

SIMSBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING
August 24, 2021
Simsbury Public Library
Program Room

6:30 p.m.
AGENDA

- I. CALL TO ORDER
- II. PUBLIC AUDIENCE
 - Email kwilde@simsburyschools.net by 12:00 p.m. on Tuesday, August 24, 2021 to register to address the Board of Education via Zoom, or citizens can participate in-person.
- III. COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOE COMMUNICATIONS
- IV. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
 - A. Approval of Minutes of June 8, 2021 Regular Meeting EXHIBIT I
 - B. Approval of Minutes of June 23, 2021 Special Meeting EXHIBIT II
 - C. Approval of Minutes of June 23, 2021 Special Meeting EXHIBIT III
 - D. Child Nutrition Program Authorized Signature Change EXHIBIT IV
- V. INFORMATION AND REPORTS
 - A. Back to School Report EXHIBIT V
 - Enrollment & Staffing
 - Mitigation Strategies
 - Summer Programming
- VI. PUBLIC AUDIENCE
- VII. FUTURE BUSINESS
 - A. Next Board Meeting, Tuesday, September 14, 2021, BOE Conference Room

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**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.

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| <p>Mr. White: Seconded. So moved.</p> <p>D. Approval of Superintendent's Contract</p> | |
| <p>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.</p> | <p>Approval of Superintendent's Contract</p> |
| <p>Mr. Watson: Seconded. So moved.</p> <p>E. Approval of Northwest Community Bank Scholarship</p> | |
| <p>Mr. Watson: MOVE that the Board of Education approve the Northwest Community Bank Scholarship, to be disbursed in 2022.</p> | <p>Approval of NW Community Bank Scholarship</p> |
| <p>Ms. Willerup: Seconded. So moved.</p> <p>F. Approval of Professor Gilbert Maffeo Jr. Scholarship</p> | |
| <p>Mr. Burrick: MOVE that the Board of Education approve the Professor Gilbert Maffeo Jr. Scholarship.</p> | <p>Approval of Prof. Gilbert Maffeo Jr. Scholarship</p> |
| <p>Ms. Thomas: Seconded. So moved.</p> <p>G. Acceptance of Gift from Squadron Line PTO</p> | |
| <p>Mr. Watson: MOVE that the proposed gift of \$3,495.00 to Squadron Line School be approved.</p> | <p>Gift from Squadron PTO</p> |
| <p>Ms. Thomas: Seconded. So moved.</p> <p>H. BOE Summer Meeting Schedule</p> | |
| <p>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.</p> | <p>BOE Summer Mtg. Schedule</p> |
| <p>Mr. Watson: Seconded. So moved.</p> | |
| <p>Ms. Willerup: MOVE to amend the agenda and take item V.B. prior to V.A.</p> | |
| <p>Ms. Thomas: Seconded. So moved.</p> <p><u>INFORMATION AND REPORTS</u></p> | |
| <p>A. Equity Council Update</p> | |
| <p>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</p> | <p>Equity Council Update</p> |

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

**TOWN OF SIMSBURY
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Record of Proceedings

Special Meeting

June 23, 2021

Mrs. Susan Salina called the virtual meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

Roll Call:

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

Members absent: Mr. Brian Watson

Also present: Superintendent Matt Curtis.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Ms. Tedone: MOVE that the Board of Education enter executive session to interview an administrative candidate and include Superintendent Curtis.

Ms. Willerup: Seconded. So moved.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Thomas: MOVE to adjourn the meeting at 6:56 p.m.

Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved.

Executive
Session

Adjournment

Jennifer Batchelar
Secretary

Katie Wilde
Recording Secretary

**TOWN OF SIMSBURY
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Record of Proceedings

Special Meeting

June 23, 2021

Mrs. Susan Salina called the virtual meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

Roll Call:

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

Members absent: Ms. Sharon Thomas and Mr. Brian Watson

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

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

A. Appointment of Director of Equity and Access

Mr. Curtis stated he is excited and pleased to recommend that Dr. Tayarisha Batchelor be appointed as the Director of Equity and Access. He reviewed her background and stated that Dr. Batchelor is well poised for this leadership work. Mr. Curtis stated that she has a great understanding of the continuous improvement model which is used in Simsbury. Dr. Batchelor will work with the Equity Council, building leadership and under the direction of Ms. Lemke.

Ms. Tedone: MOVE that the Board of Education appoint Tayarisha Batchelor to the position of Director of Equity and Access for the Simsbury Public Schools with an effective date of August 9, 2021.

Ms. Willerup: Seconded. So moved.

Dr. Batchelor thanked Mr. Curtis and Ms. Salina for giving her the opportunity to go through the process. She noted that it is clear that Simsbury is taking this work seriously. Dr. Batchelor stated she is glad to come at a time that Simsbury is ready to do the work.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Willerup: MOVE to adjourn the meeting at 7:09 p.m.

Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved.

Appt. of Director
of Equity and
Access

Adjournment

Jennifer Batchelar
Secretary

Katie Wilde
Recording Secretary

MEMORANDUM TO: Members of the Board of Education
FROM: Matthew T. Curtis, Superintendent of Schools
DATE: August 24, 2021
RE: Child Nutrition Program Authorized Signature Change

The Agreement for Child Nutrition Programs is the formal agreement between the Simsbury Public Schools and the Connecticut State Department of Education to operate one or more of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Child Nutrition Programs. Several years ago this agreement was executed and signed by Superintendent, Matthew Curtis and School Business Manager, Burke LaClair. As signatories on this agreement, it authorizes the Superintendent and School Business Manager to approve and sign for food claims reimbursement. Due to the retirement of School Business Manager, Burke LaClair, the signatories on this agreement need to be updated.

It is the policy of the Connecticut State Department of Education that action by the Board of Education must be taken in order to make changes to the authorized signers. Therefore, staff is requesting Board approval to keep Superintendent, Matthew Curtis as an authorized signer on the Agreement for Child Nutrition Programs, remove School Business Manager, Burke LaClair and add Finance Director, Amy Meriwether.

If the Board supports updating the signatories for the Child Nutrition Program as outlined above, the following motions is on order:

"MOVE, that the Simsbury Board of Education authorizes the following signatory changes associated with the Agreement for Child Nutrition Programs:

- *Maintain signing authority for the Superintendent, Matthew Curtis*
- *Eliminate signing authority for the School Business Manager, Burke LaClair*
- *Add signing authority for the Finance Director, Amy Meriwether"*

MEMORANDUM TO: Members of the Board of Education

FROM: Matthew T. Curtis, Superintendent of Schools

DATE: August 24, 2021

RE: Back to School Report

With just a little over a week before we kick off the new school year on September 1, 2021, the Central Office team will be providing the Board with information and updates we believe will prove helpful to our community as we prepare ourselves and our families.

Mr. Sullivan will provide an enrollment and staffing update. Our summer has been busy with new families registering in Simsbury. As of August 13th, our enrollment stands at 4052; this total represents an increase of 32 over projections, with more registrations expected in the next few weeks. The influx of new students has resulted in 5 new sections at the elementary level that needed to be added this summer (one cohort was able to be reduced by a section for a net change of 4 teachers). Mr. Sullivan will elaborate and discuss programmatic implications.

Additionally, I will be providing the Board an overview of Simsbury's current COVID data and vaccination percentages. Mr. Sullivan and Mrs. Lemke will review the current mitigation strategies that will be in place starting on our students' first day of school. More specifically we will discuss:

Masks: We know this is an important topic to our community, as we have received many questions about whether or not we will be requiring masks for staff and students. The Governor's Executive Order 13A requires masks be worn in schools, regardless of vaccination status. Additionally, the DPH and FVHD made mask recommendations in alignment with this order. Therefore, masks will be required of anyone while in our school buildings.

Contact Tracing & Quarantining: Contact tracing will continue to be implemented as a mitigation strategy. We will follow CDC guidelines for that process. We anticipate that should quarantines be required, we will be utilizing the CDC option for close contacts to test out of quarantine and shorten the required period.

Vaccines and Vaccination Cards: The CDC and DPH continue to promote vaccines as the most effective mitigation strategy to address COVID and to ensure continuity of in-person learning. To facilitate the most efficient contact tracing process and quickly determine the extent to which quarantining is required for those deemed close contacts to a positive case, we are requesting all staff and families share vaccination cards with us.

Daily Health Screens and frequent Hand Hygiene: We know these strategies continue to be effective and will continue for the coming year.

Mr. Sullivan and Mrs. Lemke will also provide you with updates on ventilation, COVID testing options, distance learning, and meal provision during the school day. Mrs. Lemke will conclude the report with outcomes from our K-12 summer programming.