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. ***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.	Public Audience
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. 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.	Committee Reports/BOE Communications

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 CABE/CAPSS Convention that she attended with Mr. Curtis and Ms. Lemke. She also reported on the CABE 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 — Approval of Minutes of November 14, 2023

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

Mr. Watson: Seconded. So moved.

B. Personnel — 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 — 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 rational 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

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 — CIP

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 — 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 CABE 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 — Adjournment

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

Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved.

_____ Jennifer Batchelar Secretary	_____ Katie Wilde Recording Secretary