

**TOWN OF SIMSBURY
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Record of Proceedings

Regular Meeting

June 8, 2021

Ms. Susan Salina called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m. in the BOE conference room.

Roll Call:

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

Members absent: Mrs. Jen Batchelar.

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

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

None

Public Audience

COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOE COMMUNICATIONS

Members of the board complimented the graduation ceremony the previous evening. Mr. Sullivan provided an update on the interview process for the Director of Equity and Access position. Ms. Thomas requested an update on the Columbus Day holiday. Mr. Curtis responded that the administration is collecting information from other districts in order to frame the discussion for the board.

Communications

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

A. Approval of Minutes of May 19, 2021 Special Meeting

Ms. Thomas: MOVE to approve the minutes of the May 19, 2021 special meeting.

Ms. Willerup: Seconded. So moved.

Approval of Minutes of May 19, 2021 Special Meeting

B. Approval of Minutes of May 25, 2021 Meeting

Ms. Willerup: MOVE to approve the minutes of the May 25, 2021 meeting.

Mr. Burrick: Seconded. So moved.

Approval of Minutes of May 25, 2021 Meeting

C. Personnel

Mr. Tindall: MOVE that the Board of Education accept the retirements of Catherine Marco and Sandra Vollaro effective June 30, 2021.

Ms. Thomas: Seconded. So moved.

Personnel

Ms. Willerup: MOVE that the Board of Education accept the notice of intent to retire of Kim West and Lori Worthen effective June 30, 2024.

Mr. White: Seconded. So moved.

D. Approval of Superintendent's Contract

Mr. Burrick: MOVE that the Board of Education approve the Superintendent's contract for 2021-22 with a salary increase of 3.0% for 2022.

Mr. Watson: Seconded. So moved.

E. Approval of Northwest Community Bank Scholarship

Mr. Watson: MOVE that the Board of Education approve the Northwest Community Bank Scholarship, to be disbursed in 2022.

Ms. Willerup: Seconded. So moved.

F. Approval of Professor Gilbert Maffeo Jr. Scholarship

Mr. Burrick: MOVE that the Board of Education approve the Professor Gilbert Maffeo Jr. Scholarship.

Ms. Thomas: Seconded. So moved.

G. Acceptance of Gift from Squadron Line PTO

Mr. Watson: MOVE that the proposed gift of \$3,495.00 to Squadron Line School be approved.

Ms. Thomas: Seconded. So moved.

H. BOE Summer Meeting Schedule

Ms. Willerup: MOVE that the Board of Education cancel regular board meetings scheduled on June 22, July 13, July 27, August 10 and August 24, 2021.

Mr. Watson: Seconded. So moved.

Ms. Willerup: MOVE to amend the agenda and take item V.B. prior to V.A.

Ms. Thomas: Seconded. So moved.

INFORMATION AND REPORTS

A. Equity Council Update

Ms. Lemke explained how the work of the Equity Council relates to the board's strategic goals. She noted the purpose of the Equity Council is to assess and make recommendations that will guide strategic planning and the implementation of change efforts to eliminate equity gaps in the district. Ms. Thomas stated that the Equity Council has been coming together in groups to look at the data. Data points of concern were the over representation of black and brown males in special education

Approval of Superintendent's Contract

Approval of NW Community Bank Scholarship

Approval of Prof. Gilbert Maffeo Jr. Scholarship

Gift from Squadron PTO

BOE Summer Mtg. Schedule

Equity Council Update

and the discipline data.

Ms. Lemke addressed the results of the data audit relative to student performance, climate and student discipline. She provided graphs noting males, females, white males, white females, black/Hispanic males and black/Hispanic females. Ms. Lemke reviewed the special education data, noting that 15% of our student population is classified as special education and black/Hispanic students make up a higher percentage of this population. Ms. Lemke reviewed the data on office referrals which demonstrates a similar outcome. She noted that ADHD stands out as a reason for these referrals. Mr. Burrick asked how Simsbury compares to CT with this data. Ms. Lemke responded that this is a statewide and national trend.

Madison Allen, SHS senior and Equity Council member, addressed the “root cause process” utilized to analyze the data. The analysis was based on the “5 Whys protocol”. She noted that they were instructed not to base solutions on assumptions. The “5 Whys protocol” had the group brainstorm 5 times through to get to questions and other data points. Ms. Allen stated she was in the group analyzing the student discipline data. The group noticed that there was implicit bias and they started to ask more questions such as what does the survey data reflect, what is the culture of the school, what type of language the teachers are using on the discipline referral cards, is there a common definition for referrals across the school district, are the same expectations being shared with teachers and students. These questions provided more data, specifically about the definition when addressing referrals. The group found that across the district the definitions differed and often times was ambiguous, resulting in cases of implicit bias. Ms. Allen stated that the result was a belief that there should be a set definition across the district.

Kevin Weikel, Equity Council member, addressed the four recommendations regarding special education: (1) provide implicit bias training for all teachers and staff members with fidelity, (2) provide culturally responsive training for all staff members in order to aid in developing cultural competence in educating all children, (3) eliminate inequities within the intervention process and assessment by reducing the racial discrepancy of the time students spend within tiers of intervention and the cultural relevance of the materials and assessments used along the way with an emphasis on asset-based approach, and (4) create systems and structures for continual and ongoing analysis of data for discrepancies within placements and achievements.

Ms. Thomas addressed the discipline recommendations. She stated that when the group looked at the handbooks for students/parents and teachers the verbiage is different. There were also inconsistencies as you move between schools. Ms. Thomas stated the second recommendation is that all schools explicitly teach expectations of behavior to students. Ms. Lemke noted that when the group looked into the most frequent referrals they were due to disruption, disrespect and defiance. She stated there need to be clear definitions of what constitutes a referral based on these behaviors. Mr. Curtis noted that ADHD is often associated with these behaviors.

Becky Rosenthal, Math Interventionist at HJMS and Equity Council member, addressed the remaining two recommendations relative to discipline. She noted that as students move through the school system they are coming from 5 different elementary schools with differing expectations and cultures. The group agreed there

needs to be vertical alignment. Ms. Rosenthal stated the recommendation that the administration at each school must evaluate, report and take action on recurring patterns of referrals. She noted this should be an ongoing process. Ms. Lemke noted that the process of an inquiry cycle is important. Ms. Rosenthal pointed out that what gets measured gets managed. Ms. Rosenthal stated the fourth recommendation is to mandate that all staff should be trained, well versed and educated in restorative practices. She noted that this should be in place of a more punitive approach.

Ms. Lemke stated that these recommendations will be utilized to see if the data changes. The recommendations will be brought to Administrative Council members during the summer planning session so that all buildings are in alignment. Mr. Curtis noted that administrators have also done a data dive and have similar recommendations. Ms. Lemke stated these materials will be shared publicly through our website and a brochure will be created.

B. ESSER Grant Overview

Mr. Curtis stated the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) grant provides federal funds for states, towns and educational agencies to respond to the impact of the pandemic. Ms. Lemke provided an overview of the three rounds of ESSER funding. The ESSER I grant, in the amount of \$83,217, was used to purchase 1:1 technology devices. The ESSER II grant, in the amount of \$430,323, was used to purchase 1:1 technology devices and fund the unanticipated teacher hires due to the distance learning mandate. The ESSER III grant is in process. The anticipated amount is \$981,440, 20% of which is required to be spent on learning loss.

Ms. Lemke reviewed the programs put in place to address learning loss. These include general and special education summer enrichment opportunities K-12, elementary math tutors and tiered math support at HJMS. Remaining funds will be used for mental health supports for students and staff, software enhancements resulting from the pandemic, social emotional learning curriculum, and Equity Council recommendations for professional development. Ms. Lemke shared the ESSER III application requirements which include submission of an updated safe return to in-person instruction plan. The initial plan is due to the state June 23 and will be based upon current mandates and requirements that continue to develop. Revisions to the plan can be made through August 15. The grant application is due August 23. Ms. Lemke stated that the district will be seeking input from stakeholders on the reopening plan in a letter that will go out next week.

Mr. Curtis stated that the grant covers a two year period. He noted that we don't want to create any major cliffs with funding. Funds will be set aside in case we have to react to a different instruction model or react to unforeseen circumstances.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

Michele Paige, 7 Hampshire Lane, asked what it will take to get masks removed from children. Mr. Curtis responded that the CT Department of Public Health mandate will remain in place through the end of the year. He stated he is hopeful that the next school year will start with a regular opening. Ms. Paige expressed concern with the social and emotional wellness of children and urged that masks be made optional.

ESSER Grant
Overview

Public Audience

Shannon McLean, 2 Hayes Road, urged that masks be optional in the fall. She stated that masks are causing trauma for our children. Ms. McLean noted it is a hard discussion around funding for the social and emotional wellbeing of our children.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Willerup: MOVE to adjourn the meeting at 8:06 p.m.

Mr. Watson: Seconded. So moved.

Adjournment

Jennifer Batchelar
Secretary

Katie Wilde
Recording Secretary