

**TOWN OF SIMSBURY  
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Record of Proceedings

Regular Meeting

May 28, 2024

Mr. Jeff Tindall called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in the cafeteria at Tariffville School.

Roll Call:

**Members present:** Mmes. Jen Batchelar, Sharon Thomas, Tara Willerup, Lydia Tedone and Jessica Parise. Messrs. Jeff Tindall and Josh Falco.

**Members absent:** Mmes. Jen Batchelar and Sharon Thomas. Mr. Brian Watson

**Also present:** Superintendent Matt Curtis, Assistant Superintendent Sue Homrok-Lemke, Assistant Superintendent Neil Sullivan, BOE Student Representative Sophia Luzietti and Recording Secretary Katie Wilde.

RECOGNITIONS

Maggie Seidel, SHS Principal, spoke about the SHS CABA Student Leadership awardees Sophia Luzietti and Mitch Wallman. Scott Baker, HJMS Principal, spoke about the HJMS CABA Student Leadership awardees Lara Hanley and Brett Sherman. Ms. Seidel introduced the CAS Scholar Athletes, Olivia Jarvis and Thomas Franklin.

Recognitions

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

None.

Public Audience

COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOE COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Tedone reported on the legislative wrap-up and the 20 bills that were passed. She spoke about the SHS Capstone presentations and gave kudos to the students.

Ms. Luzietti reported that Latimer Lane School held Bike to School day. She noted that boys volleyball won their conference and girls rugby won the state championship. Ms. Luzietti stated that the senior prom will be held this weekend.

Communications

Ms. Lemke stated that teachers were awarded nearly \$30,000 in Kathleen Magowan grants.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- A. Approval of Minutes of May 14, 2024 Meeting

Approval of  
Minutes of May  
14, 2024

Ms. Willerup: MOVE to approve the minutes of the May 14, 2024 meeting.

Ms. Parise: Seconded. So moved.

- B. Approval of Unaffiliated Salary Adjustments

Approval of  
Unaffiliated  
Salary  
Adjustments

Ms. Tedone: MOVE that the salary range for the unaffiliated Board of Education employees and salaries for the Central Office Administration be

increased by 2.9% for the 2024-25 fiscal year.

Ms. Parise: Seconded. So moved.

#### C. Approval of 2024-25 Textbooks

Ms. Parise: MOVE that the Board approve the textbook adoption for the 2024-25 school year as submitted by the administration.

Ms. Willerup: Seconded. So moved.

#### D. Approval of Fee Schedule for Use of Public Schools

Ms. Willerup: MOVE that the fee schedule for use of public schools for 2024-25 be approved as submitted by the administration.

Ms. Tedone: Seconded. So moved.

#### E. Donation from Tariffville School PTO

Mr. Falco: MOVE that the proposed gift of \$3,000 to Tariffville School by the Tariffville School Parent-Teacher Organization be approved.

Ms. Parise: Seconded. So moved.

### INFORMATION AND REPORTS

#### A. Social Studies Program Review

Ms. Lemke stated that the district is on a 10 year curriculum review cycle. This past year the social studies curriculum has been under review. She introduced the SHS Department Supervisor Rich Curtiss, and HJMS Department Supervisor Allan Amundsen.

Mr. Curtiss reviewed celebrations for the department. These include 282 students taking AP exams related to 5 social studies courses, the addition of an AP Human Geography course next year and formation of a National Social Studies Honor Society. Mr. Amundsen stated that two of his long time 7<sup>th</sup> grade social studies teachers are retiring at the end of the year, Kim West and Lori Worthen.

Mr. Amundsen addressed department priorities. These include alignment of our 7-12 curriculum with the new CT state standards. He stated we have evaluated our current curriculum vs. state standards and the social studies vertical team has met to make some changes in our curriculum. Mr. Curtiss stated that the department continues to embed Vision of a Graduate competencies and study skills into the coursework. Mr. Amundsen stated there are specific inquiry standards in the standards which provide an opportunity to incorporate content based study skills.

Mr. Amundsen addressed challenges in the department. He stated that the 8<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum will move from a thematic to a chronological approach. Mr. Falco questioned why the change. Mr. Amundsen responded that during their analysis of the standards they found that 74% of DRG A & B schools use the chronological

Approval of  
2024-25  
Textbooks

Approval of Fee  
Schedule for  
Use of Public  
Schools

Donation from  
Tariffville School  
PTO

Social Studies  
Program Review

approach. He stated that 7<sup>th</sup> grade is perfect for the thematic approach.

Mr. Curtiss stated that in regard to civil discourse and controversial issues, the department has a structure in place so that the same norms are followed in all social studies classes. He noted that this gives teachers a common language. Mr. Amundsen stated that staff support will be necessary for the two new 7<sup>th</sup> grade teachers who will start next year. Mr. Amundsen noted that not much artificial intelligence (AI) work has been done at the middle school, but we need to teach students how to use it. Ms. Lemke noted that the Director of Instructional Technology will present to the board at their next meeting regarding AI.

Mr. Curtiss stated they are looking at creative ways to increase enrollment in social studies electives, noting that they already have 2 sessions for AP Human Geography. He noted the implementation of Native American History and Asian American and Pacific Islanders curriculum through the K-12 sequence.

Mr. Tindall noted the political extremes in both parties and the move to change history as he learned it. He asked if this has had an effect in school. Mr. Amundsen responded that individual parents sometimes have questions but it always results in a civil discussion, they have not experienced any type of groundswell.

Mr. Falco asked if the structure for addressing controversial issues is used universally among subjects and curriculum. Ms. Lemke stated that we talk about it districtwide, noting that controversial issues come up most in social studies.

Mr. Curtiss spoke about the need for curriculum writing time and the importance of collaboration. Mr. Amundsen stated that at the PLC level they are working on providing U.S. History resources that are more inclusive, adding unheard voices. He noted that new textbook sets for the classrooms would be helpful as the text they reference is from 2009. He pointed out that the department has built many documents that are used.

Mr. Curtiss stated that professional development around inquiry based learning and through the College Board helps to strengthen our content, curricular and instructional knowledge. Ms. Lemke noted that department leaders have access to the Teaching & Learning Team to deal with impactful issues.

Ms. Parise questioned the specifics as to how study skills are embedded in the curriculum. Mr. Curtiss responded that at SHS it is particular to writing using a scaffolding method. Note taking and reading efficiently is worked on over the first 2 years, and there is a writing lab at SHS. Mr. Amundsen responded that in 7<sup>th</sup> grade students are taught how we do school, such as how we share ideas and have conversations with each other. He noted that 7<sup>th</sup> grade is the first year that students have a full year of social studies. Ms. Lemke stated that document analysis is also helpful.

#### B. Tariffville School Report

Steve Matczyk, Tariffville School Principal, reported on staff and student achievements. He stated there is continued growth in academics with 80% of students at benchmark and a 65% growth rate overall. He noted that there are students exiting special education. He pointed out the 4<sup>th</sup> grade data is outstanding

Tariffville School  
Report

<p>compared to where this cohort was the prior year. Mr. Matyczyk stated his leadership priorities for the year, noting that the grade level teams changed at every level and there is a new math coach. He discussed the character ed program and the effort to make sure every student feels connected with an adult and friend in the building. Mr. Matyczyk discussed the diversity in his school and the work of the student and faculty equity teams. He stated that the .5 addition of a special education teacher has relieved the case load pressure and supports the push in model with students being taught by certified special education teachers. He noted the PLC collaboration with new teams at each grade level.</p> <p>Mr. Matyczyk addressed current and future challenges at the school. He stated they continue to discuss and educate students on disrespectful behavior / language with race and mean behavior. He expressed his excitement with the Encouraging Words districtwide initiative.</p> <p>Mr. Matyczyk stated the new modular classrooms for music and offices for occupational therapy and physical therapy are wonderful. He noted that the addition of special education supervisors has relieved some of the stress for the school psychologist who can now work more with students Social Emotional Learning (SEL). Mr. Matyczyk stated he continues to work with members of the Teaching &amp; Learning team on a regular basis.</p> <p>Ms. Parise asked how improvement came about for the 4<sup>th</sup> grade cohort. Mr. Matyczyk stated they have worked with the students to slow down through the SEL program, additionally social workers and psychologists visit the classrooms. He pointed out that when kids exhibit bad behavior it demonstrates that they need something and staff works to figure out their needs.</p> <p>Ms. Parise commended Mr. Matyczyk for taking the time to do this work. She asked if we measure growth percentile across all elementary schools. Ms. Lemke responded that this is done at all schools using an algorithm for continued growth. Mr. Matyczyk stated that growth is measured in the fall, winter and spring. Mr. Falco asked about the Student Equity Team. Mr. Matyczyk stated that the student team has evolved and was sparked by students asking to help. Ms. Lemke noted that this also boosts role in leadership at the school.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">B. Policy Second Reading</p>	<p>Policy Second Reading</p>
<p>Mr. Sullivan reviewed the policies that were first distributed at the last meeting and will be brought forward for approval at the next meeting</p>	
<p><u>PUBLIC AUDIENCE</u> None.</p>	<p>Public Audience</p>
<p><u>EXECUTIVE SESSION</u> Ms. Willerup: MOVE to enter executive session, to include Superintendent Matt Curtis, at 7:52 p.m.</p>	<p>Executive Session</p>
<p>Ms. Parise: Seconded. So moved.</p>	
<p><u>ADJOURNMENT</u> Ms. Parise: MOVE to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m.</p>	<p>Adjournment</p>

Ms. Tedone: Seconded. So moved.

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Sharon Thomas  
Secretary

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Katie Wilde  
Recording Secretary