

**TOWN OF SIMSBURY
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Record of Proceedings

Regular Meeting

September 24, 2024

Mr. Jeff Tindall called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in room D172 at Simsbury High School.

Roll Call:

Members present: Mmes. Tara Willerup, Lydia Tedone and Jessica Parise. Messrs. Jeff Tindall, Brian Watson and Josh Falco. Ms. Jen Batchelar arrived at 6:33 p.m.

Members absent: Ms. Sharon Thomas

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

RECOGNITIONS

Maggie Seidel, SHS Principal, stated that 9 students reached the AP Capstone Diploma designation at the end of last year. Four of these students graduated last spring. She stated that these students have reached an incredible milestone in completing AP Seminar, AP Research and 4 additional AP classes receiving a score of 3 or better on the AP exam. Ms. Seidel introduced the 5 seniors who received this recognition, noting that they continue to take additional AP courses this year. Recognition was given to Logan Pedersen, Julia Agrawal, Momin Ali, Surya Patel and Eleanor Gould.

Recognitions

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

Jane Spatcher McAlpine, Simsbury Historical Society Executive Director, invited board members to attend the Simsbury Historical Society Volunteer Picnic. She noted that currently 5th graders visit the Historical Society for Colonial Days. Ms. Spatcher McAlpine stated that the society also offers Native American programs and they would like to work with the schools to structure programs that meet the curriculum.

Public Audience

COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOE COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Rosadio reported that elementary schools are holding their Open Houses and going on field trips. She stated that teachers attended teacher evaluation professional development last week. Ms. Rosadio noted the kickoff of the Encouraging Words campaign. She stated that the PSAT will be administered on October 9 and One Act Plays will be performed on October 19. This week is spirit week at SHS with the Homecoming game on Friday and the Homecoming Dance on Saturday.

Communications

Mr. Falco stated that the Communications Committee will meet October 4. He reported that the Policy Committee met to review policy edits relative to the change in Title IX federal regulations. The revised policies and regulations were developed by Shipman & Goodwin and will move forward to the full board. The committee will next start the review of the 4000 Series – Personnel.

Ms. Batchelar reported on the Curriculum Committee meeting. Discussion Centered on aligning curriculum with the Vision of a Graduate and in particular aligning 7-12 curriculum with the competencies. Curriculum review of PE/Wellness, Math and Library Media will take place this year. Ms. Batchelar noted that the curriculums are posted on the district website.

Ms. Tedone reported on the CREC Council, noting that 35 districts participate in CREC and CREC schools include 9,000 students. CREC is focused on magnet school funding in the upcoming legislative session as well as some additional areas of advocacy.

Ms. Lemke stated that all teachers were introduced to the teacher evaluation platform during last week's professional development. Mr. Tindall noted a resident email he received supporting the Encouraging Words campaign. Mr. Curtis stated that he attended a gathering with the CT Commissioner of Education who is aligned with addressing special education funding and the escalating outplacement costs with no controls in place. She is also supportive of district special ed facilities.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

A. Approval of Minutes of September 10, 2024 Meeting

Mr. Watson: MOVE to approve the minutes of the September 10, 2024 meeting.

Ms. Parise: Seconded. So moved.

B. Personnel

Ms. Batchelar: MOVE that the Board of Education accept the notice of intent to retire of Bryan Forman effective June 30, 2025.

Ms. Parise: Seconded. So moved

C. Approval of Policy Revision

Ms. Tedone: MOVE to adopt the revised Bylaw 304 Standing Committees, effective September 24, 2024.

Ms. Parise: Seconded. So moved.

D. Year End Financial Results & Transfer of Surplus Funds to Non-Lapsing Account

Ms. Meriwether reviewed the fourth quarter budget analysis, closing out fiscal year 2024. She stated that there is no change in revenues, state and federal grants, since the last quarterly report. Ms. Meriwether noted the difference in the original budget and the year-end expenditures results in a surplus of \$551,160. She addressed the increases in expenditures. These include a \$526,000 deficit in pupil transportation due the need for outside vendor transportation for special ed students; a \$77,000 deficit in nutrition services due to a state audit which found our Nutrition Services Director does not meet the state education standards and thereby can no longer be paid from the cafeteria fund until these requirements are met; and an out of district

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tuition deficit due to increased costs for out of district services and a lower excess cost reimbursement. The budget did have savings in general control and instruction, operation of plant (fuel), and maintenance of plant/equipment due to the spending freeze. Ms. Meriwether noted a surplus of \$1.1 million in the insurance/pension account due to employee changes in medical and dental insurance. Mr. Curtis noted that there had been some over budgeting of this line item, but the fund is stable and shared with the town. Mr. Tindall stated that the administration is working on addressing the transportation and out of district deficits.

Mr. Watson: MOVE, effective September 24, 2024 to transfer Board of Education surplus funds in the amount of \$551,160 into the Non-Lapsing Fund.

Mr. Falco: Seconded. So moved.

INFORMATION AND REPORTS

A. Simsbury High School Academic Report

SHS Academic Report

Maggie Seidel, SHS Principal, introduced her administrative team. She stated that last year, in her first year as SHS Principal, was a year of listening, learning and strengthening the current systems and structures at SHS.

Ken Pera, SHS Assistant Principal, discussed the successes associated with the Advanced Placement courses. 957 AP tests were taken last year with 83% of students scoring a 3 or higher. 69 students qualified for the AP Scholar Award; 31 for AP Scholar with Honor; 73 for AP Scholar of Distinction, and 8 students earned the Capstone Diploma. Mr. Pera noted that these numbers are the highest he recalls.

Georgia Robert, SHS Assistant Principal, discussed SAT testing results. 86% of students are college ready in ELA, 1st in DRG B; 60% of students are college ready in math, 2nd in DRG B; the mean SAT score is 1130, up from the prior year's score of 1102. Ms. Robert noted the CT mean SAT score is 966 and the national mean SAT score is 952.

Vanessa Massiah, SHS Assistant Principal, discussed the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). 87% of students tested were at or above goal, 1st in the DRG and 2nd in the state.

Greg Stillman, Director of School Counseling, discussed college success rates for the class of 2024. 19% of graduates were accepted to a most competitive college. 76% of graduates are attending a four year college with 14% pursuing a 2 year degree. The percentage of SHS graduates earning a college degree within 6 years remains consistent. Mr. Stillman stated that 8% of students went straight to employment, went to a 5th year prep school program, went into the military or attend a career education program.

Mr. Stillman stated, as a result of the counseling curriculum review, a focus has been on career education for college and non-college bound students in alignment with state standards. He noted the Careers in Trades panel that was held, and students completing internships through the Capstone program. Mr. Stillman stated they are planning for a larger scale career fair for both college and non-college bound

students.

The school administration addressed school culture. Ms. Seidel pointed out climate survey results from families, staff and students. Large percentage increases were seen in families feeling their child feels safe at school, the school has a welcoming environment and the disciplinary procedures are fair. Staff percentages increased substantially in the areas of feeling engaged with the administration in the school, feeling connected to the school community, and professional development being delivered in a way that addresses learning style. Student percentages increased dramatically in teachers excited about what they teach and my school values diversity. The percentage of students who felt that student behavior detracts from learning had a significant decrease. Mr. Pera noted that there was only one question where there wasn't a positive increase. Ms. Robert stated that last year 2 grades were surveyed rather than 1 as in the past.

Ms. Parise asked if there are any theories as to why the drastic increases in school climate. Ms. Seidel responded that there has been a shift in the style of teaching and how we deliver instruction with more hands on and collaboration among students.

Ms. Robert reviewed 2023-24 school accomplishments. These include the U.S. News & World Report ranking of #7 in CT, the Project Lead the Way program as a distinguished school for 2023-24, 4 state championships in athletics, clubs such as Robotics and DECA, and Halo awards in the performing arts.

Ms. Seidel addressed what was gleaned from last year and where the school is headed. The school realigned instruction and assessments with the board goals. Common assessments, course assessments and public markers (SAT/NGSS) will be looked at. Ms. Seidel noted that last year SAT phrasing was added into the instructional content as that was an area where students were struggling on the test.

Ms. Seidel discussed the Vision of a Graduate. She noted that there are 6 competencies with 4 attributes each and these 24 skills are put into the courses that students are taking. Mr. Falco suggested that we give people the ability to click on each of the attributes to see where they are being addressed.

Ms. Seidel stated that the PSAT will be administered on October 9th to grades 9, 10 & 11. A parent/student night will be held to review PSAT results and tools available for SAT prep. SAT school day is March 19th.

Ms. Seidel discussed a compassionate and connected school culture at the high school. The cell phone policy is going well. In response to Ms. Parise, Ms. Massiah stated that teachers wanted a uniform cell phone policy and there have been no cell phone referrals. Ms. Seidel stated that students have been told the alternative is the cell phone pouches. She noted that if a student uses their phone for medical technology than an exception is made. Ms. Batchelar and Mr. Watson stated that their children are completing more work during study hall without their phones.

Ms. Seidel noted that vape sensors in bathrooms was piloted last year. Additional sensors have been purchased this year and there continues to be a policy to sign in and out of the bathrooms. Ms. Seidel stated the Encouraging Words campaign is going well and students are making it high school appropriate. Additional assemblies and student celebrations are occurring as students want more reasons to come

together.

Ms. Seidel stated that department supervisors held a 2 day retreat on the teacher evaluation plan and are passionate about the new plan. She noted that the high school is looking at AI in conjunction with Dave Prinstein and the AI Committee. Ms. Seidel stated the administration is looking at security staffing models in other comprehensive high schools to see their practices and which models are successful

Ms. Seidel addressed challenges ahead, stating that in the case of intervention they don't always know what's coming to the high school. They try to stay ahead of it, and have had the benefit of an added case worker this year.

Ms. Batchelar asked if there are a lot of new interventions at the high school. Ms. Seidel responded that sometimes the shift from 8th grade to 9th grade can be difficult for students. She stated that the interventionists at SHS are specialists specific to students at the high school level.

Ms. Seidel noted that there were budgetary implications last year, particularly with last year's budget freeze. Mr. Falco suggested that the board should be apprised of which budget requests do not get approved.

Mr. Tindall stated there is clearly renewed energy in the building which is seen through the data points. Mr. Curtis stated the district administration talks regularly about the impact of team on school culture.

B. BOE Committee Assignments

Mr. Tindall noted the committee assignments for 2024-25 and thanked board members for their willingness to serve.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Watson: MOVE to adjourn the meeting at 8:11 p.m.

Ms. Parise: Seconded. So moved.

Sharon Thomas
Secretary

Katie Wilde
Recording Secretary

BOE
Committees

Public Audience

Adjournment