

TEAM Westport Meeting Minutes
April 1, 2014, 7:30 AM
Room 201, Westport Town Hall, Westport, CT

Attendees: Maggie Mudd, Harold Bailey, Jr. (Presiding), Bernicestine McLeod, Judy Hamer, Dolores Paoli, Susan Ellis, Catherine Onyemelukwe, Brett Aronow, and Barbara Butler.

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 AM.

Maggie moved acceptance of the March 4, 2014 minutes. Judy seconded. The minutes were approved.

New Business

What's Up?

We discussed the NYT's recent article about the lack of children's books reflecting children of color – meaning that there are very few being published. The point is to educate all students about students of color. We need books about other kids that reflect the demographics of our country and our world.

Action:

- Talk to the Westport Library's head children's librarian.
- Get in touch with the school libraries.
- Donate relevant books containing a bookplate from TEAM Westport – can also be in honor of someone.

Old Business:

Programming Strategy and Gameplan:

1. The MLK Soccer Team from NYC is a perennial soccer champion – among the top 10 teams in the country. Al Puchala's son is a co-captain of the Staples team. Sometime in August, the Staples team (Dan Woog is the coach) intends to invite the MLK team to play against the Staples team and do some type of informal social event afterward.

Action: Think about how TEAM Westport might play a role, if any.

2. Westport Country Playhouse – *'Intimate Apparel'*:

- David Kennedy is coming back next month so plans for programming will get rolling in early May. We hope to have as comprehensive a program as we did with *'A Raisin in the Sun'*. Monday, October 27th, Harold will be presenting to the Y's Women and possibly the Y's Men next year. There are plans to tie in Harold's October presentation with a discussion of *'Intimate Apparel'* and attending the play.
- There are plans to tie in with the school system in terms of education classes for teachers starting the end of April or May.
- NCC is having every freshman read the play. Lynn Nottage may come in to lecture after everyone has read it.
- Stephane Kirven will do at least one lecture at SHU.
- The Marketing Committee at the Westport Country Playhouse is looking at how to get to organizations of people of color and the Jewish community.

3. The books, 12 Years a Slave, have been ordered for the discussion session at the Westport Library on May 17th. Also, someone out of NY State has written a book about Solomon Northrup. We may, therefore, be able to have another book discussion on this topic from another angle.

Education Committee:

1. Diversity Essay Contest Recap

The awards ceremony for our Diversity Essay contest winners last night at the Westport Library was great. We all had a great time.

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To further leverage last night, we might:

- Excerpt from other essays and put them on our website and set up a link to them
- Let different voices from Staples be heard as expressed in other essays
- See if we learned anything from the essays that did not win

2. 'Kids of Color'

We received an email from a parent in Westport who has adopted a child of color and is experiencing reactions within the school system to her child similar to what families of color experience and have experienced over time. How might TEAM Westport be able to help with this ongoing situation?

Action:

- We should meet with the parent who wrote the email.
- Can we get a group of parents together as a support group – a standing, established group not an ad hoc group – since the concerns continue to persist?
- Perhaps Positive Directions can play a role in bringing families, school system, and the community together around this issue.
- Get more books in the library on this topic.
- A Library session may attract other parents and families with the same dilemma. Get people of the same mind together and think of other avenues after that. It should be a positive session and one that builds on the essay contest.
- Use *A Better Chance* and *Open Choice* as possible role models in how to address the issue.
- Think about how to address this with the principals and administrators? Go to school counselors to see if there is anybody else in the same situation.
- There are other families with adopted kids in Westport. What is the vehicle to get people to share? The school system has resources but those resources need to be more focused on this issue which has been seen as a non-issue. The school psychologists are in place but do not seem to have recognized it as an issue.
- Dolores, Judy, Bernicestine, and Harold will pursue further.

Marketing Committee:

1. Social Studies Resource list – comprised of people of different racial, ethnic, historical backgrounds.

We should get invitations from teachers.

Action: Send the link to the list again.

2. We have received an invitation from the town to march in the Memorial Day parade.
3. We are looking at a July 1st date for the 'Amistad' event. The Human Rights Commission in Norwalk can co-sponsor. Also, we'll ask the churches to be involved as a result of having shown the film in March at the Westport Library.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 AM.

The next meeting will be held at 7:30 AM on Tuesday, May 6, 2014, in Room 201 of Westport Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Bernicestine E. McLeod
Secretary