

**SHERMAN BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**SHERMAN, CONNECTICUT 06784**  
**REGULAR MEETING, NOVEMBER 7, 2018**  
**THE SHERMAN SCHOOL - MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM**  
**7:00 PM**

A regular meeting of the Sherman Board of Education was called to order by Mrs. Diotte at 6:15 PM, and the Board moved immediately into Working Session in the STEAM Lab. The Regular Session resumed at 7:10 in the Library Media Center.

**1. PRESENT:**

For the Board: Dr. Alexander, Mrs. Diotte, Mrs. Enright, Mrs. Lenihan and Mr. Neunzig  
 Absent: Mrs. Seeger  
 For the Administration: Dr. Melendez, Ms. Edwards and Mrs. Snowden  
 School Staff: Mrs. Loira-Marrero

The Board and attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. CELEBRATIONS:**

Dr. Melendez celebrated Dr. Belinda Badger for self-publishing two children's books. The books are based on The Sherman School Core Values. Dr. Badger will use her books for student instruction regarding empathy. Dr. Melendez noted that Dr. Badger is also Teacher of the Year and expressed how proud he is of her.

**3. PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

**4. ADDITIONS TO AGENDA:**

**5. CONSENT AGENDA:**

Mrs. Diotte moved and Dr. Alexander seconded that the Board approve the consent agenda items 5.1 to 5.4 and the motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

- |     |   |                         |
|-----|---|-------------------------|
| 5.1 | Minutes - Regular Meeting, October 10, 2018                 | Enclosure 5.1a          |
|     | Minutes - Maintenance Meeting, October 17, 2018             | Enclosure 5.1b          |
|     | Minutes - Communication Committee Meeting, October 30, 2018 | Enclosure 5.1c          |
| 5.2 | Personnel Actions   |                         |
|     | <b><u>Resignation</u></b>                                   |                         |
|     | Hilary Corbi, Crossing Guard, Effective October 19, 2018    |                         |
| 5.3 | Reports - Monthly Enrollment                                | (Enclosure 5.3)         |
| 5.4 | Monthly Budget Report 18-19                                 | (Enclosure 5.4a - 5.4b) |

**6. APPROVAL OF CURRENT BILLS:**

Mrs. Diotte moved and Mrs. Lenihan seconded that the Board approve the current bills as presented, and the motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

6.1 2018-2019 Current Bills

Enclosure 6.1

**7. ORAL REPORTS:**

**7.1 SPTO Update**

Dr. Melendez noted that Mrs. Ribisl could not attend the Board Meeting. Mrs. Lenihan shared that the Election Day Bake Sale was a success.

**7.2 Sub-Committee**

**Negotiations Committee - Mrs. Lenihan**

Mrs. Lenihan shared that the committee will be meeting on November 8th. This is the third meeting and they are making progress.

**Communication Committee - Dr. Alexander**

Dr. Alexander shared that the committee met and discussed changing the Parent /Student handbook regarding communicating with the Board and Administration when a concern is raised. The committee discussed what should be included but have not finalized the revisions. They will have another meeting to draft a revision of one section of the handbook.

**Curriculum Committee - Mrs. Enright**

Mrs. Enright shared an update from the Curriculum Meeting. The Committee reviewed the SBAC Results. Mrs. Enright noted that work must be done to improve the scores. Sherman fell below par compared to surrounding DRGs. She is pleased with the plans to improve scores. Mrs. Enright would like to see the SBAC results increase by a specific percentage.

The committee discussed the Big Ideas math program. The staff attended Professional Development training with the program. Mrs. Enright is aware that the program is difficult and will take time for the teachers to learn. She is glad to see the school is working towards a consistent math program in the Middle School.

The Committee also discussed Curriculum Templates. The Templates are similar to the Units of Study/Curriculum Page that were developed in the past. Mrs. Enright noted the templates will streamline how teachers present their information. They also discussed Curriculum Bootcamp. Mrs. Enright shared the focus of the Bootcamp was to streamline curriculum and make it more visible and consistent for parents to see.

The Committee also discussed the potential Phonics program.

**Budget - Mrs. Diotte**

Mrs. Diotte met with Dr. Melendez and the Administration to develop a proposed Budget Timeline. Mrs. Diotte requested the Board review the timeline and let her know of any conflicts. The first Budget Workshop is scheduled for December 17th. Mrs. Diotte received feedback last year that developing a budget based on the prior year's budget, and not accounting for any actuals should be discussed, and Mrs. Diotte requested the

Board brainstorm alternative methods. Mrs. Diotte believes having Mrs. Loira-Marrero involved will be very helpful in the process.

Dr. Melendez shared the focus of the first budget workshop will be the Administration to present ideas, based on Strategic Plan recommended initiatives. The Board will provide feedback on items they would like to see reflected in the budget. A discussion will follow without numbers to discuss big ideas, then assign funds and details for the remainder of the workshops.

Mrs. Diotte asked if any Board members had concerns with the new approach. She feels it help them to think about priorities and then discuss the costs, guided by the Strategic Plan.

#### **Maintenance - Mrs. Diotte**

Mrs. Diotte shared the committee has met twice recently to review the Facility Study. Mr. Yeakel was present at both meetings. At this point, the information in the report looks solid. Friar is developing a five to ten-year timeline to determine where the school may have Capital Expenditures for code, space planning, etc. The committee should have a good idea going into the budget season regarding operating expenses vs. requests from the Town. Once the Facility Study draft has been finalized, the committee will be requesting input from the community.

Mrs. Diotte provided an update on the Playground committee. She reminded the Board in September they agreed that the Playground should be replaced sooner than later and did not need to wait for the completion of the Facility Study. The recommendations have not changed in the study, and the architect's recommendation is to not replace the Pirate Ship playground, but to have one playground to service the entire school. At the direction of the Board, Dr. Melendez established a Playground Committee. The committee met twice, and strongly feel they do not want one playground. Mrs. Diotte feels that perhaps the Board moved too quickly as the committee does not have all the information from the study and it is difficult to make a fully educated decision. At this point, Mrs. Diotte feels the committee should hit pause, which could possibly take longer, but have a playground that everyone can be proud of and have the entire community support.

Mr. Neunzig added the primary focus of the Board is safety. A playground in front of the building is not the best location for the youngest students to play. The best location is in the lower lot, fenced in, where no cars drive by. Mr. Neunzig added that no matter what happens with the K-Wing, it is years away and best not to wait *to the playground*. From a monetary perspective, may make sense to do one great combined playground, as opposed to build two.

Dr. Alexander supported Mr. Neunzig's safety message. She understands the Pirate Playground has been enjoyed for many years and can understand the feeling of "loss", but understands the safety component of combining into one. She feels the playground must be designed with different spaces to support needs of both younger and older students, and that should facilitate conversation. Understanding why the playground should be relocated will take away feeling of loss out of the conversation.

Mrs. Diotte shared the next Playground Committee meeting is scheduled for November 20th with two vendors to present plans for a single playground and two separate playgrounds with the same budget constraints. Mrs. Diotte does not want to waste anyone's time and questioned the Board if they should move forward. Dr. Alexander feels the committee should move forward with the meeting. It will inform the conversation.

Dr. Melendez acknowledged that the meeting would remain scheduled for November 20th at 4:45 PM. Each vendor has one hour to present their plans. The committee will become informed, but no decisions will be made.

### **7.3 Chairperson**

Mrs. Diotte shared that according to the Bylaws, upon the resignation of the Board Chair, the Vice Chair resumes the role of the Chair until January of the next Board election, January 2021. The position of Vice-Chair/Secretary is open and will be addressed under New Business. To fill the open seat, an ad has been run in the newspaper. The Bylaws dictates the Board has 90 days to seat a candidate. Mrs. Diotte did reach out to the Democratic Town Committee Chair to inform them of the open position on the Democratic ticket.

### **7.4 Superintendent Update - Dr. Jeff Melendez**

## **8. PRESENTATIONS**

### **8.1 Monthly Update on Strategic Planning and Communication**

Dr. Melendez presented the Strategic Plan slide and noted that it clearly articulates both visually and text of what we are hoping to achieve over a period. Not all action steps have been established, and some of the action steps are being developed collaboratively at dedicated faculty meetings to gain perspective and input from teachers. After thoughtful conversations, the Administration decided to put parameters around the number of action steps which will force prioritization.

The Strategic Plan should be a living document that can be referenced easily with clear, concise details about what we need to do. The Administration decided to have an annual reflection on the process and reconvene the Steering Committee and evaluate progress. The Board will provide definitive feedback on progress. Dr. Melendez presented Progress Toward Goal slides which provided brief updates on progress made thus far on each goal.

Dr. Melendez provided a brief update on the Communication Plan.

- Email - Coding for the e-newsletter is almost complete. Content for an internal test distribution will be soon.
- Website / Mobile - The Communicate App was presented to the faculty at their last meeting.
- Social Media - Mrs. Snowden has been tweeting 2 to 3 times per week and plans to enlist the help of student photographers.
- Newspaper - Coverage of a variety of wonderful happenings in the school and hopeful it is having an impact in the community.

**8.2 2017-18 SBAC Results**

Mrs. Snowden presented the 2017-18 SBAC School Wide Results. The percentages capture students receiving a Level 3 or greater. For comparison purposes, Mrs. Snowden included the results from the previous two years. SBAC scores for both Math and Language Arts have decreased when compared to the last two years.

- 65.3% of students met or exceeded expectations in ELA on the SBAC.
- 56.9% of students met or exceed expectations in Math on the SBAC

Mrs. Snowden shared that the State of Connecticut measures progress for schools and holds schools accountable, not only for meeting the benchmark, but for growth. Growth becomes part of the accountability index and State report. For ELA, the number of students who met the growth target, set by SBAC, increased from 33.3% to 45.2%. Unfortunately, Math did not meet the benchmark and declined from 42.5% to 34.3%.

As requested, Mrs. Snowden compared Sherman to the DRGs. Percentage of Students Met or Exceeded in ELA on SBAC:

- State of Connecticut 55.3%
- Sherman School District 65.3%
- DRG A Average 82.5%
- DRG B Average 76.3%
- DRG C Average 69.9%

Percentage of Students Met or Exceeded in Math on SBAC:

- State of Connecticut 46.7%
- Sherman School District 56.9%
- DRG A Average 78.1%
- DRG B Average 69.4%
- DRG C Average 59.9%

The Sherman School is part of DRG C. Mrs. Snowden noted that due to the size of the school, each student represents .5% point, which can make a big difference in the school's percentage.

Mrs. Enright disagreed. She shared that when you examine the data and compare Sherman to DRG C, Sherman is at the bottom. Mrs. Enright feels it is important for parents to be aware, and to put Sherman on the map as a school that exceeds. Mrs. Snowden agreed, but shared that in other districts, students represent a fraction of a percentage point, but Sherman represents half a point. She noted each test score represents .5 student, and that 10 students can really make a difference.

Mrs. Snowden shared results from the District-wide assessments. She noted, expectation gets higher from Fall to Spring, so level growth is still an improvement.

STAR Reading (Grades 1 - 8)	Fall 75%	Spring 87%
Fountas & Pinnell (Grades K -5)	Fall 87%	Spring 87%
STAR Math Grades 1 - 8	Fall 78%	Spring 82%
Writing Samples (Grades K- 5)	Fall 11%	Spring 88%

*(The rubric does not change from Fall to Spring, so growth is expected)*

The Bridges Comprehensive Growth Assessment K - 5 is a new assessment only given in the Spring.

Bridges Math Assessment

Spring 65%

Mrs. Diotte questioned if the STAR Assessment is aligned with Common Core. Mrs. Snowden agreed it is aligned, but shared it is a different kind of test compared to the SBAC. The STAR Assessments are designed to be done in 30 minutes or less.

Mrs. Enright circled back to the SBAC results and shared that in 8th grade, 11 students scored at a Level 1, and 9 students scored at a Level 2. Numbers represent 50% of the students and are unacceptable. Same statistics hold true for the 6th grade, 23 out of 39 students scored at a Level 2 or below. She feels this data should be put out there for parents to see and feels parents would be more invested.

Mrs. Snowden shared that although she is presenting School-wide data results, grade level results were presented to the staff, as well as student level data to the grade level teams. Mrs. Snowden noted it is delicate in such a small community.

Mrs. Snowden shared what the school is working on right now:

- Created whole day sessions where teachers review individual student data. Meet as a Grade Level or Subject Area Team and compare data points for students who struggle, as well as successful students. The team plans to meet three times per year after each benchmark assessment.
- Insure the best possible testing environment for students. The teams discussed technical difficulties that sometimes occur while administering online tests.
- Discussed concentrating testing in a shorter period of time.
- Teachers would like to administer interim assessments. They are smaller versions of the SBAC test, meant to align with specific standards. Teachers can select a set of questions regarding a specific unit or curriculum. The interim assessments could provide experience with questions, as well as provide the teacher with instructional feedback. Mrs. Snowden noted that the school is mindful that they do not want to test too much and feels they can do in a way that supports learning and progress.
- The teams decided they need to collect more data, especially math data. They plan to do extended problem solving with students on a regular basis and collect data. Also, they plan to increase Language Arts coaching opportunities.
- Curriculum Boot Camp, Professional Development introduced the idea of consistent Unit Template. The Unit Template will help prioritize our standards to focus the most energy where we should.
- Would like students to set goals. The intent is to make students aware of their own progress and get them involved.
- Embed more Tier 2 vocabulary which spans across content areas.
- Review data to see where more time and energy should be spent.
- Measuring Growth Mindset as a goal for the entire school is important. Determine how to measure self-direction, empathy, critical thinking and perseverance.

- Examine attitude towards testing and environment in which testing occurs to maximize effort and performance. Mrs. Snowden shared that we need to make sure that our students are willing and able to give their best effort toward these assessments so that we can trust the results and use them to make decisions.

Mrs. Diotte questioned if teachers can set a goal to increase SBAC scores? Mrs. Snowden shared that you cannot tie the SBAC results to a teacher's evaluation.

Mrs. Enright shared that the District can set a goal for SBAC improvement and the teachers can do action steps to align with the District Goal.

Mrs. Snowden shared that our School-wide goals are written that way. For example, increase Mindset for Learning and teachers all write action steps to work towards that goal, which differs from a student learning objective which has hard data based on assessments.

Mr. Neunzig questioned if the teachers and curriculum have remained the same, then why are the scores going down?

Mrs. Snowden shared that there has been some staff changes, as well as grade level movement. Bridges K-5 was added three years ago, and Big Ideas was purchased last October, but only partially implemented in the Spring. The program is now fully implemented. Units of Study for Language Arts have remained consistent for the past four years but are built upon and revised. Mrs. Snowden agreed that we have to consider what is going on with the declining scores.

Mrs. Enright added that the scores were not great last year. Participation has been good this year, as well as last year. In prior years, required State plan because participant rate was so low.

Dr. Alexander questions if the meetings that Mrs. Snowden provided are a recent practice?

Mrs. Snowden shared previously, Mrs. Flynn would have two-hour meetings with each grade level, but math meetings were not held on a regular basis. In the past, teachers did receive a lot of data, and drill down on it, but not to this extent that was recently done. The Curriculum team is asking the teachers what they see in the data. The same process will be held in February and May/June.

Dr. Alexander asked is the new mini Interim Language Arts SBAC are new also. Mrs. Snowden shared that the teachers are not pleased with our summative scores and feel they do not represent what the students are capable of. Teachers want to do interim assessments as an opportunity to show what our students can do. The teachers questioned why students are not answering and feel exposure to specific types of questions is a possibility.

Dr. Alexander asked if there will be a similar approach in the Math program? Mrs. Snowden confirmed there would be.

Dr. Alexander shared that she is concerned about choosing a target number to increase the

SBAC scores, but pleased to hear about ownership in the improvement. A change in the way they are looking at the data is generating a desire for improvement, and as a Board member, Dr. Alexander feels she can check back in on. She asked Mrs. Snowden as a mentor of these conversations, does she feel that she is having an impact on how the teachers are seeing the results of all assessments. Mrs. Snowden is hopeful and shared that providing time and space will allow teachers to own the solution/improvement, make plans, give suggestions, etc.

Mrs. Enright does not think there is anything wrong with an Administration setting an expectation. She added that Big Ideas has very good assessments and feels they will provide data points and will show where the weaknesses are. She further shared that it is a hard program and training is involved to teach it.

Dr. Alexander asked for the status of the Big Ideas Math Program. Mrs. Snowden shared this is the first official year. The middle school math teachers took part in a Webinar with the Big Ideas Representative this past spring. She noted the program is appealing to use and feels consistencies will occur because of the resources.

### **8.3 Teachers College Phonics Unit of Study**

Mrs. Snowden shared that the K-2 team decided that they needed a more systematic way to teach phonics. They currently use Teachers College Reading Units of Study and Writing Units of Study. Up until now, they have been supplementing Phonics instruction, but need a more consistent program that will span grade level and move forward.

The team researched various programs and ran pilot programs on Foundations and Teachers College Unit of Study in Phonics. Mrs. Snowden presented to the Board the finding of both programs and recommended the Teachers College Phonics unit of Study. She shared that is a coordinated supplement to the Reading and Writing Units of Study that the school already uses. The team saw opportunities for independent problem solving and perseverance, that they did not see with Foundations program. They feel it will provide direct and consistent phonics instruction that is needed. Overall, the Teachers College Phonics Unit of Study had the most effective results.

Dr. Melendez. appreciates the Board listening to the presentation from what seemed to be an obvious choice going with Teachers College. He noted the importance when making a recommendation, to investigate other programs.

Mrs. Snowden added that it was a good exercise for the K-1 team. They feel even stronger about the Teachers College program and know it is right for Sherman.

Mrs. Diotte asked if all teachers were in agreement. Mrs. Snowden responded yes. She added K-1 is published, and Teachers College expects to have Grade 2 in January and Sherman will investigate once published.

**9. NEW BUSINESS**

**9.1 Discussion and Possible Appointment to Fill Role of Vice Chairperson/Secretary of the Sherman Board of Education**

Mrs. Diotte moved and Dr. Alexander seconded to appoint Mr. James Neunzig as the Vice Chair/Secretary, and the motion passed unanimously 5-0.

The Board thanked Mr. Neunzig for accepting the position. Mrs. Diotte added that she is looking forward to working with him and appreciates his fresh perspective and the insight that he offers.

Mr. Neunzig appreciates working with his fellow Board members and acknowledged the amount of time that the Board has dedicated to the school.

**9.2 Discussion and Possible Approval of Phonics Program**

Mrs. Lenihan moved and Mrs. Enright seconded to approve the Phonics Program, and the motion passed unanimously 5-0.

**10. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**11. COMMUNICATION**

Mrs. Diotte acknowledged a thank you note from Mrs. Andrea O'Connor.

**12. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**13. BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMENTS**

Mrs. Lenihan commented very positive on Mr. Rianhard and his Science Program. Mrs. Diotte noted that prior to the meeting, the Board attended a hands-on demonstration in the new STEAM room with Mr. Rianhard.

**14. FUTURE MEETINGS AND TOPICS**

- 14.1 Board of Education Meeting - December 4, 2018 at 7:00 PM - Library Media Center
- 14.2 Maintenance Comm. Meeting - November 13, 2018 at 1:00 PM - Superintendent's Office
- 14.3 Policy Committee Meeting - December 3, 2018 at 5:00 PM - Library Media Center
- 14.4 Working Session - December 3, 2018 at 6:00 PM - Library Media Center

**15. ADJOURNMENT**

Mrs. Diotte moved and Dr. Alexander seconded that the Board adjourned at 8:40 PM, and the motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

James Neunzig  
Vice Chair, Sherman Board of Education

Prepared by Recording Secretary: Nancy Winkler