

**TOWN OF SIMSBURY
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Record of Proceedings

Regular Meeting

April 14, 2020

Ms. Susan Salina called the virtual meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

Roll Call:

Members present: Mmes. Susan Salina, Tara Willerup, Lydia Tedone, Jen Batchelar and Sharon Thomas. Messrs. Todd Burrick, Jeff Tindall and Brian Watson.

Also present: Superintendent Matt Curtis, Assistant Superintendent Erin Murray, Assistant Superintendent Sue Homrok-Lemke, Director of Personnel Neil Sullivan, and Recording Secretary Katie Wilde.

BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Tedone updated the board on the ongoing work at NSBA and CABE. Mr. Tindall reported on the Facilities Master Plan public forum. He noted that the facilities study is close to being done and will move forward to next steps.

Mr. Sullivan reported on the work of the Human Resources Department, citing the work continuing to be done in various departments. He noted that the hiring season has begun with positions posted and virtual interviews taking place, as well as virtual recruiting fairs. Mr. Sullivan stated that he participates in weekly Public Safety Subcommittee meetings with town officials involved in emergency services.

Ms. Lemke reported on the personal protective equipment (PPE) the school district has donated. She reported on the meal distribution to students which total 300-400 meals per week.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

A. Approval of SHS Roof Replacement Specifications

Mr. Curtis stated that the SHS partial roof replacement project was approved previously at referendum. The estimated cost for the project was \$2 million. After reimbursement from the state, the cost will be \$1.4 million. The specifications have been approved by the Public Building Committee, architect, Fire Marshal and town staff. BOE approval is required prior to the scheduling of the pre-bid conference with the state.

Ms. Willerup: MOVE that the Board of Education approve the plans and specifications for the Simsbury High School Partial Roof Replacement Project.

Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved.

INFORMATION AND REPORTS

A. 2020-21 Budget Update

Mr. Curtis stated that the BOE is not comfortable, in the current climate, with supporting the addition of new positions. Therefore the budget has been reduced by

Communications

Approval of SHS
Roof
Replacement
Specifications2020-2021
Budget Update

the value of the new positions that had been requested. This brings the BOE budget to a 2.01% increase, which the BOF has moved to the public hearing. Mr. Curtis noted that the Open Choice Grant allows the flexibility to fund the Capstone Coordinator position next year.

Mr. Burrick asked if we foresee the need for an increase in nursing services in the fall. Mr. Curtis responded that this will be considered close to the time we open schools. He stated that he and Ms. Lemke are in daily contact with the Director of the Farmington Valley Health District. Mr Curtis noted that we are looking at cost savings due to the school closure and those funds could be used moving forward. Ms. Willerup noted the possible need for tutors and Ms. Batchelar for social workers.

B. Distance Learning Update

Distance Learning Update

Ms. Murray stated that since March 13th the district has been working hard on our distance learning plan. We have taken the approach through an equity lens in which school psychologists, social workers and counselors are checking in with families to see if they have what they need technologically.

Principals held faculty meetings to provide direction for their teachers, including the technology that they are using. The purpose of our distance learning plan is to promote teacher to student connections; provide predictable and authentic structures for learning; include student to student and teacher to family communication; review recently taught skills and introduce new learning.

Ms. Murray noted that technology is at the center of what we are doing. She reviewed the technology platforms being used, by grade level. Ongoing teacher training and collaboration occurs when teachers meet with their Professional Learning Communities (PLC).

Ms. Murray reviewed the elementary weekly schedule for students. This structured schedule provides direct standards-based instruction on learning targets. Time is set aside for students needing intervention, as well as flexible time for teachers and students to communicate with one another. Teachers are receiving support from Language Arts Consultants and Math Coaches, and are being given tools to increase their technical skills.

HJMS learning continues with their motto of Connections, Challenge, Character. HJMS and SHS weekly planning include both synchronous and asynchronous learning. This provides students with a balance between receiving instant feedback and clarification, and allowing students to work at their own pace. Ms. Murray reviewed the weekly schedule for SHS and HJMS. Identified classes are held at specific times on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Opportunities for small group and intervention occur on Wednesdays.

Ms. Murray stated that special education and general education are working closely together in order to support our more than 500 students who receive special education services. IEPs are being implemented to the extent possible. School psychologists, social workers, secondary counselors and our Choice Specialist are all addressing the mental health component for our students. Other partners in the work include paraprofessionals, nurses, tutors and instructional technology specialists. SRIP teachers and Math Tutors are working in small groups with K-6 students. Our

ELL students are receiving support with daily assignments. General education teachers keep special education teachers informed of any concerns they have about students in their classes.

Ms. Murray reviewed grading options for the 3rd trimester at HJMS and the 4th quarter at SHS. At HJMS the 3rd trimester opened on March 13th. Phase I learning has been graded for completion. Phase II learning will be identified by PLCs for grading. At SHS, a decision will be made in June about whether to offer a pass/incomplete option for students. The decision has been made to not administer final exams in June.

Ms. Murray discussed the teamwork and collaboration that is happening throughout the district. This includes PLCs, grade level meetings, department meetings, special services meetings, student intervention teams, faculty meetings and meetings between administrators and department supervisors. Ms. Murray stated that later this month a survey will be sent to families to get input on our distance learning process. This will allow us to grow and adjust, as we need to, as time goes on. Ms. Murray noted that there have been challenges, as the district works to adjust and provide an engaging learning experience for our students.

Ms. Willerup stated that the Curriculum Committee met and the district has done an amazing amount of work in a short period of time. She noted that it is fortunate that we have the 1:1 Chromebook program in place for grades 7-12. Staff worked hard to ensure that all students have access to technology.

Mr. Watson asked if the pass/fail option would apply to all classes or those of the students choosing. Ms. Murray responded that this is a part of the discussion going on now. Ms. Thomas asked if the district or the state will make the decision on whether to offer a pass/fail option. Mr. Curtis responded that Commissioner Cardona has recommended to superintendents that districts move in this direction. He noted that in conversations with similar districts most feel that this option may be the way to go. Ms. Willerup noted that this would just be for the quarter. Ms. Batchelar questioned how this would affect a student's GPA. Ms. Murray responded that the administration has looked at the math, and that information will be provided once a decision is made.

Mr. Burrick asked if there will be enough time between receiving survey results and May 20th to make changes. Ms. Murray responded that the survey will only have 6-8 questions and there will still be multiple weeks before the possibility of return to school. In response to Ms. Thomas, she stated that the responses will be based on grade level. Mr. Curtis noted that the degree of engagement for students vary based on circumstances at home. He stated that we need to plan as if we are out for the remainder of the year.

Ms. Thomas asked if we will request input on our ability to connect with students during distance learning. Mr. Curtis stated that Phase II of our distance learning plan provides many touchpoints and allows for family input. Ms. Tedone asked about teacher feedback on teaching from home. Mr. Curtis noted that their situation is parallel to that of students learning from home, dependent on family circumstances and degree of comfort with technology. He stated that teachers have jumped into remote learning with two feet.

Ms. Salina asked about the work of our tutors and intervention specialists. Ms.

Murray responded that as needs arise, special education teachers connect with general education teachers to support students. Ms. Lemke stated that the social workers and school psychologists have not seen an increased demand. Teachers will call them in if necessary, as well as the school nurses. She stated that we are making sure that every child is accounted for and receiving services if needed.

Ms. Salina asked if parents know to reach out to classroom teachers if their child is having difficulty. Ms. Murray responded that this is part of the plan and goes both ways between teacher and parent. Ms. Thomas asked if there are many students not participating in the online learning. Ms. Murray responded that are not many that she is aware of, there have been a few situations where counselors have stepped in. She confirmed that we are checking in on students who have struggled in the past.

Mr. Tindall noted that students in 4th grade or above had exposure to Google, and asked about providing supports to students K-3. Mr. Curtis said we understand that family circumstances can affect the degree of learning, and there is not a one size fits all solution. He suggested that non-certified staff could be available to provide smaller group help.

Ms. Batchelar asked if there has been a concern with students calling out sick. Mr. Curtis responded that attendance has not been an issue. Teachers follow up with families if there is a concern. Ms. Tedone asked about the Governor Lamont's executive order relative to school bus companies. Mr. Curtis stated that the district has been in negotiation with Salter's Express and may see some level of savings.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Tedone: MOVE to adjourn the meeting at 7:31 p.m.

Ms. Willerup: Seconded. So moved.

Jen Batchelar
Secretary

Katie Wilde
Recording Secretary

Adjournment