

**TOWN OF SIMSBURY
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Record of Proceedings

Regular Meeting

December 12, 2023

Mr. Jeff Tindall called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Board of Education Conference Room.

Roll Call:

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

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOE COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Luzietti reported that Latimer Lane School transitioned into 8 new classrooms and 2 special education rooms on Monday. She reported that the HJMS musical this year will be Guys and Dolls. Ms. Luzietti noted receipt of the HMS Lighthouse Award by Science teacher Elaine Kotler. She reviewed the dates for the holiday musical performances at SHS and noted that the Honor Society is collecting for the Stuff a Cruiser fundraiser. Ms. Luzietti noted that capstone projects were presented this week, as was PJ Day to raise funds for CCMC.

Ms. Tedone reported on CABE's legislative priorities and the board member orientation attended by Ms. Parise and Mr. Falco. Ms. Willerup reported on the Curriculum Committee meeting. The committee discussed EduPlanet, the curriculum based platform on the school district's website. Ms. Willerup stated that the new state standards for social studies, defining guaranteed experiences through the school counseling office, and differentiated instruction in art were all discussed as well.

Ms. Lemke noted that capstone presentations occur twice per year at SHS. She noted that the Hour of Code happened this week when SHS students go to the elementary schools to show students programming and coding.

Ms. Meriwether reported that the tri-board meeting is next Tuesday. Items for discussion are fixed costs, a presentation from the BOF, a capital overview and the draft budget calendar.

Mr. Curtis welcomed BOS liaison Diana Yeisley who was in attendance at the meeting. He stated that he observed AP Seminar presentations in John Roberts class at SHS and saw a very high level inquiry based process. Mr. Curtis noted that budget conversations have begun with administrators at the building and program level.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

A. Election of Officers

Committee
Reports/BOE
Communications

Election of
Officers

Mr. Tindall opened the floor to nominations for Secretary of the Simsbury Board of Education.

Ms. Willerup: Move that Sharon Thomas be nominated for Secretary of the Simsbury Board of Education.

Mr. Tindall closed the nominations for Secretary of the Simsbury Board of Education.

Ms. Tedone: Move that Sharon Thomas be elected as Secretary of the Simsbury Board of Education.

Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved.

Mr. Tindall opened the floor to nominations for Vice Chairman of the Simsbury Board of Education.

Ms. Tedone: Move that Jennifer Batchelar be nominated for Vice Chairman of the Simsbury Board of Education

Mr. Tindall closed the nominations for Vice Chairman of the Simsbury Board of Education.

Ms. Thomas: Move that Jennifer Batchelar be elected as Vice Chairman of the Simsbury Board of Education.

Mr. Watson: Seconded. So moved.

Mr. Tindall opened the floor for nominations for Chairman of the Simsbury Board of Education

Ms. Willerup: Move that Jeff Tindall be nominated for Chairman of the Simsbury Board of Education.

Mr. Tindall closed nominations for Chairman of the Simsbury Board of Education.

Ms. Batchelar: Move that Jeff Tindall be elected as Chairman of the Simsbury Board of Education.

Ms. Thomas: Seconded. So moved.

B. Approval of Minutes of November 28, 2023

Mr. Watson: MOVE to approve the minutes of the November 28, 2023 meeting.

Ms. Willerup: Seconded. So moved.

C. Approval of 2024 BOE Meeting Schedule

Approval of
Minutes of
November 28,
2023

Approval of
2024 Meeting
Schedule

Ms. Tedone: MOVE that the Board of Education set their 2024 meeting schedule as outlined in the December 12, 2023 board exhibit.

Ms. Parise: Seconded. So moved.

INFORMATION AND REPORTS

A. Enrollment Projections

Mr. Sullivan reported on the NESDEC 5 year enrollment projections. He noted that the new kindergarten legislation was not taken into consideration in their projections. Mr. Sullivan reviewed enrollment over the past 5 years. Over the 5 year period enrollment K-12 increased by 79 students, with the largest increases at the elementary level.

Mr. Sullivan reviewed the 5 year projected enrollments K-12. He noted the increases of 10% over 5 years, or 2% per year which is average. Mr. Sullivan addressed specific grade configurations projected for 2024-25. K-12 enrollment is projected to increase by 59 students; K-6 enrollment is projected to increase by 48 students; Grades 7-8 is projected to increase by 44 students; and Grades 9-12 is projected to decrease by 33 students. Mr. Sullivan reviewed the elementary projections noting that between 2023-24 and 2024-25 there is little change, but between 2023-24 and 2028-29 the projected increase is 10%-11%.

Mr. Sullivan discussed HJMS enrollment, noting that 6th grade has a large class that will be moving into 7th grade next year and 3 teams will be necessary. The 5 year projection is an increase of 91 students at HJMS. Mr. Sullivan noted that there may be shifts between SHS and HJMS staff as enrollment increases. He stated that in the short term enrollment at SHS is projected to decrease.

Mr. Tindall asked how the 5 year enrollment increase will affect the physical plant. Mr. Sullivan responded that the build out at Latimer Lane School will help, as well as the fact that all of the elementary classrooms are within guidelines for the current class sizes. Mr. Tindall asked if the proposed development on The Hartford insurance property is included in the projections. Mr. Sullivan responded that it has not been factored in.

Mr. Sullivan discussed the birth to enrollment comparison, which based on historical projections, uses a ratio of 1.52 kindergarten students per birth. He presented adjusted kindergarten projections for 2024-25 based on the new state legislation. These projections result in a 12% lower enrollment from the NESDEC projection. Mr. Sullivan stated that the adjusted elementary projections are a result of the percentage of “ber babies” who have enrolled over the past 12 years, the potential of parents accessing the state waiver process, and the historical pattern of birth months compared to enrollments. As a result the overall NESDEC projection of 301 was reduced to 266. Mr. Sullivan stated that providing the adjusted numbers to NESDEC will result in “righting” the 5 year projections. He noted that NESDEC’s projections would require 2 more teachers, the adjusted projections would result in 2 less kindergarten teachers.

Mr. Sullivan stated the 2023 NESDEC projections suggest that K-12 student enrollment will increase an average of 90 students per year for the next 5 years. He

Enrollment
Projections

noted that enrollment, especially incoming kindergarten classes, will be important to monitor over the next few years. Ms. Batchelar asked if the waiver option is only available this year. Ms. Tedone responded that the legislation for the waiver is one year, but the legislature will consider extending the period during the upcoming legislative session.

B. Elementary Curriculum Update

Ms. Lemke stated that last year the district was informed that Math in Focus materials would no longer be available. This year the district is piloting Think! Math. Ms. Lemke noted that the presentation will also address the science of reading curriculum and the district performance index.

Betsy Gunsalus, Director of Elementary Curriculum, noted the Math Transition Team members who are involved in piloting Think! Math. She stated that the team encompasses 30% of our elementary staff. There is a balance of schools and grades represented and teachers have received a lot of professional development. Ms. Gunsalus noted that the same structure is used in each grade.

Lori Martensen, Math Coach, discussed what engagement looks like in the math classroom relative to the student, teacher and the task. Ms. Thomas asked if there is a noticeable difference in engagement from the previous curriculum. Christine Neskies, grade 3 teacher at Tootin' Hills School, stated there is a huge difference in math understanding. The subject is different each day, but the kids know the structure and what to expect. Ms. Parise asked what the main differences are between Math in Focus and the new program. Ms. Abon, grade 1 teacher at Central School, stated that anchor tasks are provided as part of the curriculum which was not the case with Math in Focus. It has interactive manipulatives that students can do on the whiteboard. Additionally, although it was mentioned in Math in Focus, journaling is big part of Think! Math and it explains students' thinking. Ms. Neskies stated that the curriculum provides strategies for what to look for in the end task.

Ms. Neskies demonstrated how Think! Math lives in the classroom. She pointed out that students are grouped differently each day and when they come together they build a strategy board. Ms. Parise asked about the 6th grade math curriculum. Ms. Gunsalus responded that 6th grade is continuing with Math in Focus as there are not textbooks at that grade level.

Ms. Gunsalus presented a video of Ms. Abon and Ms. Neskies teaching math in their classrooms. She noted the tenets of the curriculum: anchor task, structured discussion, reading the textbook, guided practice, journaling and independent practice. Ms. Lemke stated that the K-12 math vertical team is reading the book Classroom Practices and looking at practices K-12 as to what it looks like developmentally for elementary, middle and high school.

Ms. Parise asked if students take home their textbook. Ms. Martensen responded that it depends on the grade level. Only grades 4-6 would take home textbooks. Ms. Gunsalus noted that teachers send parents parent teaching tools for the program. Ms. Batchelar asked about students who excel in math and what if the anchor task done in groups is too easy for them. Ms. Martensen stated that the anchor tasks are appropriate for the content and all offer a low floor to a high ceiling.

Elementary
Curriculum
Update

Ms. Parise asked what are seen as the limitations of the program and how do we remedy them. Ms. Neskie stated that we have a strong support system with Ms. Martensen and she can reach out to the Think! Math coaches. She noted there was a concern with the length of the assessments. Ms. Martensen stated that the district was able to adjust and choose which questions we use that cover all of the learning targets on our assessments.

Ms. Lemke reported that the legislature had the state create a K-3 Center of Literacy to look at programs in line with the science of reading. This group approved 5 programs and offered a waiver process for those not using any of these programs. Simsbury was granted a transitional waiver.

Ms. Gunsalus reviewed the targets for the program: (1) word study block, (2) differentiation block, (3) literacy skills block, and (4) assessment. The transitional waiver requires us to add specific programmatic or curricular components for vocabulary and comprehension with a fall 2025 implementation.

Mr. Curtis noted that this is a major shift at the state level as we have never seen this and it is a mandate. He explained that normally there are state standards that you need to align with your curriculum. Mr. Curtis pointed out that many high performing districts were denied the waiver. He expressed concern with what could come next with regard to mandates.

Ms. Lemke addressed the Next Generation Accountability System performance results. She stated that schools and district earn points on a broad set of 12 indicators. Three of our schools, Tariffville, Squadron and Tootin' Hills Schools have been named Schools of Distinction meaning they were in the top 10% in the state based on the growth measures. Mr. Curtis noted that the highest performing schools in the district, based on the CT assessment, were Central and Latimer Lane Schools.

Ms. Willerup asked about chronic absenteeism. Mr. Sullivan responded that these are students who miss more than 10% of school days, noting that typically the students has a history of absenteeism throughout their school career. Ms. Thomas asked if we look at the reason for absences and consider those in determining chronic absenteeism. Ms. Lemke stated we look at the pattern of absences.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Willerup: MOVE to adjourn the meeting at 8:13 p.m.

Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved.

Sharon Thomas
Secretary

Katie Wilde
Recording Secretary

Public Audience

Adjournment