

SHERMAN BOARD OF EDUCATION
SHERMAN, CONNECTICUT 06784
REGULAR MEETING, MAY 6, 2020
MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM DUE TO COVID-19
7:00 PM

A regular meeting of the Sherman Board of Education was called to order by Mrs. Diotte at 7:05 PM on May 6, 2020 via Zoom.

1. PRESENT:

For the Board:	Dr. Alexander, Mr. Berlandi, Mrs. Diotte, Mr. Laughlin, Mrs. Lenihan, Mr. Neunzig and Mrs. Seeger
Administration:	Dr. Melendez, Ms. Edwards, Mr. Kalkreuth and Mrs. Snowden
Staff:	Mr. Butler, Ms. DePuy and Mrs. Shook
Residents:	11 Residents

The Board and attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. Diotte moved and Mrs. Lenihan seconded to move Agenda Item 8.2 Capstone Award Recipients to the top of the agenda after Celebrations, and the motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

2. CELEBRATIONS:

2.1 Recognition of CAFE Leadership Award

2.2 Superintendent's Student of the Year Award

Dr. Melendez noted the CAFE Leadership Award and Superintendent's Student of the Year Award have been tabled as the students have not been contacted at this point in time.

Dr. Melendez recognized Teacher Appreciation week and expressed his personal thanks for the faculty, staff and administration for their incredible work. Mrs. Diotte echoed Dr. Melendez sentiments. The Board is grateful for the efforts and dedication of the staff and Administration.

8.2 Capstone Award Recipients

Mrs. Snowden shared the Capstone course was created to provide an opportunity for eighth grade students who demonstrate all of the qualities the school aspires to instill in them. The Capstone advisors have created the Capstone award to honor those students who exemplify self-direction, critical thinking and perseverance. The following students presented very detailed Capstone slide presentations which included their inspiration, research, what they learned and future plans.

- Dom Fazzone - How I built this PC?
- Mateo Ordinas Lewis - How do you build an engine?
- Justin Ruffler - How to design a house?
- Michael Hatcher - How do you create and conduct a piece of music?
- Nate Bruzinski - What are the basic engineering principles of rocketry?

Mrs. Diotte acknowledged each student and thanked them for their presentations. She briefly reflected on when the Capstone class was just an idea.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

No public comment

4. ADDITIONS TO AGENDA:

No additions

5. CONSENT AGENDA:

Mrs. Diotte moved and Mr. Berlandi seconded the approval of Consent Agenda Items 5.1 to 5.4 and the motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

5.1 Review of Minutes:

Review of Minutes:

Minutes - Curriculum Meeting, March 9, 2020

Minutes - Regular Meeting, April 1, 2020

Minutes - Policy Meeting, April 8, 2020

5.2 Personnel Actions

5.3 Monthly Enrollment Report

5.4 Monthly Budget Report 2019-2020: Budget by Function & Summary of Funds

6. APPROVAL OF CURRENT BILLS:

Mrs. Diotte moved and Mrs. Lenihan seconded the approval of current bills, and the motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

6.1 2019-2020 Current Bills

7. ORAL REPORTS:

7.1 SPTO Update

No SPTO update

7.2 Sub-Committee

Curriculum

Mrs. Lenihan briefly commented positively on the proposed master schedule that was discussed at the last curriculum meeting. She is hopeful that it will be implemented in the fall.

7.3 Chairperson

No additional comments

7.4 Superintendent Update - Dr. Jeff Melendez

Covid-19 Update

Dr. Melendez provided an update from the Commissioner of Education:

- Six Regional Advisory Committees will be formed consisting of BOE members, Superintendent, Building Administration, Teachers, Parents, Health Officials. The goal of these committees will be to advise the Commissioner, and then districts on strategies for reopening schools in the fall. Each region will be handled differently.
- The committee will consult with the the Department of Public Health for guidance on bringing students together (graduation, award ceremonies)
- Financially eligible families will continue to receive support during the school closure
- The State of Connecticut continues to provide resources in the form of guidance and support
- The State has approved a federal disbursement of \$111 M in federal support

- Anticipated guidance regarding Summer School/ESY is expected by 5/15
- Schools will continue with their Distance Learning plans for the remainder of the school year

Strategic Plan

Dr. Melendez presented the May StopLight Report. He noted the report was not presented at the April Board of Education meeting as the focus was on Distance Learning. Dr. Melendez pointed out Instructional Time Analysis has moved from “In Progress” to “Completed” status. The Admin Team addressed the “In Progress” action steps:

- **Action Step 1.5 Develop Guidelines and Expectations for Homework Practices**
Mrs. Snowden noted they are in the final stage of this process and will be presenting at the upcoming Curriculum meeting. She anticipates recommending minor revisions to the Policy Committee. Mrs. Snowden is hopeful the recommendations can be approved by the summer so they can be published in next year's family and student handbook.
- **Action Step 1.6 Address Connecticut adoption of CSTA and ISTE standards**
Mrs. Snowden noted these standards were scheduled to be addressed during the summer curriculum development process, but feels the focus will be on addressing issues that have arisen through Distance Learning. Mrs. Snowden pointed out many skills and concepts that are included in the standards are positive outcomes of Distance Learning (ie. learning new technology, communicating through online resources, learning using digital tools, etc.). Time will have to be invested to document and update the standards in the curriculum documents.
- **Action Step 1.7 Facilitate the production of a conceptual design study**
Dr. Melendez noted this action step is in progress. Mr. Laughlin will be providing an update under Agenda Item 10.1
- **Action Step 5.1 Embed enrichment opportunities within existing curricula**
Mr. Kalkreuth noted distance learning has created an opportunity for us to learn more about blended instructional practices (marriage of digital and in-person learning strategies). It will also provide more personalized opportunities for enrichment by leveraging learning management systems (i.e. See Saw, Google Classroom) to assign individual work. As part of Professional Development, the faculty and administration will be learning more about blended learning and what opportunities exist to further differentiate instruction on both ends of the learning spectrum.
- **Action Step 6.1 Create additional clubs for students to participate in and connect with their community**
Mr. Kalkreuth provided a recap from a Sherman Park & Rec meeting that took place prior to Covid. The school presented a list of students' interests based on a survey that was administered. Park and Rec can assist with posting programs and offer potential contacts of people interested in hosting programs as well. All programs must be self-sustaining to run. Any adult can host a program, including teachers and paras, and will be in charge of setting their own price. Mr. Kalkreuth also shared that the school is in the process of reaching out to community partners (Library, SPTO, Historical Society, etc.) to continue to gauge interest in coordinating and potentially offer some of our ideas for programs that students may be interested in.
- **Action Step 12.2 Plan and organize special arrival and dismissal activities for the first and last day of school each year**
Mr. Kalkreuth shared a celebration committee was formed to brainstorm ways to bring our community together for the remainder of the year. The recently communicated “Wish Tree” is a product of the committee. The group will be planning something special for the last day of school for our students and families.

- **Action Step 12.3 Research and launch a Social-Emotional Learning Program in Preschool through Grade 8**

Ms. Edwards shared the history of the SEL research that had taken place throughout the year. As a result of months of work, Second Step was selected as the social emotional learning program and was approved unanimously by the research and development team and the steering committee. A lengthy presentation was shared with the curriculum committee. Ms. Edwards shared that Professional Development of this program was initially scheduled for April, but given the current circumstances, the timeline to implement the program has been pushed back to the fall.

- **Action Step 12.5 Design and facilitate completion of a school climate survey**

Dr. Melendez reported this action step was close to completion but student data was not captured. The school will be administering a survey to students in grades 3 - 8, but it will be regarding the Distance Learning Plan.

Dr. Melendez noted progress on the Action Steps presented were very close to completion status. The admin team is gauging the viability of completion based upon the circumstances of the Distance Learning Plan. Dr. Melendez requested questions or feedback from the Board.

Mrs. Diotte briefly commented on the impact the virus is having on all school districts across the country and the unknown repercussions. She thanked the admin team for the update and all of the progress made on the goals.

Dr. Alexander commented positively on the admin teams persistence and commended them for thinking of learning opportunities that have emerged from this unfortunate circumstance.

Budget Update

Ms. DePuy noted prior to Covid19, she reported to the Board an estimated 2019-20 budget surplus of \$73,000, but is now anticipating an additional surplus of \$215,000.00. There are many Covid factors that are contributing to the surplus, for example:

- \$50,000 savings from the substitute teachers' line
- \$15,000 savings from external SPED evaluations
- \$40,000 savings from two unfilled paraprofessional positions
- \$18,000 savings from DC trip
- \$46,000 savings from spring sports & extra-curricular enrichment
- \$45,500 savings from transportation

Ms. DePuy expects \$75,000 for unanticipated costs that were not budgeted. These expenses include Powerschool/eFinance support, CIRMA ransom and 1:1 Chromebooks & associated cost to support Distance Learning. She is also anticipating potential legal fees.

Mrs. Diotte noted there are still two months left for the remainder of the year. She recapped \$215,000 Covid related savings, in addition to the 73,000 estimated surplus.

Mr. Berlandi questioned where does the budget surplus go? Mrs. Diotte noted any surplus goes directly back to the Town. She briefly shared that some towns keep 1% to 2 % of their surplus in a lapsing fund, but the Sherman BOE always returns the surplus funds.

Mrs. Lenihan questioned if the school is still paying high school tuition. Dr. Melenedez confirmed the school is and explained the high school surplus is a result of students moving out of the district, or attending a reduced or non-tuition program (HAT or AgriScience).

Distance Learning Plan 2.0

Dr. Melendez recapped the initial Distance Learning Plan which was initiated within a week of the school closing and intended to engage students in meaningful ways. The plan was iterative and through parental feedback and multiple staff meetings, a new Distance Learning Plan Version 2.0 was launched on April 27th.

Expectations

Mr. Kalkreuth explained the expectations were developed with the understanding that Covid is impacting families in unique ways and everyone is doing the best they can. The expectations are intended to encourage as much participation, engagements and support as possible. Mr. Kalkreuth shared highlights:

- Student Independence - emphasis on increasing students independence to the greatest extent possible at age appropriate level. Mr. Kalkreuth noted established routines of familiarity gained on digital platforms like Seesaw, Google Classroom and Kami should help promote more independence and match students with the proper digital tools.
- Appropriate Online Behavior - the admin team participates in many online group sessions. Mr. Kalkreuth noted how well the students are conducting themselves and the level of engagement.
- Work Completion - completion of assignments is the primary way to monitor participation, and the admin team requested to be informed of any barriers that are preventing students from participating so they can assist. New assignments are also only being provided Monday through Thursday in an effort to reduce stress and increase participation, especially in special area classes.
- Expectations for teachers - teachers are expected to provide weekly opportunities for live instruction and/or interaction. Only live group instruction excluding class discussion will be recorded for viewing by students at a later time. Teachers are engaging in Professional Development on Fridays to assist them with their current needs, as well as a focus towards the fall and blended learning environments.
- Expectations for paraeducator - paras have been engaging in many professional development opportunities to further enhance their understanding and to support students. Paras have been invited to weekly grade level meetings to discuss students they are working with and are in regular communication with teachers.
- Expectation for administrators - the admin team is closely monitoring student work completion and family communication. They are co-teachers on everyone's online learning platforms. The admin team discusses students at weekly meetings and works with teachers to provide guidance and support. In addition to supporting teachers with the resources they may need as well as to offer professional development suggestions.

Mr. Kalkreuth shared they are encouraging feedback from families, students and teachers in an effort to remain responsive to everyone's changing needs.

Report Card

Ms. Edwards provided Report Card grading information. There will be three types of grades for middle school students for the third quarter:

- Pass with distinction - student completes most of the work assigned with a high degree of effort
- Pass - completed most of the work
- Incomplete - did not complete most of assigned work

Middle school year end grades are going to be calculated based on the 1st and 2nd trimesters and the third trimester grades will not impact final averages.

Students in Preschool through Grade 5 will receive narrative comments only for core content area classes and then selected comments for special area classes.

Ms. Edwards noted any student with an IEP will receive a special education progress note that reflects the work that has been accomplished through distance learning. Consistent with the school's practice, they will be sent home at the same time report cards go home.

Workshops for Families

Dr. Melendez shared several workshops have been developed to assist families who are teaching their children while dealing with additional responsibilities. The workshop topics were created from feedback shared by families about the challenges they were facing. Each workshop has a scheduled zoom link, but also recorded and accessible on the school website at any time. Dr. Melendez acknowledged teachers who went above and beyond to create some of these workshops.

Mrs. Seeger asked if Dr. Badger and Ms. Ficca were participating in the workshops. Dr. Melendez confirmed they are hosting Self Care and Coping Strategies on May 8th at 2:00 PM. He also shared they developed a resource guide that was included in Distance Learning 1.0.

Mrs. Seeger also inquired if they are reaching out to families and students. Ms. Edwards confirmed they are checking in with students regularly, especially students who have IEPs. Dr. Badger and Ms. Ficca have been connecting with students on Google Meet, as well as via phone, at the students' preference.

Professional Development

Mrs. Snowden noted that some families indicated their children were having a difficult time completing assignments and had to prioritize their time to focus on reading, writing and math. In the 2.0 version, assignments are given Monday through Thursday, with the intent to use Fridays to catch up and focus on Specials (art, music, etc). This schedule shift provides time for teachers on Friday to engage in professional development and think about blended learning environments. Time will be dedicated on Fridays to learn about some models of teaching and learning that may support multiple different situations that the school may experience. Fridays also give teachers time to meet with colleagues or paras who are supporting students

Mrs. Snowden touched on the level of time it takes to plan lessons for Distance Learning in comparison to traditional teaching and acknowledged the teachers for their efforts.

In preparing for the fall, Mrs. Snowden briefly noted the level of planning involved for various scenarios. The admin team is engaged with many different districts in the area, and around the state to try to come together in groups to help each other plan. It is difficult due to the level of unknown information at this point in time.

Dr. Alexander cautioned to factor at-risk staff and students in the fall and determine how to prepare.

8. PRESENTATIONS

(Moved to the top of the agenda)

9. NEW BUSINESS

- 9.1 Policy 3231 - Adopt CABE sample Policy & Reg. to replace present Policy 3231
- 9.2 Policy 0200 - Adopt CABE sample Policy to replace present Policy 0210, 6146
- 9.3 Policy 5111 - Update Policy with legal Reference PA19-179
- 9.4 Policy 5118.1 - Update Policy with legal Reference PA19-179
- 9.5 Policy 7211 - Adopt CABE sample Policy to replace present Sherman Policy 7211
- 9.6 Policy 7454 - Adopt CABE sample
- 9.7 Policy 7100 - Adopt CABE sample
- 9.8 Policy 3516 - Update Policy and Regulations with PA 19-52 & CGS
- 9.9 Policy 3517 - Update Policy and Regulations with PA 19-52 & CGS

Mrs. Seeger clarified the function of the Policy Committee. In 2016-17 Sherman policies were reviewed by CABE and they identified missing mandated policies, as well as policies that needed updated laws and statutes. The Policy committee has completed updates on all mandated policies and are now reviewing policies that need modifications. The policies presented under New Business are first readings, and the second reading will take place at the June Board of Education meeting. Mrs. Seeger encouraged all Board members to reach out to her if they have any questions after reviewing the policies. Mrs. Seeger shared her minutes identifying public acts that have affected the changes in some of these policies. Mrs. Seeger noted the committee uses many CABE sample policies since they have the most updated wording, but tailor them to the Sherman School.

Mrs. Seeger noted the importance of policies since they provide direction. She reflected on when she joined the Policy committee and how the process was confusing with cumbersome binders. Policies are now available on the school's website.

Mrs. Diotte also stressed the importance of policy. She feels both policy and budget are the most important functions of the Board.

Regarding new policies in the 7000 series, Mr. Laughlin looked for confirmation that CABE has the standard language with respect to building committees, their composition, how they work, and is informed by general statute.

Mrs. Seeger confirmed Mr. Laughlin was correct. Mrs. Seeger clarified there are Public Acts that schools must adhere to and noted schools do not set the rules. She also noted policy is not mandatory but feels it is beneficial to have direction and be aware of the legal ramifications.

Mr. Laughlin asked if there is a legislative requirement from state statutes, and there is no formal policy, then we follow statute. Mrs. Seeger confirmed Mr. Laughlin was correct.

10. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

10.1 Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Conceptual Design Services Project

Mr. Laughlin briefly recapped community conversations and feedback prior to the Covid crisis. Tecton has been analysing the maintenance over time scenario and developed both five-year and ten-year capital plans to address the specific needs outlined in the Friar Report. In 2018 Friar Architects was retained to identify code issues, building concerns and KWing issues. Their proposal was for 16.8 million dollars in 2018. As requested by the community, Tecton will drill down and phase maintenance overtime. This will establish what the numbers and projects are with respect to the Friar report in current dollars. Tecton is also looking at other options including renovations within the building footprint, as well as renovation/new edition scenarios. Mr. Laughlin added that

Tecton is fully aware of the budgetary concerns of the school district.

Mr. Laughlin shared the next step will be to have a conversation with the state to determine potential reimbursement for each scenario. He pointed out that school construction projects in Connecticut continue to move forward as they are deemed essential. Also, projects that are on the table or have requested funds will be moving into a special session that the legislature will be having in June or July specifically for school bonding.

In the coming weeks, Mr. Laughlin is hopeful to present to the Board a matrix with all of the options that have been discussed with associated costs, as well as what State contributions will be.

10.2 Food Service Update

Food Service Update has been tabled.

11. COMMUNICATION

Mrs. Diotte noted she received one email from a community member regarding the budget and how it relates to enrollment. She responded to the community member and copied the Board on her response.

12. PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comment

13. BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMENTS

Mrs. Lenihan thanked the teachers and administrators. She has received positive feedback from parents regarding all that has been done with Distance Learning.

14. FUTURE MEETINGS AND TOPICS

14.1 Board of Education Meeting, June 3, 2020 at 7:00 PM

14.2 Curriculum Committee Meeting, May 13, 2020 at 5:00 PM

14.3 Policy Committee Meeting, May 19, 2020 at 10:00 AM

15. ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Diotte moved and Mrs. Seeger seconded the Board adjourned at 8:50 PM and the motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

Respectfully submitted,

James Neunzig
Vice Chair, Sherman Board of Education

Prepared by Recording Secretary: Nancy Winkler