

SIMSBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING
December 12, 2023
BOE Conference Room
6:30 p.m.
AGENDA

- I. CALL TO ORDER
- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
- III. PUBLIC AUDIENCE
- IV. COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOE COMMUNICATIONS
- V. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
 - A. Election of Officers EXHIBIT I
 - B. Approval of Minutes of November 28, 2023 Meeting EXHIBIT II
 - C. Approval of 2024 BOE Meeting Schedule EXHIBIT III
- VI. INFORMATION AND REPORTS
 - A. Enrollment Projections EXHIBIT IV
 - B. Elementary Curriculum Update (waiver, math) EXHIBIT V
- VII. PUBLIC AUDIENCE
- VIII. FUTURE BUSINESS
 - A. Next Board Meeting, Tuesday, January 9, 2024,
BOE Conference Room

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95 or 1070 and on Frontier Channel 6070 as well as LIVE and on-demand at
www.simsburytv.org.*

MEMO TO: Members of the Board of Education

FROM: Matthew T. Curtis
Superintendent of Schools

DATE: December 12, 2023

RE: Election of Board of Education Officers

According to Board of Education By-Law 300(a) a biennial organizational meeting of the Board will be held on the first regularly scheduled meeting following the election of Board members. The Board will elect a Chairperson, A Vice-Chairperson and a Secretary who will be members of the board. Officers will be elected by plurality vote of the members present and voting. The newly elected Chairperson will take office upon election and preside over the elections of the Vice-Chairperson and Secretary.

Board officers will serve for a term of two years and until a successor is elected, except in the case of removal or resignation. Officers may succeed themselves in office except that no one person shall hold the office of Chairperson for more than two successive terms. Each officer will perform any legal duties of the office and other duties, as required by the Board.

MTC:kdw

**TOWN OF SIMSBURY
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Record of Proceedings

Regular Meeting

November 28, 2023

Ms. Susan Salina called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Board of Education Conference Room.

Roll Call:

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

Members absent: Ms. Sharon Thomas.

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

RECOGNITIONS

The board recognized the SHS girls' soccer team who won their conference and the State Championship. Mr. Curtis noted the accomplishments of the team and congratulated the team on how they represented their school.

Recognitions

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

Lori Boyko, 15 Oakhurst Road, expressed frustration with the lack of response regarding books in our schools. She stated it is the BOE's job to approve curriculum materials. Ms. Boyko suggested the policy abdicates the decision to the American Library Association. The BOE directs schools what to buy, not the administration.

Public Audience

Alec Lawson, 28 Fairview Street, urged board members to ask questions during the SEL presentation. He expressed concern that SEL curricula can be politicized and radicalized. He asked if parents were consulted regarding this model, and whether there will be an opt out procedure.

COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOE COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Curtis thanked Susan Salina and Todd Burrick for their years of service on the board and their support of the students, teachers and staff. Ms. Salina and Mr. Burrick thanked the board members for their kind words and the work of the board as a team.

Committee Reports/BOE Communications

Mr. Picoult reported on the status of the Tariffville School modulars which will be occupied in mid-December, the Jack Bannon Turkey Trot, the success of the SHS girls' soccer team, and the Freedom Pen-a-thon.

Ms. Willerup reported on the Curriculum Committee meeting. There was discussion about Capstone and the fact that this is no longer a state mandated graduation requirement. The committee decided to keep the Capstone requirement as it has a beneficial aspect to our curriculum. Ms. Willerup reported that implementation of the new social studies standards is occurring across the state. She noted that a decision on our K-3 reading waiver has still not been communicated to the district.

Ms. Salina and Mr. Watson stated their support for keeping Capstone. Mr. Picoult stated that the Capstone project doesn't interfere with regular classwork and gives students skills a normal class would not provide.

Ms. Willerup thanked the Volunteens, started by junior Macie Goetz, for their assistance with Simsbury Celebrates over the Thanksgiving weekend. Ms. Tedone reported on the CABA/CAPSS Convention that she attended with Mr. Curtis and Ms. Lemke. She also reported on the CABA delegate assembly.

Mr. Sullivan reported that Interim Assistant Principal Susan Henneberry will finish in her role as Vanessa Massiah will return from her maternity leave on Monday. He thanked Ms. Henneberry, who is a retired administrator, for putting 110% into the job over the past 3 months.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

A. Approval of Minutes of November 14, 2023 Meeting

Ms. Willerup: MOVE to approve the minutes of the November 14, 2023 meeting.

Mr. Watson: Seconded. So moved.

B. Personnel

Ms. Tedone: MOVE that the Board of Education accept the resignation of Javier Rivera effective November 22, 2023

Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved.

INFORMATION AND REPORTS

A. Social & Emotional Learning (SEL) Update

Ms. Lemke introduced Dr. Tayarisha Batchelor, Director of Equity and Access, Squadron Line School Assistant Principal Nancy Forsberg, and Caroline Farrah, Tariffville School teacher. She stated that SEL is embedded in our strategic plan and address 5 competencies: (1) self-awareness, (2) self-management, (3) social awareness, (4) relationship skills, and (5) responsible decision-making.

Ms. Forsberg addressed the rationale for SEL which includes increasing student's sense of belonging, teaching into competency needs for Vision of a Graduate as a seamless overlay of foundation skills, and shared knowledge/skills and experiences. She discussed the history of SEL in the Simsbury Public Schools. This includes providing a bridge between each school's character education program and SEL, the importance of SEL as a result of COVID, and school-based teams that develop SEL/self-care practices.

Dr. Batchelor stated that the district wanted a clear vision for K-12 from a reputable, research based source to build our framework. At the elementary level a 20 minute SEL block occurs each day with explicit direct teach. This is aligned with character education and the 5 competencies developed by CASEL. An elementary SEL site has been developed for teachers with resources for direct teach and practices. At

Approval of Minutes of November 14, 2023

Personnel

SEL Update

the middle school explicit lessons are taught in Wellness Class to assist students with navigating social and academic skills. The "First Four" minutes of every class is allocated for students to prepare for that particular class. At the high school competencies are addressed during the Connect period. Each of the competencies are addressed during particular months during the year.

Ms. Forsberg addressed next steps. She noted that Every Day Speech is being piloted at the elementary level and feedback will be provided to the Curriculum Committee. Every time a new competency is taught information is sent home to parents. At the middle and high school competencies are embedded and discussed during vertical team meetings (7-12).

Mr. Curtis asked about the scope of the pilot. Ms. Lemke responded that all 5 elementary schools are participating and each grade level is represented. Mr. Burrick questioned how we measure students and competencies. Ms. Forsberg responded through assessments and informal tests to determine if students are retaining the skills, in addition to observations. Dr. Batchelor stated that referrals are looked at and report card comments are aligned with the competencies. Ms. Lemke noted that safety and belonging are always included in our surveys. Mr. Tindall asked if there had been a decline in referrals and improvement in behavior since COVID. Dr. Batchelor stated that they can come back with data points to address those questions.

Dr. Batchelor stated that next steps include addressing 7-12 vertical teams to ensure they are in alignment with the elementary schools, teacher led professional development and student focus groups. She noted that students want to lead some of the activities. Ms. Tedone stated that the "First Four" is a building block going forward that should potentially start in the younger grades.

B. Nutrition Services Update

Mr. Sullivan introduced Director of Nutrition Services Bonnie Anderson who was a longtime cafeteria manager at Latimer Lane School prior to moving into this position. He ran through the numbers for the department, noting the number of breakfasts and lunches served as well as staffing in the department.

Ms. Anderson discussed the USDA's National School Lunch Program (NSLP). She noted that Connecticut has higher nutrition standards than the USDA. Ms. Anderson stated the NSLP sets the ground rules for breakfast and lunch as they subsidize these programs. She noted that in 2023-24 all school breakfasts in CT are free and fully reimbursed. She reviewed the thresholds for free and reduced qualification, and pointed out the thresholds are the same throughout the U.S.

Mr. Sullivan stated the handout provided to the board describes the nutritional value of what we serve, noting that Ms. Anderson makes sure that all requirements are met. He noted that prices were raised, after many years, this year to \$3.50 at the elementary and \$4.00 at the secondary.

Ms. Anderson addressed the participation rates for breakfast and lunch comparing 2019, 2022 and 2023, pre- and post-COVID. Mr. Sullivan pointed out that the operation has grown significantly over the past few years. Ms. Anderson reviewed the training requirements for herself and the department. She addressed the current

Nutrition Services Update

challenges and opportunities Challenges include the rising cost of food, increases to minimum wage, staffing, uncertainty of funding and aging equipment. Opportunities including increased revenue due to a la carte sales, the Cool Schools Café rebate program, and current government programs.

Mr. Sullivan addressed the financials, comparing 2021, 2022 and 2023. He noted the \$274,188 deficit in 2021 was offset with funds from the general fund. In 2022 revenues and grants changed and we ended the year with a \$282,802 surplus. \$195,027 was returned to the general fund to offset some of the deficit from 2021. At the end of 2023 we ended with a \$148,870 surplus that was used to replace aging equipment. Mr. Sullivan explained the state of CT program review process which occurs every 5 years. The district is currently providing documents to the state prior to the onsite review in May 2024. The state will choose 2 schools to observe and will provide recommendations. Mr. Sullivan provided photos of the renovated Latimer Lane School kitchen.

C. Capital Improvement Plan

Mr. Curtis stated that the interim Town Manager has some ideas about how to do capital differently which he will discuss at the tri-board meeting. Mr. Casey reviewed the new process for capital improvement plan review. A Capital Review Committee has been formed with representation from Public Works, Simsbury Public Schools, and Culture, Parks & Recreation. The intent is to see a bigger picture of the needs of the town and the school district. Additionally, we have moved to a 12 year capital plan.

Mr. Casey reviewed the capital project requests for the 2024-25 budget year. This includes a Tootin' Hills School partial roof replacement, SHS amphitheater and auditorium improvements, district network infrastructure improvements, and district flooring improvements. Mr. Casey discussed moving some of these maintenance projects onto the capital improvement plan on a rotating schedule in the areas of roofs, heating, pavement and plumbing. He stated that the building of a new Squadron Line School, at the existing location, sits at fiscal year 2032 on the plan. Mr. Curtis noted that the CNR policy has not changed in 30 years. Ms. Salina stated it is important for the BOF to be open to changes.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

Lori Boyko, 15 Oakhurst Road, stated the Curriculum Committee agreed to keep Capstone as a graduation requirement but did not take a formal vote, nor did the BOE. She questioned why the BOE is not discussing how our delegate will vote at the CAFE Delegate Assembly. Ms. Boyko questioned whether it is within the schools' purview to address students' mental health services or whether the needs would be more appropriately served in the community or privately. She suggested that SEL is subjecting all students to psychological training in non-therapeutic spaces by unlicensed professionals, regardless of need and without consent. Ms. Boyko noted that there is no ability to opt out as it is embedded throughout the day and throughout the curriculum.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Willerup: MOVE to adjourn the meeting at 8:43 p.m.

Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved.

CIP

Public Audience

Adjournment

Jennifer Batchelar
Secretary

Katie Wilde
Recording Secretary

EXHIBIT III

TO: Members of the Board of Education

FROM: Matthew T. Curtis
Superintendent of Schools

RE: Approval of 2024 Board of Education Meeting Schedule

DATE: December 12, 2023

The Freedom of Information Act of the Connecticut General Statutes requires all town agencies to file with the Town Clerk on or before January 31 of any given year the meeting schedule for that calendar year. Board of Education By-Laws state that "regular meetings of the Board shall be held on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month."

Below are the scheduled meeting dates for 2024 that coincide with the second and fourth Tuesday of each month. The time of the meeting will be set for 6:30 p.m.

January 9	Board Conf. Room	July 9	Board Conf. Room
January 23	Latimer Lane School	July 23	Board Conf. Room
February 13	Board Conf. Room	August 13	Board Conf. Room
February 27	Squadron Line School	August 27	Board Conf. Room
March 12	Board Conf. Room	Sept. 10	Board Conf. Room
March 26	Central School	Sept. 24	Simsbury High School
April 9	Board Conf. Room	October 8	Board Conf. Room
April 23	Tootin' Hills School	October 22	Henry James School
May 14	Board Conf. Room	November 12	Board Conf. Room
May 28	Tariffville School	November 26	Board Conf. Room
June 11	Board Conf. Room	December 10	Board Conf. Room
June 25	Board Conf. Room		

"MOVE that the Board of Education set their 2024 meeting schedule as outlined in the December 12, 2023 board exhibit."

MTC:kdw

MEMORANDUM TO: Members of the Board of Education

FROM: Matt Curtis
Superintendent

DATE: December 12, 2023

RE: NESDEC Enrollment Report

Overview

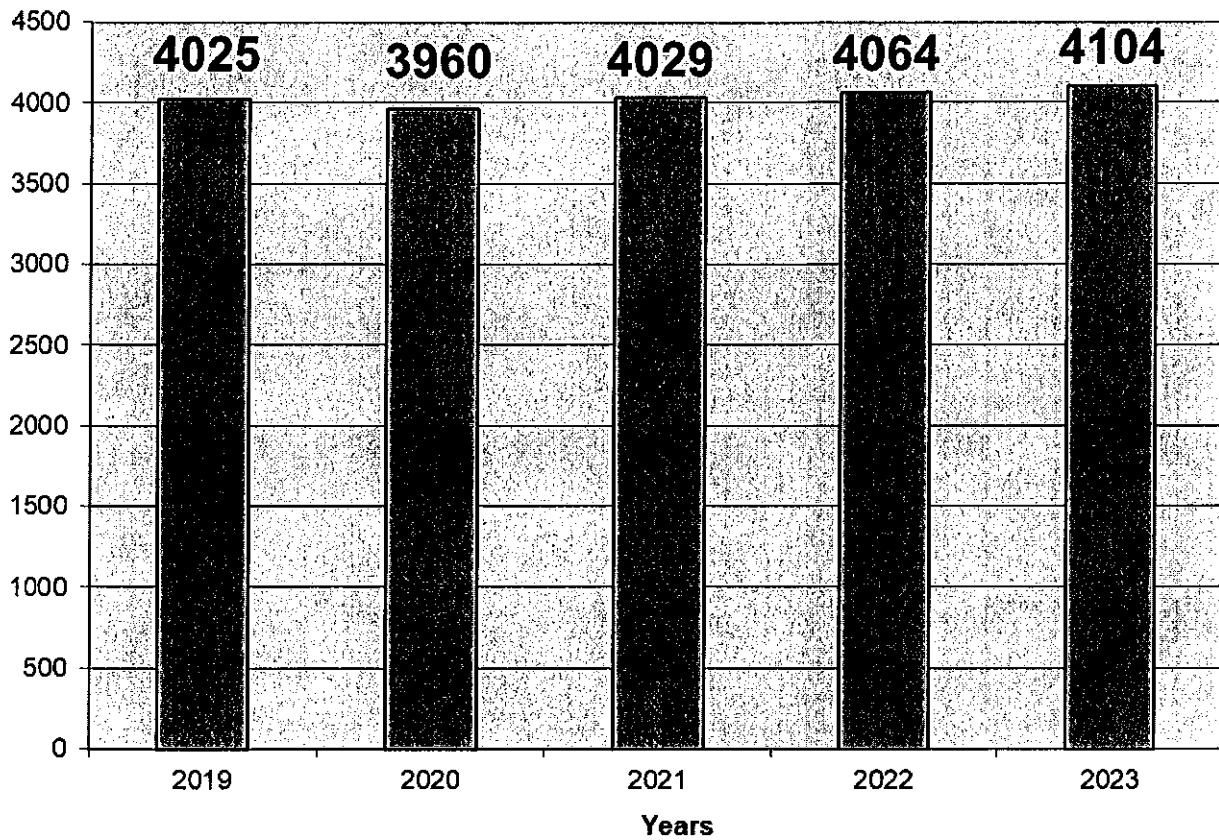
The following enrollment projections for the period 2023-24 through 2028-29 have been developed by the New England School Development Council (NESDEC).

NESDEC employs a modified cohort-survival method in developing these projections. This procedure involves the calculation of ratios, based upon historical enrollment data, to determine a reliable percentage of increase or decrease in enrollment between any two grades.

After study and analysis of the historical ratios and based upon the assumptions above and those regarding births, migration rates, and retention rates, ratios most indicative of future growth patterns are determined for each pair of grades. Each ratio represents the cumulative effect of the following factors:

- Real estate turnover.
- New residential construction.
- Migration, in or out, of the schools.
- Births to residents.
- Retention in the same grade.

I. Table I--October 1 Enrollment History: 2019-20 through 2023-24

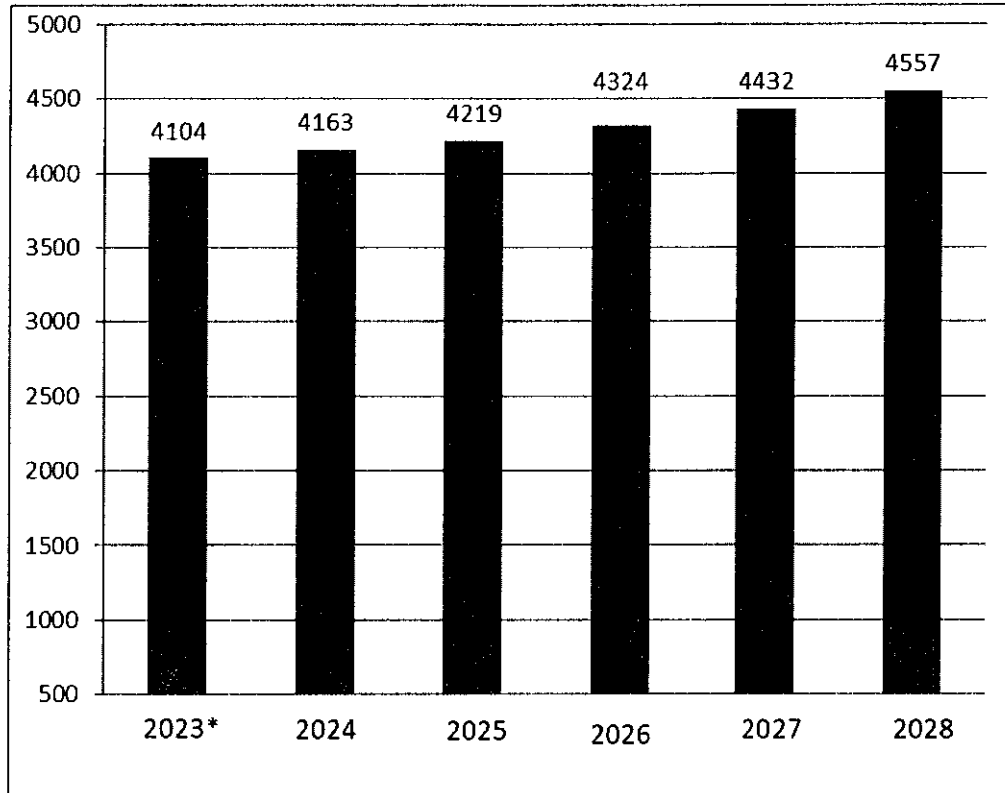


Comments:

- Table I illustrates that K-12 enrollment has increased from 4025 students in 2019 to 4104 students in 2023; this represents a total of 79 students or 1.9%.
- In grades K-6 there were 2038 students in 2019 and 2177 students in 2023. This marks an increase of 139 students or 6.8%
- In grades 7-8 there were 633 students in 2019 and 634 students in 2023. This marks an increase of 1 student, remaining basically flat.
- In grades 9-12 there were 1354 students in 2019 and 1293 students in 2023. This marks a decrease of 61 students or 4.5%.

II. Table II -- 5-year Projected Enrollments K-12: 2023-24 through 2028-29

Note: 2023-24 enrollment numbers are actual October 1, 2023 data

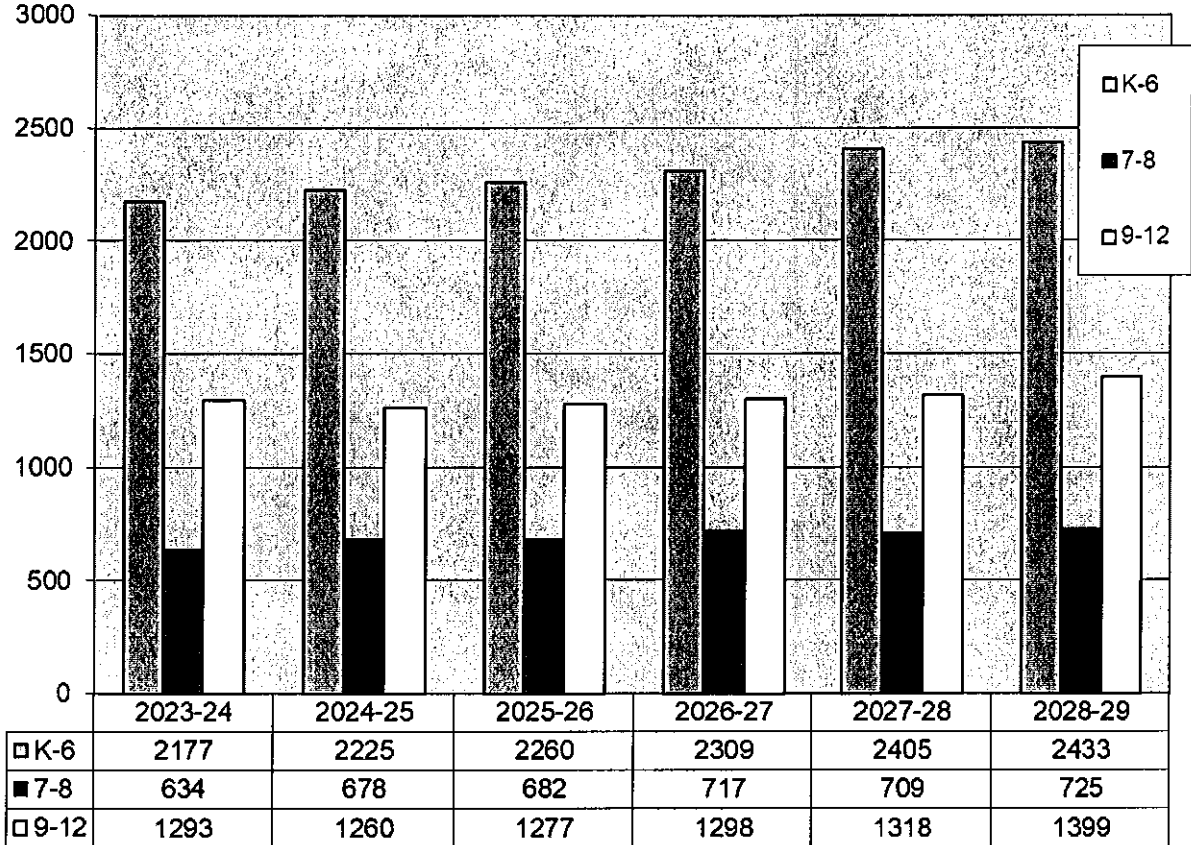


Comments:

Table II suggests that enrollment in kindergarten through grade 12 is expected to increase by 59 students for school year 2024-25. Over the next five years, K-12 enrollment is expected to increase by 453 students. The present enrollment of 4104 students is expected to increase to 4557 students by 2028-29, an overall increase of 11% in the student population.

III. Table III -- 5-year Projected Enrollments by Grade Configuration: 2023-24 through 2028-29

Note: 2023-24 enrollment numbers are actual October 1, 2023 data

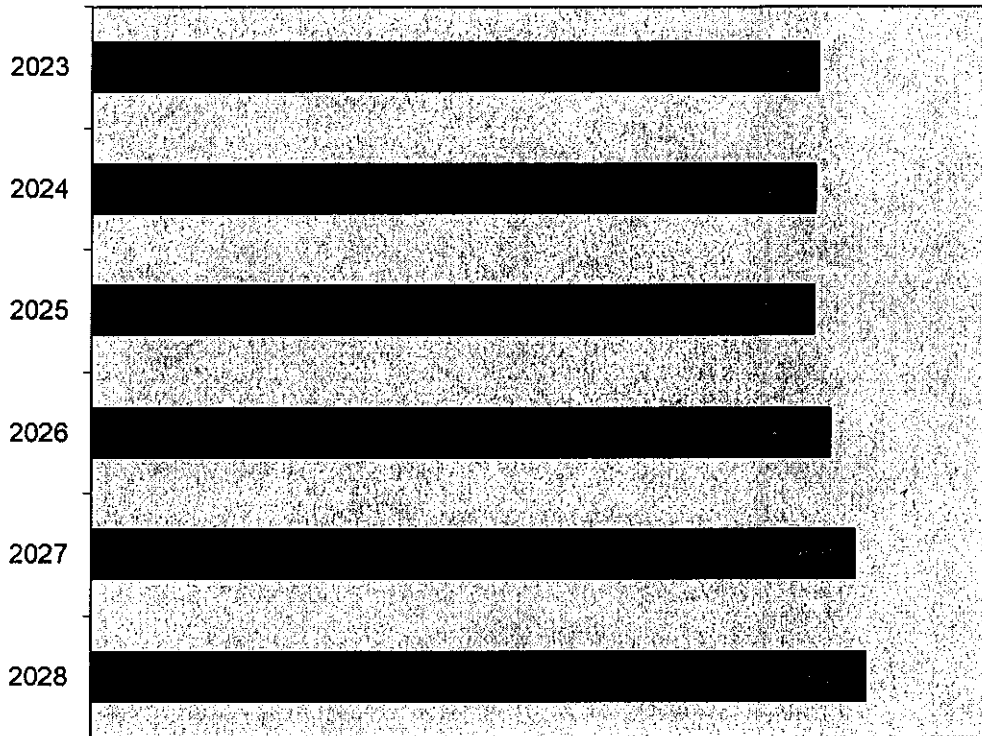


Comments:

- As illustrated in Table III, enrollment in grades K-6 is projected to increase by 48 students by school year 2024-25. Over the next five years, K-6 enrollment is expected to increase by 256 students. The present K-6 enrollment of 2177 is expected to increase to 2433 by 2028-29, an overall increase of 11.8% in the student population.
- Table III suggests that enrollment of Henry James Memorial School will increase by 44 students in 2024-25. Over the next five years, 7-8 enrollment is expected to increase by 91. The present 7-8 enrollment of 634 is expected to increase to 725 by 2028-29, an increase of 14.4%
- Table III suggests that enrollment at Simsbury High School is expected to decrease by 33 students in 2024-25. Over the next five years, 9-12 enrollment is expected to increase by 106 students, an increase of 8.2%.

IV. School by School Enrollment Projections

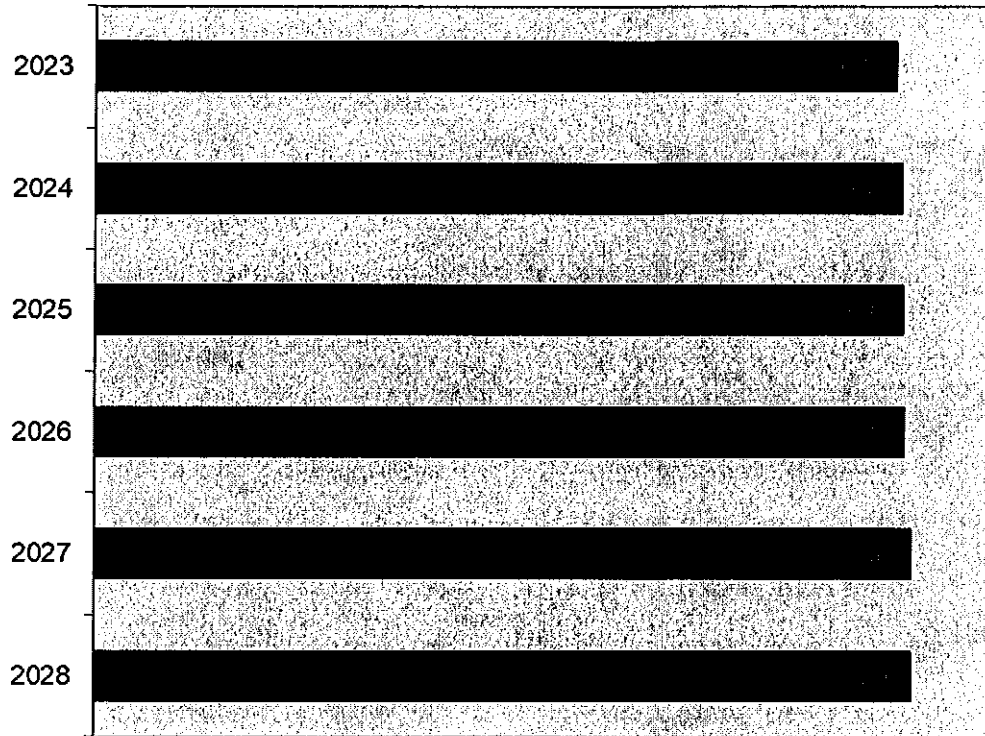
Central School:



	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Enrollment	404	403	402	411	425	431

- Central School is projected to remain relatively flat with a decrease of 1 student in 2024. Five-year projections indicate an increase of 27 students or 6.7%.

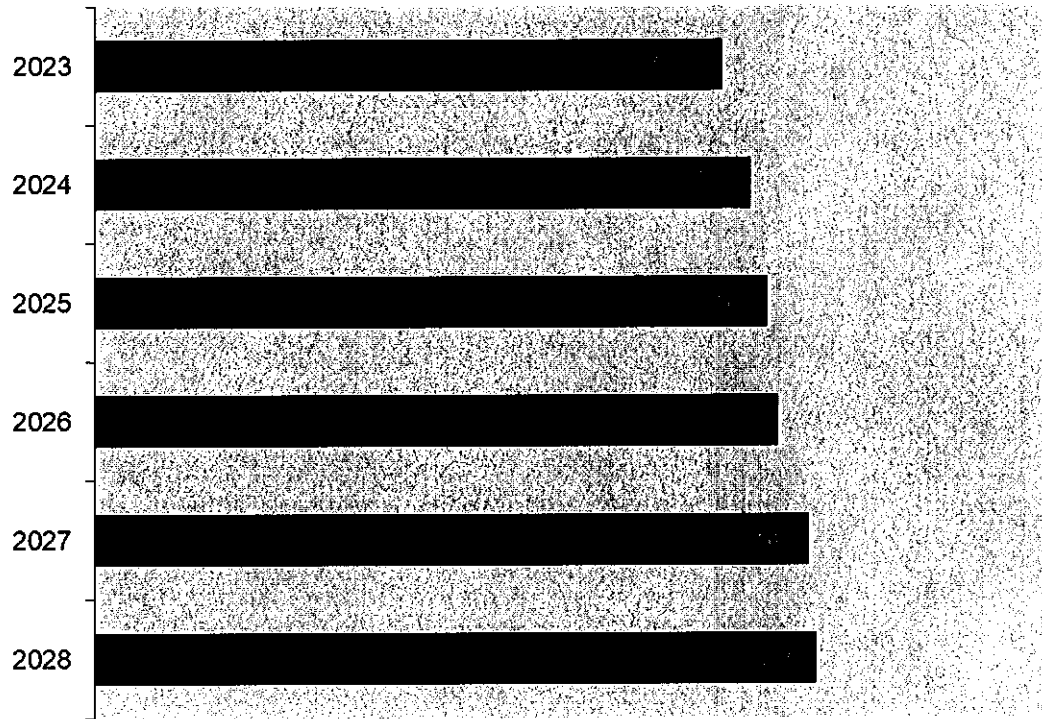
Latimer Lane:



	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Enrollment	470	490	496	503	530	534

- Latimer Lane School is projected to increase by 20 students or 4.3% in 2024. Five-year projections indicate an increase of 64 students or 13.6%.

Squadron Line School:

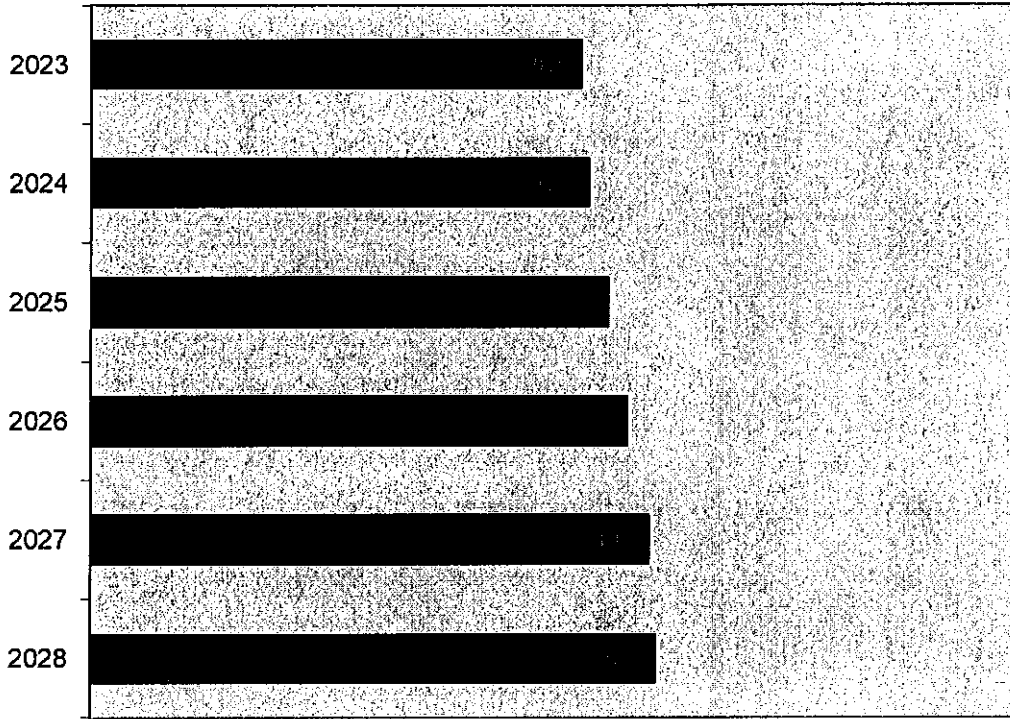


	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Enrollment	655	684	703	713	746	754

- Squadron Line School is projected to increase by 29 students or 4.4% in 2024. Five-year projections indicate an increase of 99 students or 15.1%.

Note: These projections do not include preschool enrollment, which is 100 students (full- or part- time) in 2023-24.

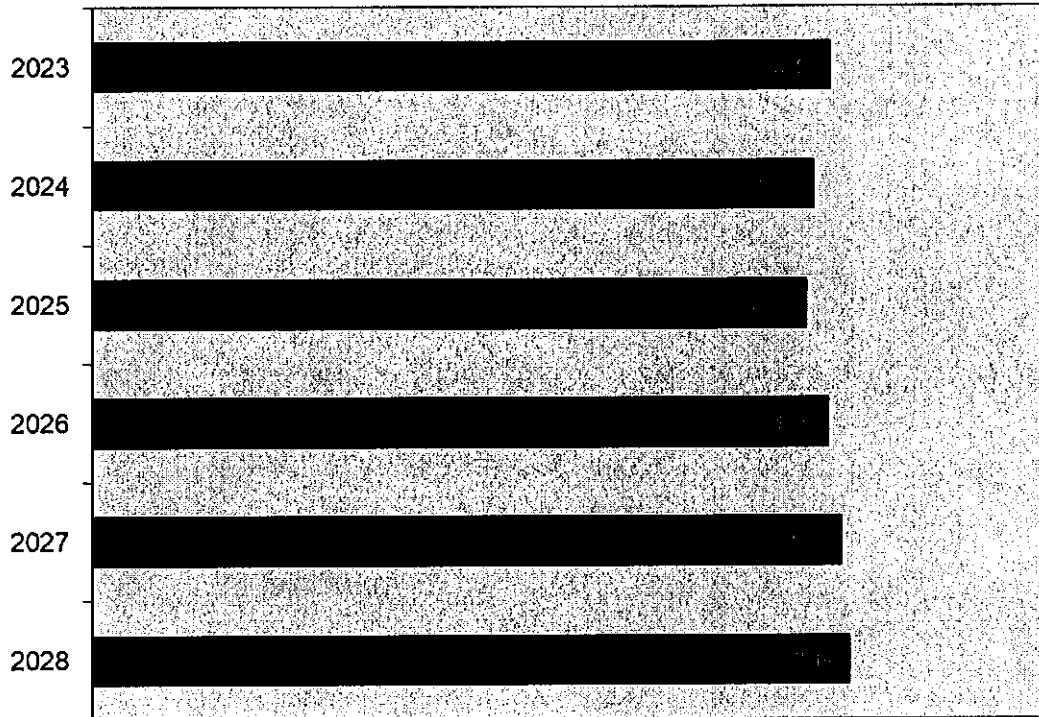
Tariffville School:



	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Enrollment	263	267	278	288	300	303

- Tariffville School is projected to increase 4 students or 1.5% in 2024. Five-year projections indicate an increase of 40 students, or 15.2%.

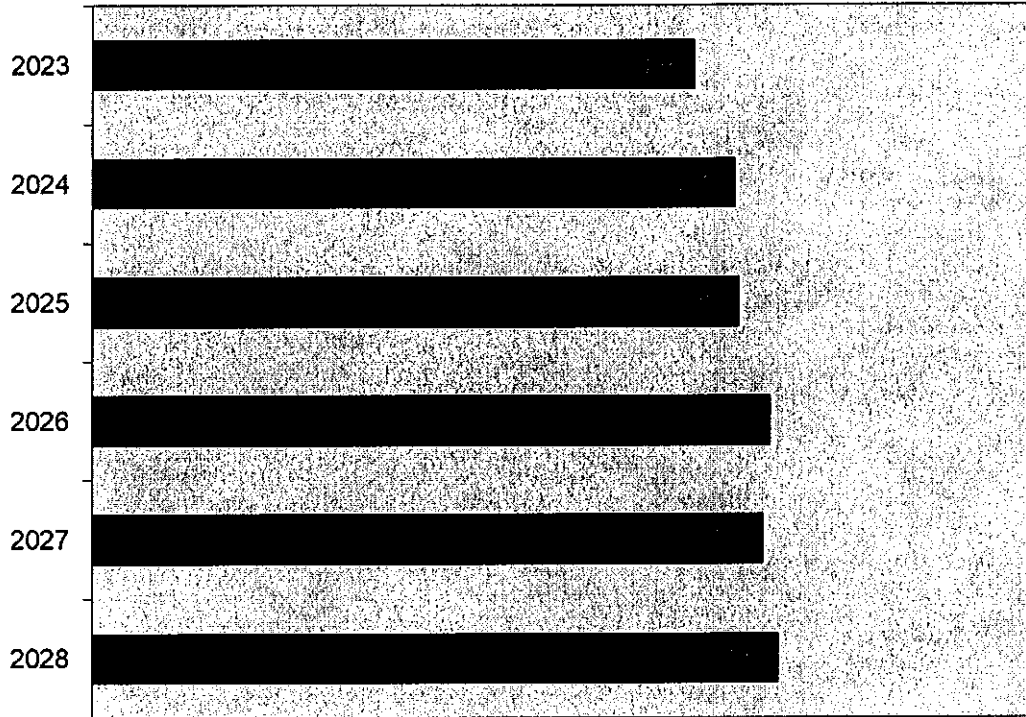
Tootin' Hills School:



	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Enrollment	385	377	373	384	391	396

- Tootin' Hills School is projected to decrease by 8 students or 2.1% in 2024. Five-year projections indicate an increase of 11 students, or 2.9%.

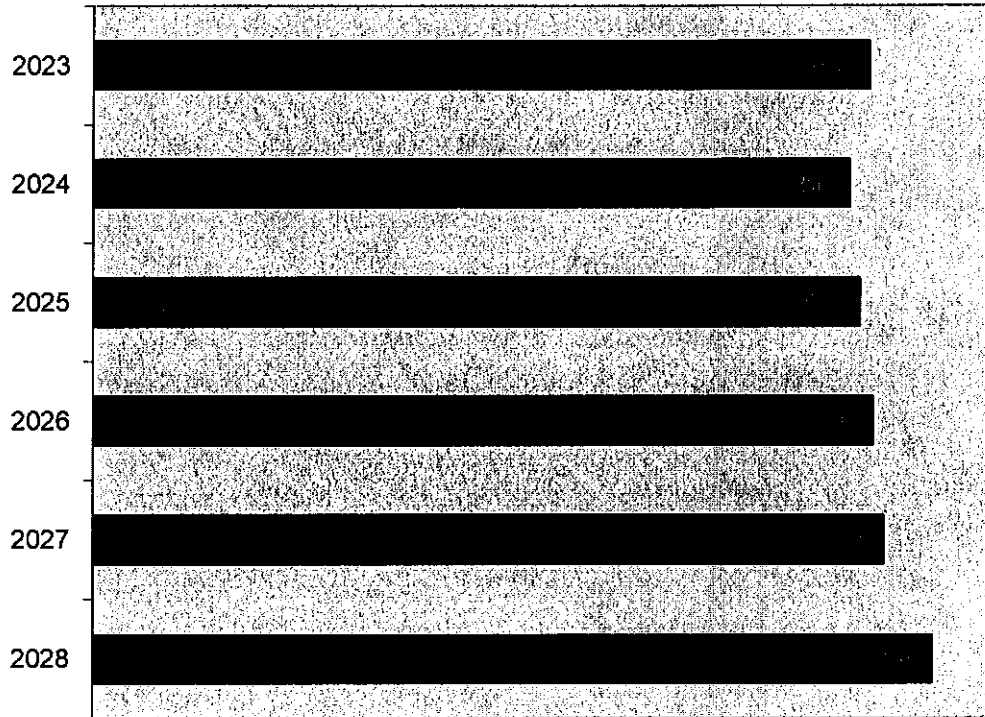
Henry James Memorial School:



	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Enrollment	634	678	682	717	709	725

- Henry James Memorial School is projected to increase by 44 students or 6.9% for 2024. Five-year projections indicate an increase of 91 students or 14.4%.

Simsbury High School:



	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Enrollment	1293	1260	1277	1298	1318	1399

- Simsbury High School is projected to decrease by 33 or 2.6% in 2024. Five-year projections indicate an increase of 106 students or 8.2%.

**V. Historical & Projected (P) Enrollments Birth to Kindergarten
(School-Year 2019-20– 2028-29)**

Birth Year	# Births	Year Students Entered K	K Enrollment
2014	181	2019-20	283
2015	195	2020-21	252
2016	178	2021-22	303
2017	191	2022-23	294
2018	230	2023-24	275
2019	210	2024-25	301 (P)
2020	206	2025-26	295 (P)
2021	234	2026-27	335 (P)
2022	239	2027-28	342 (P)
2023	224 (P)	2028-29	321 (P)

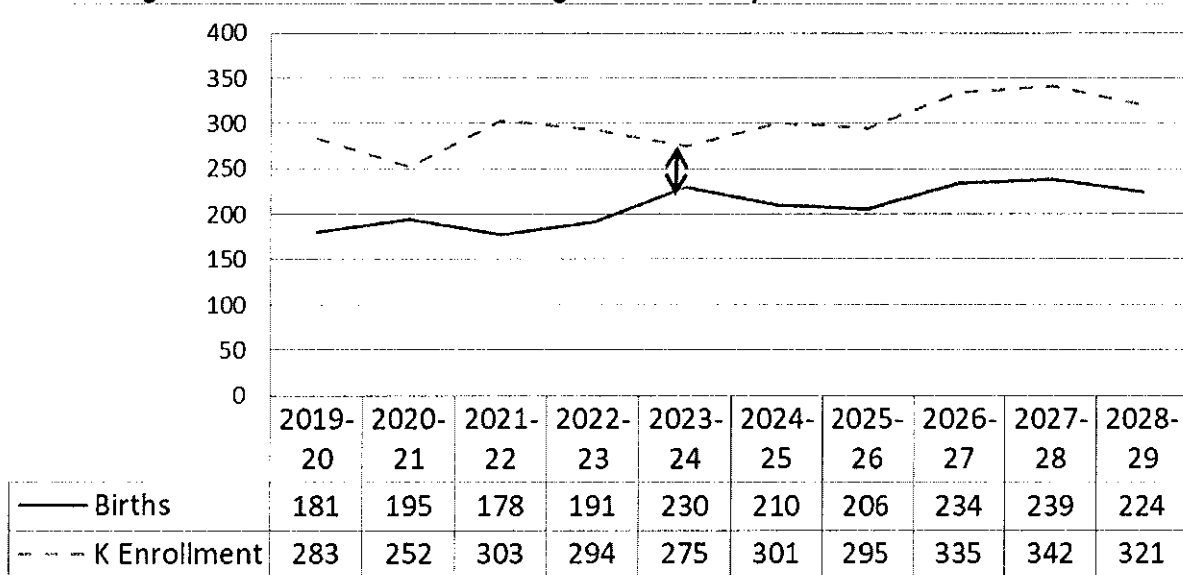
The relationship between Simsbury births and Kindergarten enrollments is displayed on the table above. Over the past four years, Simsbury has registered an average of 152 kindergarteners for every 100 births. This fall there were 120 kindergarteners for every 100 births.

During the period 2023-24 through 2028-29, the number of students entering kindergarten each year is projected to average 312 students per year. Kindergarten projections are directly related to the number of births to area residents five years earlier, coupled with data on in-migration of students new to Simsbury. Since these factors serve as the primary influence on enrollment projections, it is of value to examine them. This table provides a record of births to area residents during the last several years. The administration will continue to monitor the birth-to-kindergarten ratio, which has increased slightly in the last few years.

This year, consistent with past practice, the annual census of pre-school children residing in Simsbury will be undertaken. Since the number of students eligible to enroll in kindergarten each year ultimately drives enrollments at the other grades, the importance of obtaining accurate census information cannot be underestimated. The data derived from the census provides additional information for future planning.

Births/Enrollment Comparison

Kindergarten Enrollment 2019-20 through 2028-29 compared to Birth Year 2014-2023



Note: 2024-25 through 2028-29 K enrollment = projections

Kindergarten Adjusted Projections 2024-25

- NESDEC was not comfortable changing the Kindergarten projections based on new legislation.
- Assistant Superintendent, Neil Sullivan, adjusted the elementary projections taking into consideration the:
 - percentage of “ber babies” over past 12 years (children born in September, October, November, or December);
 - potential of parents accessing the State waiver process; and
 - historical patterns of birth months compared to enrollments.
- As a result, the NESDEC Kindergarten projections were reduced by approximately 12% at each school. The overall NESDEC projection of 301 was reduced to 266.
- It is anticipated that providing NESDEC with the adjusted numbers for the 2025 projections will result in “righting” the 5-year projections.

	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Central School	47	55	53	61	56	61	65	398
Latimer Lane	58	69	64	77	60	80	74	482
Squadron Line	83	80	107	108	91	111	94	674
Tariffville	34	35	42	43	36	40	34	264
Tootin' Hills	44	51	52	54	57	52	62	372
K-6	266							2190
7-8								678
9-12								1260
Total K-12 Adjusted Projection								4128

VII. Conclusions:

- The 2023 NESDEC projections suggest that K-12 student enrollment in the Simsbury Public Schools will increase by an average of approximately 90 students per year for the next five years. The present enrollment of 4104 students is projected to increase to 4557 students in the year 2028-29.
- Enrollment projections are very useful when planning for areas such as staffing and its associated budget implications; however, projections are merely a forecast, not a certainty or guarantee. Although the historical data are accurate, many of the variables influencing the movement of families to and from Simsbury are not predictable and do have the potential of impacting future enrollment numbers. In addition, it is important to note that projections are most reliable for the immediate future, i.e., into the following school year. Projections become increasingly less reliable the further they extend into the future, specifically after a 5-year period.
- These projections will be important to monitor, especially the size of incoming K classes, over the next few years. Adjusted projections completed by the Assistant Superintendent for Administration take into consideration new legislation and trends.

EXHIBIT V

TO: Members of the Board of Education
FROM: Matthew T. Curtis, Superintendent of Schools
DATE: December 12, 2023
RE: Elementary Curriculum Update

It has already been a busy year in the elementary world. Last spring, you were given an overview of both the Science of Reading, as well as an anticipated shift in our math curriculum to *THINK Math*. This evening, Assistant Superintendent Sue Homrok-Lemke will be joined by Director of Elementary Curriculum Betsy Gunsalus, math coach Lori Martensen, and teachers Christine Neskic, Kara Arbon to share how these shifts live daily in an elementary classroom.

First, Ms Gunsalus will remind us of the math transition team members, share the goals of the group, and how their work lives in the classroom. We will see some classroom footage demonstrating the engagement of students and staff through this instruction. The teachers will also highlight a K-12 tool devised by the math vertical team and share its validating content through *THINK Math!*

Next, the group will review the Science of Reading and Simsbury's approach to this instruction. In February of 2023, Simsbury submitted a waiver to the state, asking that our curriculum be considered as one approved by the CT State Department of Education's Center for Literacy. After nine months of waiting, on the evening of Friday, December 1, we received confirmation that Simsbury was partially approved. There were no surprises to the state's determination. Although recognized for our work in phonics, phonemic awareness, and fluency, we need to enhance our instruction in explicit vocabulary and reading comprehension. As frustrating as it was to experience the elongated wait for this response, we are glad that the state has developed a compendium of approved curriculum that aligns with decisions already in the works in Simsbury.

Finally, Mrs. Homrok-Lemke will review some elementary student performance measures and our schools' outcomes. We will specifically discuss the district and school performance indices.