



SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

November 17, 2014
Seymour Middle School
Auditorium
7:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Yashu Putorti, Chairman
Saundra Gesek
Kristen Harmeling
Jay Hatfield
Theodora Klarides
Jennifer Magri
Ed Strumello
Lee-Ann Dauerty, Board Clerk

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Allison Sobieski-McAndrew
Fred Stanek

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Christine Syriac, Superintendent of Schools
Rick Belden, Asst. Superintendent, Finance & Operations
Ginny Tagliatela, Director of Special Services
Rob Dyer, Systemwide Technology Coordinator
Jim Freund, Principal, SHS
Tara Yusko, Assistant Principal, SHS
Paul Lucke, Assistant Principal, SHS
Bernadette Hamad, Principal, SMS
Ernie DiStasi, Assistant Principal, SMS
Mary Sue Feige, Principal, BS
Kristopher Boyle, Assistant Principal, BS
David Olechna, Principal, CLS
Roxanne Melaragno, Assistant Principal, CLS
Kim Keegan
Pete Turlis

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Putorti called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:00 p.m.

II. REPORTS AND INFORMATION

A. INFORMATION

1. **School Improvement Plan: Seymour Middle School** – Bernadette Hamad
Mrs. Hamad presented the School Improvement Plan for Seymour Middle School, the power point is attached. She explained that SMS uses the Blue Ribbon Testing for Benchmark Assessment. This test is given at several schools in Connecticut testing in Math and Reading. Last year Blue Ribbon was aligned to the Common Core State Standards and those results cannot be compared. Comparisons are from September to May. Ms. Harmeling asked if the test is the exact same test in September and May. Ms. Hamad said it is different questions throughout the year but by the end of the year it is everything the students should know.

SMS does not do the Blue Ribbon test in writing. In the Science CMT, SMS experienced nice growth. This is not a cohort as it is only given to 8th grade students. The scale scores for 2014 are some of the highest Seymour Middle School have ever achieved. With regard to the student survey, we did a pretty good job of keeping the scores high. This survey is given three times a year. This survey is used to plan programs and where we need to do better job of monitoring of the students with regard to what is expected of them. Regarding the student survey, one area of concern is "My school is generally clean". Mrs. Hamad said this does not have to do with the work of the custodians rather this is related to students being held accountable for keeping their areas (lockers, classrooms, etc.) clean. Also discussed was the question of feeling safe in the lunchroom. She said they are trying to find out from the students what their definition of safe is. We have done a lot to make students feel safe in the cafeteria. We feel this number should be higher. Mr. DiStasi presented the Measure of Academic Performance (MAP) assessment results. This is the first year for MAP Assessment which is taking the place of the Blue Ribbon Assessment. Students will take this assessment three times a year. This is a national norm based test and is computer adaptive. Reading and Math Assessment aligns with the Common Core State Standards. This test provides a more accurate read. Our September results in reading showed our students were slightly above the national mean. In math, our students were slightly below the national mean. The benefit of this test is the information that is provided to the teacher for each student. This will allow us to target each student's specific needs. Ms. Hamad said our goals for this year will be to focus on writing from the spring results and to increase them by 10% this year. We are looking to increase student performance in both reading and math. With regard to the Parent Survey we had 50 parents respond to the survey. We were not happy with the scores for "the school helps me to understand what is important for my child to succeed in school", and "I know there is extra resources available for my child". We are looking for a significant increase from parents for both of these questions. Ms. Hamad said they will be doing some parent information sessions. Topics are not yet finalized; possible topics include what it is like to be a young adolescent and a curriculum expo. Ms. Magri said that her question will most likely be covered in the meeting Thursday night. She talked about the individual student report of MAP scores she received. Mr. DiStasi explained the learning continuum, which gives a read on where the student falls within each continuum. The end result is to find where the student's weaknesses are and begin to address them in the classroom. Ms. Magri asked what measurement will be used when comparing fall to spring assessments. Mrs. Syriac said the district has not yet set goals and she has asked the buildings not to set goals at this time. We are looking at individual student growth and how many students have met their targeted growth. Next year there will be district goals, school goals, and classroom goals. Ms. Magri asked with respect to math, two different tracks, math and algebra. Do we have any analysis on where these students fall? Ms. Hamad said something we will have to account for. We will need to analyze what information the students who are taking algebra are getting and what they are not getting will need to be included in the 7th grade curriculum. These are adjustments we will have to make along the way. Ms. Harmeling asked about the sub groups with the math assessment. Ms. Hamad said she definitely will be setting goals for the sub groups in the future. Ms. Gesek asked how long it takes to get the results of these tests. Mr. DiStasi said results are back within 24 hours. There is a really quick turnaround and provides the teachers with very timely information. Mr. Hatfield asked about the progress report that is given to the parents at the parent conference. He said the real time information will be provided to the parents. How are you going to build this into the parent communication? This is the first time and we are having the meeting next Thursday. For those parents who did not attend a conference, the report will be mailed home with an explanation. He stated parents will be given the opportunity to make changes to help their child's progress. Ms. Hamad said it is not a simple report to understand but there is a lot of information for the parent to use. Mr. Hatfield asked how the gap is addressed; at the school level or the class level. Ms. Hamad said it will be addressed at both levels. Ms. Harmeling talked about the collaboration between the school and Khan Academy, which is an immediate online resource. She asked about the writing scores and the increases.

How is the scoring done? Ms. Hamad said the scoring is quite intensive. Teachers work together so they are scoring the same way. All use the same language; all use the same scoring piece. Mr. Strumello asked if you can get state comparison or are only national comparisons available. Mrs. Syriac said she will find out. He asked if there are any pattern of systematic changes in curriculum and staffing that need to be made. Ms. Hamad said some of the things we started last year are working such as Readers Workshops; we want to continue into 7th and 8th grade. The Writers' workshop will start in 6th grade and then expand to 7th and 8th grade. Math curriculum is being revised. They are working on piloting the math textbook. We are looking at several vendors and then make a recommendation to the Board in the spring. Mrs. Syriac said they will pilot the textbook they feel most strongly meets their needs. Mr. Hatfield asked about collaboration between the Social Studies and Language Arts teachers on scoring the writing piece. Ms. Hamad said they score their own tests. Ms. Harmeling asked if all teachers will pilot the textbook. One team will pilot one module or unit and then pass it on to the next team. This will allow all of them to provide input on the textbook. Mrs. Syriac reminded the board that piloting textbooks is no longer free so we will purchase for the team and will also share with the parents. Mr. Strumello wondered if the safety question might be related to what is going on throughout the nation. He said the middle school might be able to provide information to the Board that might make it necessary to go back to the Police Commissioner to ask for more from them. Ms. Hamad said we as a school will definitely going back to the students to find out more.

2 School Improvement Plan: Seymour High School – Jim Freund

Mr. Freund presented the School Improvement Plan for Seymour High School. He spoke about the SPI (School Performance Index) which is set by the State of Connecticut by focusing on academics and school climate. Seymour High School was one of 52 high schools out of 216 to achieve the SPI target in Science. It was also one of 146 schools out of 215 not to achieve SPI High Needs target. This is a combination of ELL, Special Education and Free and Reduce Lunch students. The school was one of 16 schools out of 216 to achieve SPI with Free and Reduced Lunch targets. He reviewed the Student Enrollment in AP classes. We have had a substantial jump. The numbers include the freshman class who are not eligible to take AP classes. Without the freshman class, we are looking at approximately 1/3 of the student population taking one or more AP classes. Regarding the Science CAPT test, in 2014 Seymour High School achieved the highest score in Seymour High School history. Mr. Lucke reviewed the 2013-2014 Connecticut Technical Education Assessment scores. This includes assessments in Computer Aided Drafting and Design CADD, Personal Finance, Business Management, Pre-Engineering, Accounting, and Food Production. Mr. Lucke is very pleased with the assessment scores overall. Mr. Freund reviewed the SAT Average performance in Critical Reading, Math, and Writing; he noted that our scores are the highest scores in quite some time. He reviewed the 14-15 School Improvement Goals. Strategies to support the goals include: Increase student achievement and performance by enhancing the manner in which students are engaged in learning, empower teachers to be innovative, establish a culture of learning through PBIS, improve student connections to the school community, and prepare for NEASC Visitation in March 2016. The Strategies to support the goals include, updating and revising the advisory program, introducing new clubs and activities, integrate additional 21st century learning activities, build internal capacity for professional learning, and work with the NEASC Committees. The 2014-2015 Parent Feedback goal is to make Seymour High School more welcoming for students and parents. We want people to know what a gem we have there. We will use our webpage for continued communication. We will use press releases that are developed by students, teachers, and administration. Target is at least one release per month. We want everyone to know that Seymour High School great place to learn. Ms. Magri attributed some of the positive changes to the change in culture and asked about new ideas regarding clubs and activities.

Mr. Freund talked about a few things to improve a connection to the school such as the implementation of the Debate Team, Art Club (who is doing the set for Annie), Chess Club (which is an intellectual outlet), Anim Club, Drama Club (who is presenting their play this Friday evening and Saturday), and Electrathon Racing Club. Mr. Putorti asked if there was a photography club and Mr. Freund responded that it is on the horizon. We are adding the things students want. We are letting them tell us what they want and need. We are responding to them. If they want to be there, they will do better academically. Ms. Harmeling asked how students communicate with you. Debate team was a result of a petition by the students. The team is doing a good job. Mr. Lucke said a student approached him about the Anim Club. The best thing we can do for the students is to listen to the students. A student wanted to do Cupcake Wars; we were able to do it. Mr. Lucke reported about the participation in the upcoming Christmas Parade. Students wanted to do a presentation of Annie at the senior center and a couple of the area preschools. We will continue to look for opportunities to get our students out in the public. Mr. Putorti acknowledged the climate of the school has changed in the last several years. Mr. Lucke reported the Sikorsky bank has slowed down a bit. Sikorsky comes into the classroom quite frequently which is invaluable. The bank is open every Monday. Ms. Magri said the press release for Annie which was written by a student was wonderful. Mr. Freund and Mr. Lucke said the students like to see us involved and we like to be involved.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Public Comment (A1 and A2)

None

IV. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: (Mr. Strumello/sec., Mr. Hatfield) to adjourn the meeting

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Ms. Gesek, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Ms. Klarides, Ms. Magri, Mr. Putorti, Mr. Strumello

The meeting adjourned at: 8:17 pm.

Submitted by:
Lee-Ann Dauerty
Board Clerk