dialog. He will be here in August with a youth group. He spoke at a UCC Conference.

**Education Committee:**

- 1) We have two candidates for the TEAM Westport Scholarship award at Staples. Our current method of finding candidates is to have the teachers and administration nominate seniors.
- 2) We brainstormed about how, going forward, to possibly revamp the award process.  
Action: We could have essay competitions on diversity written on the freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior levels, with publicity and greater involvement. This should have a greater impact all around. Dolores, Maggie, Susan, and Brett will work on this.

**Marketing Committee:**

- 1) Catherine received the notice for TEAM Westport to march in the Memorial Day parade again. We should think about next year. This year is our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a committee. In 2 years we’ll have been a town committee for 10 years.
- 2) We have some followers on Facebook (32).
- 3) We need to add more material to our website and would like to include book recommendations.  
Action: Please send recommended titles to be added.

**Closing Thoughts:**

There really is a disparity between what students get here versus other places. How do we make our students aware of the disparity and get them to want to make a difference in rectifying it?

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Bernicestine E. McLeod  
Secretary