

Westerly Teachers Association
44 Park Avenue
Westerly, R.I., 02891
Phone: 401 348 2728 (Maureen Logan, Staff Development Office)

Data Collection: Bill Harju, Interviewer

Data Source: Maureen Logan, Staff Development Coordinator and former Union President
Maguerite Long, President

A. Demographics

Number of Schools: (11)

Elementary: 5

Middle/Junior High: 1

High School: 1

Other

2 Alternative sites - One small high school for behavioral problems; and another for unmotivated but capable students. Both are affiliated with Westerly High School.

2 Preschool sites which include special needs students and regular preschool students selected by lottery.

Total number of employees by classification: (576)

Certified: 333

Classified: 231

Management/supervisory: 12

Other: part time coaches, substitute teachers not factored in.

Current enrollment by level: (3622)

Elementary 1755

Middle/Junior High: 836

High School: 1031

Current enrollment by race/ethnicity

Caucasian: 3400

Hispanic: 24

Black/African American: 50

Asian: 95

Other: 14

Current enrollment-Language

Westerly has approximately 70 students (mostly Chinese) enrolled in a bilingual program. The program is located at the high school, the middle school, and one "magnet" elementary school.

Average Class Size by level:

Primary: K: 20; 1-3: 23.

Upper: 26

Middle: Middle schools utilize a team teaching approach

High School: 25

Unusual among TURN locals, Westerly's actual class size is lower than the contractual requirements. Actual class sizes are 16 at kindergarten, 18 at grades 1-3, and 20 at grades 4-5.

Private School enrollments in area/trends:

267 students attend private religious schools in the area. In addition, there are a handful of students who are home schooled.

School District Budget

Total expenditures \$29,598,522

Expenditures per student: \$8059

B. Significant Background Information:

. Union Structure/Roles

Officers (Names, longevity)

Marguerite Long, President (4 years)
Chris Sieczkiewicz, First Vice President (2 years)
Second Vice President, DD Sevigney (1 year)
Recording Secretary, Joe Light (3 years)
Courtesy Secretary, Lynn Moody (3 years)
Treasurer: Louise DiCarlo (1 year)

Executive Body

Because Westerly is a small district, both the executive and policymaking bodies are combined into one structure: the Executive Board. The Board is composed of the officers, the Building Representatives from the 8 sites, as well as the Professional Rights and Responsibilities persons (PR&R - or grievance representatives) from each site. The Executive Board thus composed performs both the policymaking and executive functions of the organization. The Building Representatives are based upon a ratio of one per 25 faculty members. The PR&R representatives are based on the ratio of one per forty. In each case, major fractions of 25 or 40 do not entitle the sites to additional representation.

Representative Body: See above

Committees-Union:

Bylaw Revision
Nominating Committee
Budget Committee
Negotiations Committee

Committees-Joint:

Teacher Evaluation
Mentor/Mentee
Professional Development
Curriculum
Technology

In addition, joint district/union taskforces are appointed as necessary.

Permanent Union Staff (Names, positions, tenure)

The WTA has no permanent local union staff exclusively assigned to Westerly, however, the President is released 40%, and the PR&R Chairperson is released 20%, both paid for out of local union dues. In addition, WTA obtains services from the Rhode Island UniServ Staff Person, who serves Westerly and approximately ten other Rhode Island locals.

Term limits

The WTA has no term limits.

Union Partnerships

NEA Learning Lab- A partnership between NEA, the District and the WTA. The partnership began in 1989, with an off-site conference involving local union leadership and management to develop a framework for working together. The result, over the past 11 years, has included joint programs in the area of shared decisionmaking, technology, and staff development.

Principal means of communication with members:

WTA News - A monthly newsletter, authored by the President, and prepared locally.

Memos, Notes, Site Bulletins - On various issues, either jointly with the District or by the Union President, memos will be drafted for distribution to the membership. In addition, school site bulletins contain association announcements, and the Union often posts items of immediate interest on the bulletin board of faculty lounges.

Meetings: WTA conducts 5 membership meetings per year, and additional meetings at the discretion of the President. The membership maintains the exclusive authority to approve contracts and contract amendments, and bylaws changes.

Membership Engagement

New Teacher Orientation: Organized around staff development credit, the Union sponsors a new teacher orientation at the local public library. The program involves a four-hour time period, with lunch provided.

Retirement/Installation Banquet: Annually, the WTA sponsors a banquet that includes recognition for retirees, and installation of officers.

2 Off-site Professional Development Days: Two days organized by the Staff Development department of the district, paid jointly by the district and the union, at a nearby hotel or other facility, involving a variety of staff development presentations. In addition, the Westerly Teacher of the Year is honored during this function.

Significant recent budget developments (cutbacks, infusions) if any:

Rhode Island school budgets must be submitted to the Town Council by November, for the following school year, and then must be approved by the Town Council by March. In 1998-99 following several years of level funding, the district proposed an 11.6% increase which was approved by the town council. A group of citizens opposed to the increase circulated a petition - which required only 200 signatures in a community of 13-14,000 voters - to conduct a referendum. The referendum was defeated by a slim majority and the increase was granted.

In order to understand this district, what is it necessary to know/understand?

During the 1970's, and including 1980, the WTA and the District experienced a decade of labor strife, including three strikes culminating in a 5-week strike in 1980. As a result of the 1980 strike, the parties began to look to a new and more collaborative relationship. Now, for the past twenty years the parties have been evolving a collaborative relationship which has extended through four superintendents, and 3 union presidents. As a result of this relationship:

- The union and management work in partnership, sorting out difficulties as they occur - not waiting for contract negotiations time.
- The union takes the lead in school staff training in the district through the professional development coordinator who is a union member, and who works with a professional development joint committee.
- Three of the five local elementary schools are led by teachers, not principals (Though this program is currently being phased out through negotiations).
- Several positions which would normally be administrative positions, are bargaining unit positions which are posted and selected through a participatory structure.

- An atmosphere exists in the district that results in mutual respect, joint decisionmaking, and collaboration that is highly valued by both the administration and the Union.

Key crises: See above.

Measured outcomes - test scores, college acceptance rates (1997-98 & 1998-99)

(See attachment ___) (Also, see Rhode Island Dept. of Ed. Website: www.infoworks.ride.uri.edu)

Current Superintendency:

Name: Dr. Scott H. Kizner, PhD

Background

Came from Clark County, Virginia where he had been the Assistant Superintendent and the Special Education Director.

Tenure: 1 year

Management team:

The District Leadership Team includes approximately 18 people of whom at least 11 are members of the WTA Bargaining Unit. The Union President is also included, though does not always attend.

Other employee unions (Name, approximate unit membership, relationship to teachers)

Secretaries, instructional assistants, maintenance & custodians

All support staff are represented by the Local 15 of the Laborer's International Union of North America AFL/CIO

Food services:

District food services are privatized through the Marriot Corporation.

Principals:

Principals and other managers have an informal bargaining group of 12.

Status of contract:

Expiration of current agreement: 8/31/00

Agency fee: yes

Binding arbitration: yes

Strikes: 3 strikes during the 1970's and in 1980

Unfair labor practices: None

Significant litigation: None

Approximate number of grievances per year: Approximately 6

Union role in community:

Political endorsements:

WTA has no local Political Action Committee. No formal involvement in local political races, except for the 1998-99 referendum on the School District Budget.

Community engagement

WTA Joined the Westerly Chamber of Commerce but is not particularly active.

C. Education Reform

Union posture:

Pro/anti reform

The WTA has a 20 year history of collaboration and reform. The union has made the transition to dealing with the issues of student achievement in addition to traditional bread and butter issues.

Membership attitudes

The membership is heavily into extensive staff development. On the spectrum of school reform, elementary teachers are most supportive, middle school next, with high school teachers being most resistant to change.

Financial commitment:

The WTA budgets for the annual Professional Development conference, and also pays to release the Union President for 40% of a full time assignment, much of which is devoted to working through reform issues with the district leadership.

Reform elements in contract:

1. Article II - Philosophy: Describes a mutual union/district commitment to student achievement, and establishes provisions for participative management and shared decisionmaking.
2. Article XXXVIII - Instructional Coordinators: Establishes that curriculum coordinator positions are elected by the teachers within the subject area. Also establishes several districtwide coordinator positions remain within the bargaining unit, and are selected in accordance with the contract.
3. MOA provides for several schools to be governed by a teacher leader selected by the teaching staff.

Organization/structure for reform:

Central coordinating structure:

The District Leadership Team which meets twice per month and includes the top management, and the coordinators (bargaining unit positions), and the Union President deals with issues relating to reform and change.

District office structure: See above.

Union structure: See above.

Responsibility (within union - leaders? Staff?)

Since the relationship between the Union and the District is so positive, the responsibility for delivering on educational change is shared, and the primary responsibility is worked through the District Leadership Team, as well as through regular meetings and discussions between the Union leadership and the Superintendent.

Organization around standards

Development of standards:

The District is in the process of developing districtwide standards in each of the major curricular areas. Curriculum committees are being formed and charged with developing standards in each area. The State of Rhode Island uses the New Standards Reference Exams developed by the National Center for Education and the Economy. For three years, schools have been (and will continue to be) compared based upon results from these tests in reading, writing, and math. Accordingly, the District will be developing standards that will be geared toward the material which is being tested by these exams. While the districtwide program is just beginning, in recent years schools, teams and academic departments have worked on standards projects on a piecemeal basis, in response to the national trend in standards development.

Implementation

Implementation is spotty - as some areas have developed standards and begun to implement them, prior to the testing. It is anticipated that some frustration may be experienced from schools that have progressed in the area of standards, while the district program had not been put in place.

Role of union:

The union has supported the employment of a curriculum coordinator, and has advocated for a districtwide approach to standards development and implementation. Most of the leadership in curriculum development is through the coordinators who are bargaining unit members.

Training/Staff Development:

For the past three years (since the adoption of the statewide testing), training and staff development has been geared toward the standards movement. Examples include speakers from the New Standards Project, day long staff development programs which are site based, allowing school sites to work on standards development, and discussions of how to implement standards developed by various national curriculum organizations. In addition, literally hundreds of after school and summer workshops over the past three years have been devoted to development and implementation of standards.

Professional Development

Program description & operation:

The basis for the Westerly Professional Development Program is included in the Collective Bargaining Agreement, and includes a bargaining unit coordinator position for Staff Development, and language relating to stipends for staff development, numbers of inservice days per year, a jointly sponsored two day off-site conference, and provision for a variety of workshops and summer institutes.

The stipend program involves a \$350 stipend to a teacher who attains 40 hours of approved staff development. The program is coordinated by the staff development coordinator, and teachers can earn as many of these stipends as their individual schedules permit.

Relationship to union:

The program is fully negotiated and included in the CBA.

Relationship to colleges/universities:

Westerly does not have an ongoing relationship with local colleges and universities, but several different projects with the University of Rhode Island around staff development have occurred over the past several years. An existing course in Differentiated Learning is being offered locally in Westerly, through the University of Connecticut Teachers enrolling in the course will earn credit and the district will pay their tuition.

Low performing Schools

Program description

There is a state plan being developed by the Rhode Island Department of Education to be implemented within the next few years. In theory, the plan will establish cut off exam scores. Schools that are unable to raise scores over a period of time will be subjected to review, support and assistance. Locally, the Superintendent is being evaluated in part based upon an objective that says 90% of the students will meet or exceed the performance standards (performance tests in reading, writing, math and health) by 2003. Thus far, there is no program in place to deal with schools that do not satisfactorily move to meet the superintendent's objective.

Relationship to union: None yet.

Incentives for school improvement - measures to raise student achievement or teacher quality:

Nothing formally in place, though the statewide testing program with publicly announced test results is forcing conversation about improvement.

Peer review:

Program description: No program.

School based management/decisionmaking related to school improvement

Program structure:

The Westerly contract contains a philosophical statement defining the union and district commitment to development of site based decisionmaking in the schools and establishes parameters around with such decisionmaking must take place. While the contract does not specify the authority of the site based decisionmaking groups, nor does it define the makeup of such groups these specifics are spelled out in memoranda of understanding written specifically for the high school, middle schools and elementary schools. These MOU's are fine tuned each negotiations session. The result is that Westerly has several schools with no principals - teachers operate the schools with "teacher facilitators" selected to perform administrative functions. Further, many of the roles typically assigned to administrators - coordination of staff development, early childhood programs, ESL, Title 1, etc., are run by teachers.

Role of site teams:

The role of site teams is determined at the site.

Contract/rule waivers:

The contract does not provide for waivers, however the relationship between the parties is such that waivers by mutual agreement could be easily accomplished.

Pay for Performance

No program.

Attachments

1. Westerly Collective Bargaining Agreement, September, 1999 - August 31, 2000
2. Summary of sections of WTA Contract which refer to restructuring, shared decision-making and staff development.
3. WTA Budget, 1999-2000
4. WTA Constitution & Bylaws
5. Evolution of a District/Union Partnership: Professional Development
6. NEA/WTA Supports District Initiatives
7. Information Works
8. Information Works - Rhode Island
9. Information Works - Westerly
10. "How did your district fare?" 1/9/00 - Providence Sunday Journal
11. Westerly Professional Development - A district/union partnership
12. Staff Development Newsletter: Learning Line, January, 1999
13. Staff Development Newsletter: Learning Line, January, 2000
14. Portraits in Change - Snapshot: Westerly R.I.
15. Memo: Contractual monthly meetings beyond school day (Sample of Union memo to members)
16. Letter re: New Report Card, specifically, home visits (Sample of joint union/district letter to staff)
17. WTA News - November/December, 1999
18. Westerly Learning Lab (brochure)
19. Learning Laboratories Initiative (brochure)