

**TOWN OF SIMSBURY
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Record of Proceedings

Regular Meeting

February 23, 2022

Ms. Susan Salina called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. in the Central School gymnasium.

Roll Call:

Members present: Mmes. Susan Salina and Tara Willerup. Messrs. Jeff Tindall, Todd Burrick and Brian Watson. Ms. Thomas arrived at 6:37 p.m. Ms. Willerup departed at 7:09 p.m.

Members absent: Mmes. Jen Batchelar and Lydia Tedone.

Also present: Superintendent Matt Curtis, Assistant Superintendent Sue Homrok-Lemke, Assistant Superintendent Neil Sullivan, Director of Finance Amy Meriwether, BOE Student Representative Alex Picoult and Recording Secretary Katie Wilde.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

Lori Boyko, 15 Oakhurst Road, stated that in-depth studies of social and emotional issues are being included in classes, the curriculum, professional development and special events. She questioned whether these matters are better taught at home. Ms. Boyko asked if those presenting these topics are trained in teaching about social matters, and suggested that students are better served by teachers teaching content. She noted some of the Equity Week session topics at SHS.

Public Audience

COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOE COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Picoult reported on activities at the elementary schools. He noted that Equity Week signup began today and each student can attend 4 sessions over the week. Mr. Picoult stated that the SHS spring play is Radium Girls.

Communications

Ms. Willerup reported on the Curriculum Committee meeting, noting their discussion about AP Human Geography which will be a new course offered in the fall. The committee also discussed DESSA (Devereux Student Strengths Assessment) which is a state program to measure levels of success with social/emotional learning.

Ms. Thomas reported that the town's Spirit Council would like to change their name to the Council of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. The BOS will decide on the name change at their next meeting.

Ms. Lemke reported that the CSDE released the CT Standards for Remote Learning Grades 9-12 and she will participate in a webinar about the standards next week.

Mr. Curtis stated the transition to a mask optional model will begin February 28. This decision is supported by CSDE, DPH and FVHD. Mr. Curtis noted all school districts in the Farmington Valley, and 90% of districts across the state, are moving to the mask optional model. This decision is based on our high vaccination rates, number of hospitalizations and the reduction in case rates. Mr. Curtis pointed out that the DPH guidance provides trend information, not specific data points. The pandemic emergency response model is moving to a model of management and control of the

virus.

Mr. Sullivan reviewed the communication that will be sent to families outlining the procedures at school in the new model. He stated that in March the FVHD will hold two vaccine clinics at HJMS.

Ms. Salina praised the administration and task forces that led the district through a very difficult storm the past two years. Mr. Tindall noted the mask optional policy is a very divisive issue and the decision was science and metrics driven not based on politics or emotions. Mr. Watson thanked the children and stated he hopes the kids who continue to wear masks do not feel threatened. Ms. Willerup stated that thoughtful decisions have been made throughout the pandemic and she noted the importance of students being respectful of others. Mr. Burrick noted that masking has been a difficult issue and he is appreciative of the guidance and transparency that has gone into the decision making. Ms. Thomas stated these will be interesting times to look back on and it will be good to see young kids without masks. Ms. Salina read Ms. Tedone’s comments, stating her support for the plan to make masks optional.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

A. Approval of Minutes of February 5, 2022 Workshop

Ms. Thomas: MOVE to approve the minutes of the February 5, 2022 workshop.

Ms. Willerup: Seconded. So moved. Ms. Salina and Mr. Burrick abstained.

B. Approval of Minutes of February 8, 2022 Meeting

Mr. Tindall: MOVE to approve the minutes of the February 8, 2022 meeting.

Ms. Willerup: Seconded. So moved.

C. Adoption of 2022-23 School Budget

Mr. Curtis stated the proposed budget identifies the needs in the district and utilizes grant funding to offset costs. He reviewed the budget process moving forward. Mr. Burrick stated the budget addresses the needs and wants of the district and moves us forward without creating a financial cliff down the road. Ms. Salina stated the BOF appreciates the work that went into the BOE budget, noting that Ms. Mackstutis and Ms. Heavner attended the BOE budget workshop.

Mr. Burrick: MOVE that the Board of Education adopt the 2022-23 school budget in the amount of \$77,030,819 which represents an increase of \$2,584,239 or 3.47%.

Ms. Willerup: Seconded. So moved.

D. Approval of Policy Revisions

Ms. Thomas: MOVE to adopt the Board of Education policies, as noted, effective February 23, 2022.

Approval of Minutes of February 5, 2022

Approval of Minutes of February 8, 2022

Adoption of 2022-23 Budget

Approval of Policy Revisions

Mr. Burrick: Seconded. So moved.

E. Cancellation of March 8, 2022 Regular Meeting

Mr. Burrick: MOVE to cancel the March 8, 2022 regular meeting.

Mr. Watson: Seconded. So moved.

INFORMATION AND REPORTS

A. Central School Report

Ms. Lemke stated that math is a district priority relative to our strategic plan. This work begins at the district level and works through the Office of Teaching & Learning, the principals and directors, into the classroom. Betsy Gunsalus, Director of Elementary Curriculum, stated that this year math is at the forefront of our work in the elementary schools. The areas of focus are closing the math gap, a flexible model of intervention with small group instruction, the induction of new coaches and interventionists, and the use of data to make decisions.

Beth Hennessy, Central School Principal, stated that work begins in the summer to look at trends across the math data. She noted that math coaches are back in the building after being pulled into classroom teacher positions last year due to COVID. Ms. Hennessy stated that she shares her vision with her faculty and breaks out with teachers to determine what support they need. The math coach works as a thought partner to move the work forward.

Lisa Smith, Math Coach, stated that the year starts with the sharing of Student Learning Objectives (SLOs). Students who are not meeting their expected growth receive classroom interventions through small group instruction and tutor support. Ms. Smith noted that the intervention cycle is more fluid now, providing an immediate response to student needs. PLCs are used to plan instruction around learning goals and targets. Data teams review data, evaluate instruction, and adjust learning goals and supports. Math tutors collaborate across grade levels.

Morgan Pierce, Kindergarten teacher, stated that the math coach assists teachers with planning and co-teaches lessons. She stated that Ms. Smith assists with assessments, individualized instruction and small groups at the Kindergarten level. Ms. Pierce noted the unique level of support offered in Simsbury. Megan Leonard, Grade 6 teacher, stated that she is the math teacher for all sixth graders. She stated that she is able to speak with Ms. Smith and make adjustments in the moment. Students who receive math tutoring are able to preview the upcoming work such that they are provided assistance both before and during lessons.

Mr. Burrick asked how we get kids to be passionate about math. Ms. Hennessy noted that students work together in small groups and are given anchor tasks that involve using an inquiry model. Ms. Smith pointed out that confidence in math will result in the enjoyment of math. Ms. Leonard stated that her classes discuss math related to real world situations. In response to Ms. Salina, Ms. Smith stated that students move in and out of receiving math intervention.

Cancellation of
March 8, 2022
Meeting

Central School
Report

Ms. Lemke stated that this same program is run in all of the elementary schools and each school has a math coach. Ms. Hennessy reviewed the STAR data assessment results. In grades 3-6 there was improvement between September and December. The next assessment will be given in March. Ms. Hennessy noted that this year the elementary schools added 15 minutes of time into the math curriculum. She pointed out that last year there were no math tutors due to COVID.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

Stacey Walczak, 35 Banks Road, thanked the school district for making masks optional. She stated that she has a child who is too young to receive the vaccine and most local daycares are continuing mask wearing. Ms. Walczak stated her concern that with this age group continuing to wear masks, it could affect their readiness when they get to kindergarten.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Thomas: MOVE to adjourn the meeting at 7:46 p.m.

Mr. Burrick: Seconded. So moved.

Jennifer Batchelar
Secretary

Katie Wilde
Recording Secretary

Public Audience

Adjournment