

**PARENT TEACHER ADVISORY COMMITTEE
WEST CHICAGO COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL
May 20, 2022
COMMUNITY ROOM: ROOM 1114-1116
ENTRANCE B
326 Joliet St.
West Chicago, IL 60185**

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Mary Howard began the meeting at 7:48am.

2. ROLL CALL:

Present were: Megan Dusing (Parent), Brianne Ferreiro (Teacher), Jennie Fleming (Parent), Sandra Gonzalez (Support Staff), Mary Howard (Assistant Principal), Penny Munoz (Board Member), Crystal Noland Riani (Parent), Jenna Windt (Dean), Veronica Jimenez Winton (Director of English Language Learners and World Language Division Head), Kelsey Wirkus (Teacher), Student 1, Student 2, and Student 3.

Absent: Cruz Maria Barrios (Parent), Dr. Will Dwyer (Principal), Daisy Fernandez (Parent), Stephanie Waller (Parent), and Student 4

Also in Attendance: Elva Slepicka (Special Education Interpreter)

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

No one attended to participate in person, nor were there any electronic submissions.

4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

Mary Howard stated that prior to reviewing the previous minutes, one correction needed to be made, which was a change of date from October 6, 2021 to October 5, 2021. Jenna Windt motioned to approve the minutes from June 9, 2021 and from October 5, 2021. Kelsey Wirkus seconded. All present committee members approved the minutes.

5. EXCUSED ABSENCE POLICY:

Ms. Windt summarized the current excused absence policy in place for the 2021-2022 school year and the changes to the state's new student "mental health" days implemented in January 2022.

Ms. Windt discussed the variety of reasons that parents excuse their students for and explained how the attendance policy affects school work. Ms. Windt added that when students use two consecutive mental health days, the student is referred to a social worker or their counselor to get the additional support that they may need.

Ms. Jimenez-Winton outlined the administration's concerns regarding the current attendance policy and discussed options to make the attendance policy more responsive to the cultural needs of our students and families.

The committee discussed the recommendations for changes to the attendance policy and shared strategies for increasing parent engagement and awareness regarding the importance of student attendance. Having conversations with students and parents earlier in the year, using Step Up days, and looking at summer dates were discussed as options for being more proactive.

Committee discussed the remote learning format and how assignments, absences, and missed lessons can be addressed for students. Concerns were raised about the challenges for students associated with multiple missed days, such as when days are missed due to quarantine, and the challenges for teachers in trying to accommodate multiple students who miss multiple days and were therefore at different places in the lesson. Options for academic supports were also discussed.

Ms. Howard thanked the Board and the teachers for starting the Student Support Initiative (SSI) that will go into effect for the 2022-2023 school year. Ms. Howard summarized the structure and format of the Student Support Initiative and explained the focus on academic and social/emotional. SSI will be on Tuesday-Friday for 30 minutes with a teacher that is most likely not one of their other teachers. This is similar to a "homeroom" class (ungraded) with two of the days devoted to what it means to be a Wildcat, adjusting to high school, and some explicit social/emotional lessons.

Committee discussed the cap on the number of absences that is currently in place in the attendance policy and how it impacts missed work, student discipline, hospitalizations, and non-vacation related needs.

The use of Mental Health days was discussed and the supports provided to students when multiple mental health days have been used.

6. DRESS CODE:

Ms. Windt summarized the current hat and hood policy. Ms. Howard added that the administration will be removing the prohibition of hats and hoods for the 2022-2023 school year from the handbook.

Ms. Windt explained the adjustment made in the implementation of the hat and hood policy in response to increased anxiety in students coming back to school having been away from school and in a remote learning environment. Ms. Windt added that the students feel more comfortable wearing a hat or a hood and that this has been in a "trial mode" since Spring 2021 without any issues. Ms. Windt stated that according to the student handbook, students

are prohibited from wearing hats or hoods, but we are not enforcing it. Thus, the recommendation is to remove that language from the handbook as it is not being enforced.

Ms. Windt summarized what has been done regarding dress code, specifically for females. Ms. Howard stated that in the fall she, Ms. Windt, a social worker and a Division Head met to discuss the dress code with a group of female students. Ms. Windt stated it is very difficult to put a “one size fits all” policy on dress code.

Ms. Jimenez-Winton discussed challenges when students comply for the moment but then change how they are wearing their outfit later in the day i.e. during lunch. Ms. Jimenez-Winton added that the dress code is difficult to enforce and asked the teachers for their perspective.

Students on the committee shared their perspective on student dress. Students are here to learn, and this is not a fashion show or an opportunity to show off their body. Students should keep in mind how they are representing themselves, their parents and their school as a whole. The middle school has a rule that straps on a shirt had to be two fingers wide. There are cute tops, but people’s individual bodies must be taken into consideration.

Committee members discussed a variety of perspectives and suggestions regarding student dress including the balance of student choice and what is appropriate based on setting, partnering with parents to set expectations, using this as a teachable moment, and the future application of dress code in careers.

Committee discussed other procedural items related to dress code such as how that applies to changing for PE, the approach taken when talking to students about dress code in the Dean’s office, and the use of social workers to further process dress code issues when students are upset.

7. TARDIES:

Ms. Windt provided an explanation of tardies in the school and stated that historically, 1st hour is when most of the tardies are issued. As students accrue tardies, they are given a variety of supports—including an after school detention. Ms. Windt said that this year the implementation of lunch detentions is more culturally responsive to students who may have after school responsibilities and is an attempt to stop consequences from escalating.

Ms. Windt explained that students are late to school for a variety of reasons: parents who leave for work and the students fall back to sleep, students who stop for coffee in the morning, missing a bus and waiting for a ride, etc.

Ms. Munoz asked about the timeliness of notification of a student's absence. Ms. Windt explained that automated calls occur in the evening but not at the moment when a class period is missed. While it may seem that a call to parents right when a period is missed may

seem like a good idea, Ms. Windt explained that students are frequently meeting with teachers, counselors, etc. and may arrive late to a class. Ms. Windt added that we do not want to cause concern for something that happens so frequently.

Ms. Munoz asked about a student going “under the radar” with regards to tardies. Ms. Windt stated that the team approach to support the student is best. One person may have been made aware of special circumstances that are impacting a student and can share that knowledge with other team members. Dean’s Assistants and Dean’s Specialists communicate very frequently with the Deans to say when they have seen certain students multiple times a day or even that week. Students meet with a Dean’s Specialist on the 5th tardy.

8. ATTENDANCE UPDATE

Ms. Windt provided an overview of the school’s attendance rate which has been in the mid 90s. With the uptick of COVID in April and May, our attendance percentage dropped slightly, but Ms. Windt is hopeful that with returning in the fall the attendance percentage will increase.

Mrs. Dusing inquired about a digital attendance system where a parent could enter an absence for their student electronically. Ms. Dusing also asked about how errors in attendance are handled when the error was made on the school’s side; (for example, if a student was AP testing but wasn’t marked excused for all the periods). Ms. Windt explained that the student can go to the Attendance Office to get that fixed and/or speak with the teacher involved.

9. OTHER

Ms. Jimenez-Winton discussed Parent Engagement. Next year, there will be a Parent Engagement Series in both English and Spanish with dates, topics, and locations provided in Registration packets.

Ms. Howard then discussed the time of future meetings (evenings being a possibility). Ms. Munoz said it may be beneficial to move some of the meetings to the evenings, but for continuity it might not be possible. Ms. Howard expressed concern over the students being able to attend due to their own commitments. Student 3 discussed that she has volleyball practice everyday and games a few days a week, so depending it may or may not be possible.

Student 2 said that he too would have had practices and/or games for school in addition to playing club soccer, which could make it difficult. Mrs. Dusing added that there is never a good time—she is a teacher in a feeder district and she has her own children with their own schedules that need rides. Student 3 added that for this specific meeting, Dr. Dwyer gave her three other dates, and she couldn’t make any of them due to volleyball.

Ms. Howard stated that she was hopeful all committee members would be able to attend, but if that was not possible, she understood. .

10. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Munoz motioned to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Gonzalez seconded. All in favor. None opposed.