

TOWN OF SIMSBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION

Record of Proceedings

Regular Meeting

September 28, 2021

Ms. Susan Salina called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. in the Simsbury High School auditorium.

Roll Call:

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

Members absent: Messrs. Todd Burrick and Brian Watson

Also present: Superintendent Matt Curtis, Assistant Superintendent Sue Homrok-Lemke, Assistant Superintendent Neil Sullivan, Director of Infrastructure & Technology Jason Casey, BOE Student Representative Olivia Antidormi and Recording Secretary Katie Wilde.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

Lori Boyko, 15 Oakhurst Road, asked who has the final decision on wearing masks in school, is the decision subjective or are there objective metrics, and does the town receive funding for following specific protocols. Mr. Curtis responded that the BOE does not receive funding for following specific protocols, discussions are happening with the Farmington Valley Health District on using metrics to address mitigation strategies, and the final decision on masks at this time sits with Governor Lamont.

Ms. Batchelar read public comment from **Amy Allen** into the record. Ms. Allen questioned why students cannot continue to learn virtually as they did last year. She questioned who makes the ultimate decision when it comes to flexibility for our students.

COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOE COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Antidormi reported on activities at the elementary schools and HJMS. She noted that SHS is celebrating spirit week with Homecoming occurring this weekend.

Ms. Thomas stated she participated in interviewing candidates for CAGE's upcoming election. She expressed concern with the communication relative to the SHS Homecoming dance.

Ms. Tedone reported on the CREC Council meeting, noting that CREC has 8,000 students attending their schools and 28 participants in their Teacher in Residence program. She stated that the CREC Diversity, Equity and Inclusion user group will be contacting board members. Ms. Tedone reported on the ongoing work being done relative to the bus driver shortage in the state. She provided an update on the work of the NSBA.

Mr. Sullivan provided an update on the vaccination mandate for K-12 schools that went into effect September 27. The 3% of our staff who are not vaccinated are required to submit weekly COVID testing results. Mr. Curtis noted that the state COVID data over the past 6 days has been encouraging. He pointed out the

Public Audience

Committee
Reports

Farmington Valley data tends to lag behind state data.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

A. Approval of Minutes of September 14, 2021 Meeting

Ms. Tedone: MOVE to approve the minutes of the September 14, 2021 meeting.

Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved.

B. Acceptance of Completion of HJMS Project Phase I and Squadron Line School Office Project

Mr. Tindall: MOVE that the Simsbury Board of Education accepts as complete the Squadron Line School Main Office project (128-0105A) and the Henry James Phase I project (128-0106A/CV) and authorizes the acceptance of the school building grants.

Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved.

INFORMATION AND REPORTS

A. Simsbury High School Report

Steve Patrino, Principal, highlighted some of the 2020-21 accomplishments at the high school. These include a successful Equity Week, our first 4 students identified by the College Board as Hispanic scholars, receiving both the Michael's Cup and Unified Sports Program of the year from the CIAC, and the student created "What Just Happened" play performed last spring.

Mr. Patrino addressed events at the high school over the summer. High school students were offered 45 credit earned courses and 60 students took enrichment classes. A new roof and sidewalk were completed, as well as the addition of air conditioning on the third floor. Mr. Patrino noted that the new "8 drop 2" schedule went into effect this school year.

Greg Stillman, Director of School Counseling, provided the results of the school day SAT for the class of 2022 noting that the scores are among the highest in the DRG. He discussed participation in Advanced Placement courses, noting that students are encouraged to challenge themselves at school. Mr. Stillman addressed college success rates for the class of 2021 and stated the goal of the department is for every student to have a plan upon graduation.

Mr. Patrino stated that the BOE goals sit above the Vision of a Graduate (VoG) which is used for the creation of the one pager addressing the school's priorities. Vanessa Massiah, Assistant Principal, addressed the high schools four goals for this year. Goal #1 is to provide a challenging and supportive learning experience. Ms. Massiah highlighted the types of Capstone programs being offered, noting that this year 55 students are participating. She discussed the new "8 drop 2" schedule which has a four day rotation with 58 minute classes.

Ms. Massiah noted that Goal #2 is to ensure success for every student. Teachers

Minutes of
September 14,
2021

Acceptance of
HJMS Project
Phase I and
Squadron Line
Office Project

SHS Report

are asked to identify students who struggle and create appropriate Professional Growth Plan (PGP) goals. Ensuring that social/emotional learning (SEL) is a focus for all, SHS Connect has been re-introduced with a focus on teamwork and day to day Trojan Code behaviors. Goal #3 is to create a safe and positive school environment. Ms. Massiah stated that during the first week of school, when there were 3 half days of professional development, work was done to develop systems for meaningful teacher feedback. Teachers are also working to re-engage student with in-person co-curricular activities. Ms. Massiah stated that Goal #4 is to prioritize teamwork. The school administration is increasing visibility and communication this year, as well as identifying and building staff support and teams.

Mr. Patrina stated that the school's mission this year is to have a compassionate and prideful school community in which everyone feels safe, wanted and heard. Ms. Willerup asked when the Capstone requirement goes into effect. Mr. Patrina stated the graduation requirement starts with this year's junior class.

Ms. Batchelar asked if the lunch waves have improved. Ms. Massiah responded that there has been tremendous improvement since the first day of school. Ms. Batchelar questioned the impact of homework with the new schedule. Mr. Patrina responded that the School Culture Task Force has a representative from each department. The homework policy is 2.5 hours and prior to last year, students had 8 period days. The administration is starting to meet with students to discuss homework concerns. Ms. Batchelar asked if students are still able to participate in the half-day magnet school programs with the new schedule. Mr. Stillman responded that there are students currently attending Greater Hartford Arts Academy (GHAA). Ms. Batchelar asked if the SHS team ever meets with the HJMS team. Ms. Lemke responded that once a month she attends department supervisor meetings at both schools. Additionally, K-12 vertical teams specific to content areas meet regularly.

Ms. Salina asked how college planning is promoted in the school. Mr. Stillman responded that counselors meet with the juniors and their parents in January. Prior to the March SAT students are offered a prep class that is now taken online. Ms. Salina asked how students are grouped for the CONNECT period and the length of that period. Ms. Massiah stated that the period is 32 minutes and students are grouped by grade level and alphabet so that they stay together for 4 years.

Ms. Salina asked the student representatives to share their thoughts on the new schedule. Ms. Antidormi stated the main benefit is the great class time. She noted that students are more stressed about homework, and teacher free periods for extra help are always changing. Mr. Picoult stated that 58 minutes classes work, but if you have any labs they are every day. He agreed that homework is a downside to the schedule.

B. Teaching & Learning Update

Ms. Lemke stated that the restructuring of our central office team included a restructure of the Office of Teaching & Learning. The Director of Elementary Curriculum, Director of Pupil Services, Director of Instructional Technology and Director of Equity and Access work as a team with the Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning. Ms. Lemke presented the SBA scores from the spring of 2021 by student category, noting that the data has been used for the strategic plan prioritization for her department.

Teaching &
Learning Update

Betsy Gunsalus, Director of Elementary Curriculum, discussed her focus this school year. She noted that in March 2020 everything changed and the curriculum focus was more on depth over breadth. Ms. Gunsalus stated that closing the math gap is a major priority. Last spring grade level sequences were adjusted and a daily supplemental math block K-6 was added. Additionally, math tutor hours have been added. Ms. Gunsalus stated there is a focus on standards aligned curriculum and looking at data to determine what is most essential. At the elementary level expanding understanding of the VoG is also an area of focus. Ms. Gunsalus stated that examining and improving tiered intervention will be accompanied with increased teacher involvement in looking at student work and talking about what students need, and real doable Tier 1 teaching strategies. Mrs. Gunsalus stated she is excited to have our language arts consultants, math coaches and interventionists back on the team this year.

Katie Krasula, Director of Pupil Services, stated the department's theme for this year is Row the Boat through Successful Waters. The meaning is for the department to recognize the energy we put toward students' individual needs, as well as the direction and work we do with students and families to move them forward. Ms. Krasula addressed the areas of focus for the Pupil Services Department. Ensuring IEP goals and instruction are aligned to general education standards and the VoG. Develop shared best practices with dyslexia. Develop K-12 SEL practices aligned with the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) five competencies. Ensure referrals have gone through the Student Intervention Team (SIT) process with fidelity. Utilize a new Individualized Education Program (IEP) platform. Provide tiered level behavioral support training.

Tayarisha Batchelor, Director of Equity and Access, stated that her work encompasses the work of all members of the teaching and learning team. She noted that she looks at all of these entities through an equity lens. Dr. Batchelor stated these are great systems, but she is looking at who they working for and where there are opportunities for growth and improvement. She stated she uses the VoG, standards, data and recommendations from the Equity Council as her standards. These drive her questioning, her thinking and her planning.

Dr. Batchelor noted that she has joined the CREC Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) network so her learning is supporting the learning of the district. She will be providing professional development for staff on implicit bias with a focus on unfinished teaching and unfinished learning. Dr. Batchelor noted we need to figure out the things that are working well and find ways to replicate the things that are doing well in the district so that all students have access to the high quality education here in Simsbury. We need to make sure that all equity indicators of success are things that all teachers are thinking about. Before students fall into intervention we are going to make sure there is data discussion, parent involvement and a full team approach so that the student has everything they need. This includes all members of the teaching and learning team. Dr. Batchelor stated that she has met with all of the principals and teams and have data conversations. She brings this information back to the Teaching & Learning Team as a problem of practice. Dr. Batchelor stated that in working with individuals on the team we each take a piece to address these items with our students.

Maggie Seidel, Director of Instructional Technology, reviewed the priorities for the

Technology Department. Students and staff have been provided with 1:1 devices and 50+ software apps. Tech tools are being utilized to access math standards for students. The VoG is embedded with the Trojan Tech Team Capstone experience. Ms. Seidel stated that we are utilizing technology to accommodate and support learning gaps and we plan to revise the website to engage staff and welcome all families. The department is relaunching the Instructional Technology Team and realigning the technicians and technology team.

Mr. Tindall asked if certain groups are over-represented in the referral process. Ms. Krasula responded that collaboratively we work with our tiered interventions to ensure we are offering appropriate intervention to all of our students in all areas. We are also going to look at the data as to how long the students are in referrals. We also have interventions that don't require a referral to special education. Dr. Batchelor stated that the Equity Council recommendations also come into play when assessing a student.

Ms. Salina questioned if students are pulled from class for math tutoring hours. Ms. Gunsalus responded that the time is built into the schedule. Ms. Salina asked if the school district is continuing to help those with connectivity issues at home. Ms. Seidel responded that the district continues to provide hot spots when needed.

C. BOE Committee Assignments

Ms. Salina noted that the board members have been sent the committee assignments, that haven't changed from last year. Ms. Tedone has agreed to be the BOE liaison to the town's Sustainability Committee.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Tindall: MOVE to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved.

Jennifer Batchelar
Secretary

Katie Wilde
Recording Secretary

BOE Committee
Assignments

Adjournment