

PUBLIC HEARING

Confronting the Heroin/Opioid Epidemic in Pennsylvania Thursday, June 2, 2016 The Fez Aliquippa, PA

Testimony of: Dr. Roberta DiLorenzo, Superintendent Washington School District
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Washington School District Demographic Information

Washington is a small inner city school district located in the City of Washington in Southwestern Pennsylvania. Washington School District students reside in the City of Washington or the Borough of East Washington. This nine square mile area has a population of 13,497. Twenty-three percent (23%) of families are below the poverty line. Our school age economically disadvantaged total 70% of our population. The City of Washington is the County seat and provides numerous services for dependent families. There are four (4) women's shelters in the City as well as four (4) federal housing properties and four (4) group homes. As a result, we have a transient population with some students withdrawing and returning as many as 4 times per year. It is not uncommon for Washington to be the fourth or fifth district a new student enrollee experiences in his/her school career. In addition, we service an intensive population that requires resiliency training and self advocacy to assist with managing their many challenges. Washington County data indicate that 58.3% of children under five are living in economically at-risk families. Research indicates that such children's growth and development are negatively impacted by risk factors such as living in economically stressed families, poor or no pre-natal care for the mother, parents with low educational levels and/or abuse and neglect, The more risk factors the child experiences, the greater his/her risk of school failure or addiction.

Washington School District has a total of 1,459 students.

Grades 7-12 - 622 (Males - 324; Females - 298)

Grades K-6 - 837 (Males - 430; Females -407)

Ethnicities: American Indian - .07%; Asian - .34%; Black - 24.47%; Hispanic - 3.43%;

Multi-racial - 16.86%; White - 54.83%

Special Education students K-12 -240 (16.45%)

Washington School District employs 133 teachers and 9 administrators and 81 full-time and/or part-time support personnel.

Budget Information: 2016-17 \$26,860,048 Revenues: Local - 40.21%, State - 51.53%,
Federal - 7.89% Other - 0.37% Millage rate - 135 mill (\$13.50 per \$100) 1 Mill = \$60,000

Expenditures: Instruction - 59.42%, Support Services - 29.09%, Non-Instruction - 2.76%,
Debt/Other - 8.73%

Gun Incidents: In 2016, there have been a number of gun incidents in the City of Washington:

- Jan. 4, 2016 - Shots fired & casings found in the residential area of Elm & Houston Streets
- Feb. 28, 2016 - a 14 year old boy arrested with a loaded .38 caliber handgun - numerous shots fired in another residential area
- Mar. 18, 2016 - Parked car with two women inside was shot at twice. Two bullets struck the vehicle. Women unhurt
- Mar. 24, 2016 - Man reported a teen fired a shot at him behind main street of town. 9 mm casings found.
- April 15, 2016 - Two New York men robbed and one man shot in the hip when they went to a residential area to purchase marijuana.
- April 25, 2016 A man was arrested by city police after he fired several shots in the 700 block of Main Street
- April 30, 2016 - A man was found shot inside a vehicle parked on the street in a residential neighborhood.
- May 2, 2016 - A man was arrested after being found with a gun after reports of shooting

- May 4, 2016 – A 19 year old female (2015 graduate) was shot and killed and another wounded in a drive by shooting. The alleged perpetrators were arrested on a Washington County Drug Task Force warrant and a parole violation. It was believed the girls were not the target, but were “in the wrong place at the wrong time.”

Drugs and alcohol addictions breed death, violence and significant life changing consequences to those directly involved and also to many indirectly affected. We must respond to this social crisis with restorative treatments and pro-active efforts to counter the damage done. Therefore, it was not a difficult decision to take advantage of the state offered Narcan and training provided by Washington Drug and Alcohol Commission.

In September, Secretary of Education Rivera notified school superintendents of Act 139, which permits an individual in a position to assist a person at risk of opioid overdose to obtain and administer nalozone (now known as narcan). I began efforts to fulfill the necessary procedures and provide training. I immediately met with our nurses and resource officer to discuss necessary details and proceeded with the support of our Board of Directors. We are focused on assistive, restorative and/or preventative measures.

We obtained a doctor’s order for nurses to administer Narcan from Dr. Anna Binney McCague.

Narcan training was scheduled for Friday, March 4, 2016, an inservice day. Training was delivered by a Washington Drug and Alcohol Commission, Inc. staff member. Twenty-seven (27) staff members were trained.

Employees trained included:

- Nurses
- Principals and Spec. Ed. Supervisor
- Patrolman Foreman, our school resource officer
- Coaches
- Athletic Director
- Guidance Counselors
- Physical Education Teachers
- Dean of Students
- Superintendent
- Curriculum Director

Employees’ main concerns were:

- Liability issues
- Misreading symptoms and administering a dosage to someone who hadn’t taken heroin
- Administering the dosage

After the training, all were reassured that their concerns were addressed and they fully understood the scope of service. The staff members who were trained were so impressed with their newfound knowledge that they recommended all staff receive the training. We have scheduled a session for all employees in Fall 2016.

We requested and received 11 Narcan kits which are available in main office areas, nurses’ offices, stadium and near the AED/ defibrillator boxes in some buildings. Kits have a two (2) year shelf life. Washington Drug and Alcohol Commission, Inc. will notify us when kits are to be replaced.

While we take the responsibility of educating our employees and youth about this social crisis and the toll taken on individuals and society, education doesn’t guarantee equity. Equity is dependent upon the collective efforts of many to support and guide those whose challenges are greater. This is a multi-generational problem – a big business and big money problem. Only a unified, concerted effort will reduce the damage.

We support and align our mission with that of the Washington Drug and Alcohol Commission, Inc. - to enrich the quality of life for persons who have experienced problems related to the use or abuse of alcohol and other drugs. We support the assurance that clients receive the appropriate level of drug/alcohol treatment. Narcan

intervention can't be the sole answer. Addicted persons require appropriate treatment and supportive services. To truly address the problem, all must work together in assisting them to assume a life-long plan of recovery that is suitable to individual needs, and to help maintain a network of treatment and prevention opportunities that will provide a seamless system of services to the community.

Only then will this dirge diminish. The schools are a microcosm of our society and schools are challenged with addressing societal ills. Communities must decide what it is they require of schools. Recognizing the diverse issues facing school communities, society must determine if schools are to be centers of education, rehabilitation, medical and/or mental health. These are very different agencies with each requiring a set of extensive resources.

As it currently appears necessary for schools to deliver services of all agencies in order to provide an education to a growing number of special needs, at risk youth, then medical and mental health reform issues must include the schools' perspectives and focus on the growing responsibilities of educators – who entered the field dedicated to teaching and find themselves responsible for administering medical and mental health interventions. True, we do so willingly and on behalf of our students, but nonetheless our efforts should be recognized and sufficient support provided.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Roberta DiLorenzo
Superintendent of Schools
Washington School District