

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, October 12, 2022 at 6:00 PM in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School.

Board members present: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Caramanello (arrived late), Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Mrs. Roy and Mr. Stone (arrived late)

Board members absent: None

Administration present: Dr. Schuch, Superintendent of Schools, Mr. Brough, Human Resource Specialist, Mr. Pietrasko, Director of Infrastructure and Security Technology, Mrs. Quarato, Learner-Centered Specialist, Mrs. Siegel, Learner-Centered Specialist, Samantha Winkler, Middlesex Transition Academy Program Coordinator, Mrs. Stone, Coginchaug Principal, Mrs. Gonzalez, Strong Principal, Mrs. Durkin, Memorial Principal, Mr. Ford, Lyman Principal and Mrs. Murray, Brewster Principal

Mrs. Petrella called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM.

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **Approval of Agenda**

Mrs. Petrella explained that there are two modifications to the agenda, one to table item 8B as Mrs. Keane was unable to attend the meeting and to item add 9B, Finance Committee Appointment.

*Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mennone, to approve the agenda, as amended.*

*In favor of approving the agenda, as presented: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mrs. Roy and Mr. Roraback. Motion carried.*

### **Work Session**

#### **A. Strategic Plan Update**

##### **1. Action Plans**

Dr. Schuch explained that he has been trying to give strategic plan updates during regular board meetings, but felt that they could have more of a robust discussion during this work session. He reviewed that the teams began meeting back in March in isolation from each other, but the leadership team invited any members of the action teams to meet together on July 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> this past summer. He emphasized that the action teams are open to anyone in the community and they are constantly accepting new members. They also feel that it is important to have the learners involved in the process, but they are busy people. They are developing a way to engage the young learners during the school day. Dr. Schuch also explained that the six strategies are all dependent on each other which is another reason to get together to talk about this. The leadership team talks about updates every week. The action plans themselves are working documents and will be dated any time they are published.

The first action plan is that learners progress through a personalized, competency-based education system. Dr. Schuch felt that some people consider this the meat and potatoes of the entire plan and most of the other plans queue off this one. This action plan will look very different for different ages and stages of development of the learners. He reviewed that they had grouped the learners into young adult,

adolescent, young and youngest groups. That team hasn't subdivided yet, but they will move forward in those four separate groups.

Common to all age groups, there will be a concerted effort for staff and learners will have a digital interface to track their progress, allow parents to track their progress, teachers to have input and for them to see themselves progressing. There is work going on around the country and the district will learn from that work. There are a handful of states with state-level framework around this as well.

Dr. Schuch reviewed the four domains, including academics, employability, citizenship and wellness, and for each span and each learner, there will be well-defined competencies in each area. He does feel that some people want to know why this hasn't happened already and others can't see how it can be done anytime soon. If this all works well, the district will have to seriously work on school calendars and schedule of how learning happens.

Looking at the adolescent and young adult groups, Dr. Schuch stated that anything that is being done needs to line up with state graduation requirements. He does feel that the district is in a good place to do that. He added that many of the learners aspire to go to college and people wonder if a competency-based system will impact their ability to get admitted into school. Dr. Schuch felt that the top colleges in the U.S., including many in the Ivy League, not only accept competency-based transcripts but actually prefer them in many ways because they actually say what learners can do. Dr. Schuch also felt that it is important to work with businesses in the area to build in competencies that specifically tie to what they want employees to be able to do.

Dr. Schuch went on to review the second strategy, that learners leverage local and global resources to promote experiential learning. He felt that this will also be subdivided to the age spans as it does look very different at different ages. Most of the action in this plan focuses on the young adult and adolescent group as a lot of this would involve leaving the campus and going out into the community. This starts with work-based learning, with a deliberate emphasis on learners getting out into job shadows, internships and apprenticeships. There is also a virtual side to this, which can include global partnerships. They also think there is an opportunity here for learning workplace credentials and college credits.

The third strategy is that learners are supported by learning coaches and connection teams. There will be a lot of professional learning around this. They will be working to better define those terms and implement pieces of this before shifting the whole system to competency based.

Learners will also be supported by a community that embraces learner-centered education. This is basically the communication advocacy strategy and this can go in a lot of different ways. They will work to cultivate advocacy with key employee groups, with teachers at the top of the list. Dr. Schuch feels that this will go nowhere if the teachers are not behind it. They are now hearing some teachers are afraid of things being so different. Dr. Schuch will do whatever is needed to really help everyone understand and to let them know they are part of the design.

They are in the process of developing shorter time periods for meetings about reimagining. They have already done full-day and half-day sessions, but have heard that there is a need for shorter sessions. They are actively trying to build in a process that will include learners during the school day. Dr. Schuch firmly believes that it is really helpful to engage people in one-on-one conversations. He can't do it alone

and there will be training available for learner-centered ambassadors. They will also need to do some marketing and hopefully it will be something that distinguishes the district from others.

Learners will be supported by educators who engage in personalized, relevant and job-indebted professional learning. Dr. Schuch felt that this may possibly be the one thing that can be started immediately. They want to make a shift to where teachers and staff feel like professional development is important, rather than required. He also felt that an online tool will be important here as well. Dr. Schuch felt that they need to look at professional learning in different ways. He felt that some teachers are already taking the initiative and it is great to see. Dr. Schuch reiterated that they will really have to rethink the calendars in order to not put professional learning into time boxes.

Learners will also need to be supported by efficient operational practices. Dr. Schuch felt that if this isn't happening, nothing else will. Bargaining agreements are currently tethered to a time-based system and it will become important to get buy-in from the bargaining units. The transportation contract has everyone coming to school at the same time and everyone leaving at the same time and there will also need to be flexibility in that.

Dr. Schuch also felt that reconfiguring the school facility use is going to support this work going forward. He added that they need to recognize that much of this has a technology component and they will need to make sure the infrastructure as well as software and data warehousing can be supported. Dr. Schuch emphasized that the annual budget process needs to reflect this work moving forward. He felt that they got criticism last year because people felt that they received a traditional budget. Dr. Schuch also reminded everyone that the budget failed out of the gate last year and they need to be wise, efficient and strategic in shifting budget priorities to support this work.

Mr. Moore felt that it will help to let learners know what a competency-based transcript will look like. Dr. Schuch will make sure that that is in the action plan. They have learned that some schools have specific individuals that take the course work into GPA credits, but they will also reach out to schools to see what colleges and universities have accepted some of these learners. They hope to ask them what it is they are looking for. Dr. Schuch added that some of this will be grand-fathered in.

Dr. Darcy was curious about the process of defining the competencies, including a definition of wellness, citizenship and employability. Dr. Schuch felt that they will depend on other places that have done this work. There will always be subjectivity. Dr. Schuch felt that there is a disconnect between what graduates of both public and private education have and the skills that employers value. He felt that pieces of that will be built in throughout the learners' experiences. One of Dr. Schuch's pet peeves in education is that they sometimes separate learners into career-bound or college-bound. He felt that everyone is being prepared for work. He does feel that it will become very subjective in wellness and citizenship and they can hopefully come to a consensus. Dr. Schuch felt that voting in elections and being civically engaged in the community is a measure of citizenship, but more discussion will be needed. Dr. Schuch also felt that they struggle in the academic space because they tend to do things in content-area silos. Learners don't necessarily feel that they should be separate.

Mr. Moore felt that they need to figure out how to approach the teachers about this as they are beginning negotiations for a new three-year contract and Mr. Mennone asked how this will affect that. Dr. Schuch has been told not to say anything about that in this setting, given the way the process works, but he and Mr. Bradanini have been talking about this for a number of months. Specific language will be proposed

to the negotiating team, but that may or may not make it in the proposal to the bargaining unit. They also hope to have an understanding with the bargaining unit that the district doesn't want to wait three more years and hoping that they would be open to revisiting pieces of the contract as appropriate.

Mrs. Petrella asked if the Reimagining Lite will be geared towards marketing to the general community and Mrs. Winkler felt that everyone who works with students has gone through a larger session and now they are talking about the community at-large. Mrs. Petrella added that some people aren't really sure what it is all about and hoped that they could do several sort of FYI types of sessions for the community. Dr. Schuch stated that he and the teams would be willing to go to any groups who would want additional information.

Mrs. Roy asked who is on the team that goes on site visits and Dr. Schuch explained that it is not a set team. Each site visit has had different people attend. Mrs. Roy asked if teachers have gone and Dr. Schuch confirmed that they have, but it is difficult to take them out of the classroom. Two different groups of teachers initiated site visits on their PD day in September and gave some really good feedback.

Mrs. Caramanello has had people ask her about how much money will be spent on having teams doing site visits that are both in- and out-of-state. She felt it is concerning because she has no idea of how much money is being allocated to that. Dr. Schuch explained that it is all covered in the current-year budget, but may have to expand into next year's budget. He felt that once connections are made, physical revisits will not be required. He added that there isn't a lot of this work happening in Connecticut public schools, but they are trying to do things in driving distance though they haven't all been. They will be able to make a clear accounting for any visits. Mrs. Caramanello asked where those expenses are covered in the current budget and Dr. Schuch will have Mrs. Neubig explain that. Mrs. Caramanello added that she will have a very hard time cutting teachers and staff members in the next budget while having an astronomical line for traveling expenses for this. Dr. Schuch stated that it was not astronomical and was bundled into professional learning. He was not aware of a district policy or practice that prohibits out-of-state travel for professional learning and if the board wants them to limit it, they certainly can do that. Dr. Schuch added that they haven't sent any more than four on a team out-of-state.

Mr. Roraback felt that there are a lot of different genres of employment and there should be some sort of committee geared towards that. The technical school that he works at has Zoom meetings with various employers.

Mrs. Roy asked if it would be possible to get debriefings from the teams that do site visits so that people can learn what they took away from those visits. Dr. Schuch stated that that is planned to go back to the action teams. Mrs. Roy felt that the board, as well as teachers, would like to hear a debriefing about the visits. Dr. Schuch felt that it would be best facilitated through the action teams and anyone would be welcome to attend those meetings. Dr. Schuch also felt it was important to understand that some of the sites freely offer their resources and they may actually save money in the future.

Mrs. Dahlheimer added that she would like to look through the wording of the action teams and the strategic plan itself to engage students and people not on these teams. She felt that some of this wording goes over people's heads. She noted several terms that she felt would not reach most students or parents.

## 2. Measurable Outcomes

Dr. Schuch reviewed the so-what of the strategic plan that is rooted in the hopes and dreams of the learners and their families. Qualitative and quantitative measures will be used to try to follow learners after they leave the district. Outcomes would reflect one or more of the strategic plan domains and they are working on a draft of that. They do feel it is important to measure what is being done and test scores will still be included in the plan, however they will be just one element. It will remain important to report test scores and graduation rates, but not do that alone.

Dr. Schuch tabled the remainder of his presentation until a different meeting.

Mrs. Petrella announced that they will take a five-minute recess at this point.

### **Presentations and Recognitions**

#### **A. Durham Fair Student Exhibitions**

Over 30 students at Brewster School exhibited at the Durham Fair and earned over 60 ribbons. Art, building construction, agriculture and science were all part of their exhibits and took place outside of the traditional classroom walls. Taylor Hall and Carter Kilroy, both second graders at Brewster School, described their exhibits. Taylor won first place and best in show for her scrunchies. Carter won first place for his collection.

A lot of learners from John Lyman School entered projects in the fair as did several classes. Maggie and Brooke shared their class exhibit with the board.

Many students from Memorial School also entered individual projects, but they showcased class projects from Room 22 and Room 24. Avery and Reilly shared their project.

Arabella DiPentima, an eighth grader, and Logan Dahlheimer, a seventh grader, from Strong School described their exhibits. Arabella exhibited photos and Logan exhibited a metal lantern project.

#### **B. CRHS Reporters - Hayden Gonzales, Catherine Taylor and Christine Waterman**

Hayden Gonzales reported that the championship seasons starts in the next few weeks. Girls' soccer and volleyball are in line for Shoreline and State championships. The football team has upcoming home games on October 22 and November 4. Boys' and girls' cross-country teams will have the Shoreline championship meet at Hammonasset on October 20<sup>th</sup> and Class S and SS championships at Wickham Park on October 29<sup>th</sup>. There was a great crowd at last Friday night's football game. Earlier today, captains and athletes had a showcase for upcoming seventh and eighth graders from Strong School. Cuginchaug hosted a Unified Sports event with Daniel Hand and Guilford teams and students were excited to cheer each other on.

Catherine Taylor reported that a combined choir sang at Ms. Bowman's wedding and pep band played at the home football games. The Shoreline Music Festival began on October 6<sup>th</sup> and the performance will be tomorrow at 7:00 in the auditorium. This year's musical was announced and they will be performing Matilda, with rehearsals starting in January and the performances in late March. Students from sixth through eighth grade are also invited to join in the musical this year.

Christine Waterman reported that all freshmen, sophomores and juniors took the PSAT this morning to help prepare for the SAT. Some seniors helped with Memorial's fall field day. All of the clubs, academics and sports set up tables today and seventh and eighth graders visited. The tech teachers have been hosting an open studio during advisory and students have had the opportunity to work on engineering or art projects. Many students were involved in the Durham Fair and the Eco Club collected 4.49 tons of combustible waste. The oceanography class took a field trip kayaking from Stony Creek to an island and back. This week, juniors will host the homecoming dance and they have had theme days all week.

### **C. Unified Sports/Unified Campus - Robb Bajoros**

Mrs. Petrella reminded everyone that Mr. Bajoros is the district's teacher-of-the-year. Mr. Bajoros explained that he teaches three sections of health education and they have made great community partnerships. The Unified Sports program has become a model program for the State of Connecticut. It started in the 2015-2016 school year and ran a unified sports program during the school day and were named Rookie School of the Year by the CIAC. The following year, they were named an Exemplar High School and this past year, Mr. Bajoros was named Unified Sports Coach of the Year. He was also named Team Connecticut Youth Leadership Coach and went to the USA Games in Florida with two of the district's students. Students had presented at the Youth Leadership Conference where Beau Doherty saw the presentation. Mr. Doherty was the man who created the Unified Sports model and couldn't believe his program looked like it did. District students will also present remotely at the Colorado Youth Leadership Summit about how the district's program is a little bit different.

Mr. Bajoros noted that Coginchaug is a national unified champion school and there are 10 standards of excellence. The first three are inclusive youth sports programs that include students with and without disabilities on the same team competing and practicing together. Other components are youth leadership opportunities and full school assemblies. Coginchaug has invited Middletown High Schools to participate in events as well. Mr. Bajoros feels he is blessed to be in this position and he really gets to work with everyone at their best.

Mr. Bajoros noted that the fall festival not only included Daniel Hand and Guilford, but had all of the sports teams there. Because of the success of the Unified Sports program, Mr. Falcone suggested campus unification in 2019. Kids with and without disabilities come up with projects together that they want to do on campus. Since that time, an outside garden has been created, a trail was done, car shows were hosted and motivational murals have been painted. He hopes to have the programs extended into other district schools.

Mr. Bajoros introduced Shannon Moore, a senior, who stated that unified sports and campus unification have sparked her passion to help others. It reminds her how important kindness and inclusion is to everyone involved and she believes everyone should take the class. Ethan Bufford-Cournoyer, a senior, stated that the Unified Sports program has had a very profound impact on him as it was a main reason he came to Coginchaug instead of going to Xavier. It allowed Ethan to interact with a lot of students as a freshman. He is also taking the Campus Unification class which allows students to work with all different kinds of students to make the school a better place.

Mrs. Roy asked how the program can be brought to the other schools and Mr. Bajoros stated that they have started talking to other buildings about the program, but he is not 100 percent sure how it can be

done other than maybe creating a budget and perhaps changing what his job looks like. He would be happy to work with everyone to figure that out as all of the schools can benefit from it. He noted that they are the model school for Connecticut and Connecticut leads the country with 97 percent of its schools having unified programs, though most are after school. He hopes to make the district a model program for the country and possibly even globally.

Dr. Schuch stated that Mr. Bajoros' energy and passion is very persuasive and the entire administrative team is very supportive of expanding the program. It will really depend on to what extent the program is considered and if it becomes a more permanent presence. Mrs. Roy felt that it should be a priority as it would meet every parent's hopes and dreams for their special needs children to have those types of opportunities. Mrs. Dahlheimer agreed that it should be a priority and Mr. Roraback noted that it has been proven to help kids in the classroom as well. Mr. Bajoros explained that there is great data to support that on the Special Olympics North American website.

Mr. Bajoros reported that he had just been at an event at Daniel Hand High School. He had asked the Hand boys' hockey team to help with the event and it was amazing. The difference is that their program is after school. Westbrook followed our lead and now has a gigantic program as a class. They will come to the Campus Unification class next week and then participate in Unified Sports as well. Mr. Bajoros added that they are preparing for a unified prom with Guilford and Madison. The CIAC gave them a \$1,000 grant and the students decided to make buttons and 3D-printed keychains.

**Public Comment - at the beginning of the meeting, public comment should refer to items on the agenda**

**A. In-person public comment**

Donia Viola, from Durham, asked that board members have a microphone when speaking at a meeting as it is hard to hear sometimes. Mrs. Viola stated that she read the article in the Middletown Press about the board mulling over the closure of Lyman School and expanding the programs at Memorial. It also mentioned that Brewster would serve only the preK program. Mrs. Viola reminded everyone that they had expanded Brewster School in the past. She would like to know just how much of a savings this would really be with only preK at Brewster. She also believes that Memorial would probably require an expansion to accommodate K-5. Seeing the enrollment projections coming up a little bit, she does not think it would be smart to close both Lyman and Brewster. She felt that Brewster might be better as the district's elementary school because it is larger and in a better setting. Memorial could be available for preK. Mrs. Viola also noted that the cost of bus transportation has not decreased with the decline in enrollment. She also hoped that the Unified Sports program being incorporated into daytime hours could afford credits in place of regular gym for students.

Christine Cowen, from Durham, wanted to voice her support for expanding Unified Sports. About five years ago, she emailed Nancy Heckler, the prior principal at Brewster, about doing a Differences Day in the district. With COVID hitting, it was never done and she really hopes that it can happen. As a mother of a special needs child in the district, she is saddened to hear that her child does not participate at recess and has no friends. She went on to describe other activities that her daughter does get to participate in and noted that her daughter is intellectually disabled but very self-aware of she is capable of doing. Ms. Cowen really hopes that this will eventually be a priority for the board and administration to expand this program to the elementary schools.

Sarah Salling, from Durham, has two kids in the district and also asked for a commitment from the board to expand the Unified program. Her first-grade daughter has Down Syndrome and kids with Down Syndrome are prone to low muscle tone which makes it hard for them to participate in typical activities. It is really hard to appreciate how hard it is to be turned away from typical facilities and their family has tried very hard to get her daughter to participate in activities. She, too, would love to see the program expanded.

**B. Remote public comment**

None.

**Approval of Minutes**

**A. Board of Education Regular Meeting - August 10, 2022**

**B. Board of Education Regular Meeting - September 14, 2022**

Mrs. Dahlheimer explained that the August 10<sup>th</sup> minutes have been updated.

*Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, to approve the minutes of the Board of Education Regular Meetings on August 10, 2022 and September 14, 2022.*

*In favor of approving the minutes of the Board of Education Regular Meetings on August 10, 2022 and September 14, 2022: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Mrs. Roy and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.*

**Superintendent's Report**

**A. Merwin Foundation Learner-Centered Grant Winners 2022-23**

Dr. Schuch explained that the district is fortunate to have the Merwin Trust that gives them money every year and they never tell them how to spend it. They asked Dr. Schuch how he would want to spend it last year and he didn't feel he was qualified to decide. Instead, he asked groups of teachers and the trustees agreed to turn this into individual internal grants. He thanked both the trustees and the teachers who wrote the grants.

Six different grants were awarded, totaling \$10,000. All applicants were from Strong and Coginchaug, but Dr. Schuch hopes other get involved in the future. There were two grants awarded for the Open Studio Design Model at Strong and Coginchaug. Ryan Bothamley and Diane Walsh at the high school have taken the existing advisory period and created an Open Studio to give learners the opportunity to do different projects. The graphics and robotics lab, the art studio and the ceramics studio are open to any learner. It is a place to create independent, project-based learning outside of the regular education program. Dr. Schuch described several examples of the different projects. The same model is being run at Strong School by Tina Hurlbert and Amy Schaefer. Mrs. Hurlbert was actually part of the design of the program at the high school. The overall participation has been a little bit higher at Strong. The program there is limited to the wood studio and the art studio, but 88 percent of the learners said they were somewhat or very interested in the program.

Another grant at the high school was for a sensory room that Kate DeMartino has put together. Sensory rooms help regulate emotional behaviors for learners that struggle with that. This is still in the design process and will be located between the Special Ed classroom and the ABA room. Dr. Schuch described how the sensory room helps students.

Two other grants at Strong School have not yet happened, but include Rebecca Sinusas is doing Education and Exploration Career Experiences which will try to beef up the Career Day at Strong and perhaps bring in a speaker to anchor that day. One of the things she sees at Strong is that it is sometimes hard for learners to see how what they are doing in school impacts their life out of school. The last program is another by Amy Schaefer and will be called Culinary Arts Meets Jewel Arts. It will be about the visual art of cooking and she has a plan to bring in a professional baker.

Dr. Schuch thanked the Merwin Trust again for the money, but also allowing the teachers to lead the direction. The teachers would like to update the board on their programs possibly in early Spring. There was also some discussion about CVEF grants and that their applications go out in March.

Mr. Roraback encouraged a high level of safety in these programs as different kids who would not normally be acclimated to the various shops will be in them. Both Dr. Schuch and Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that they are concerned about safety in the programs.

#### **B. Other Updates (If Applicable)**

None.

#### **Staff Reports**

##### **A. SBAC/NGSS/SAT Results 2021-2022 - Stephanie Quarato**

Mrs. Quarato reported that results from the 2021-2022 school year are showing some improvement, but there are still some signs of lags from pre-COVID levels. Remote learning was off the table last year, but teachers and learners were still getting sick. The state came out with a pandemic recovery dashboard this year that compares the data from the 2018-2019 school year to the 2021-2022 school year to show where each school district performed. They used a performance index which puts all of the data on a common scale and comes up with an average.

In math, the district's performance index in 2018-2019 was 70.5 and 63 last year. ELA was 75.2 in 2018-2019 and 70.2 last year. In science, it was 73.9 in 2018-2019 and 74.2 last year.

Mrs. Quarato explained that SBAC assessments measure learner progress at the end of the school year in May. She showed data from 2016 up to 2021-2022. Looking at math specifically, the district is still falling a bit behind. She showed the scores for general education learners, special education learners and multi-language learners. General education learners show a decrease in level one and an increase in level two. Special education learners show a slight decline in level one scores, but level two did go up. Multi-language learners had more learners scoring in the level one category than in level two, with none in level three or four last year.

Mrs. Petrella asked how many students are multi-language and Mrs. Quarato reported that there were 10 students last year, but she was not sure about this year. It was believed that there about 20 in the district this year, but that does include those who have been exited from the program but still need to be tracked for two years. Dr. Schuch reminded everyone that percentages become much larger as the actual numbers get smaller.

Mrs. Quarato went on to review ELA scores. Mrs. Petrella noted that it has always appeared that the math drop-off was greater than language arts. Mrs. Quarato noted that math is a very hands-on content area and is very difficult when the learners are not in school. Mrs. Petrella asked what is specifically being done to address the drops in both ELA and math and Mrs. Quarato was going to address that at the end of her presentation. The numbers were broken down into the same groups as ELA. Dr. Darcy felt it would be beneficial to have the data segregated to students who are eligible for free and reduced lunch as well. She noted that there is a 20-point difference between kids in the high needs groups and their typical peers. Dr. Darcy asked if these scores correlate with the district benchmark assessment data and Mrs. Quarato stated that they do. There were improvements shown from each assessment last year and it is very much aligned.

Looking at the NGSS science assessment, which is taken by fifth, eighth and eleventh graders, she reminded everyone that science is exploratory and includes experiments. The data is broken down by grade level. Mrs. Petrella found it interesting to see how high eleventh grade is at level three compared to fifth grade. She did point out that that is the first year they take the test. Mrs. Quarato explained that these tests can be very tricky and can be difficult.

Finally, the SAT assessment data showed the history from 2016 up to 2022. The goal for ELA is 480 and the district surpassed that. The goal for math was 530 and the district fell just below that. Mrs. Quarato then showed SAT results comparing them to other districts in the DRG. Mrs. Petrella asked why certain schools were chosen to compare to, but Mrs. Quarato did not know the answer to that. They were shocked not to see H-K on the list and Mrs. Quarato will figure that out.

Mrs. Quarato reviewed that the district has their coaches and they are focusing more on instruction than on content. They continue to push into the classrooms to help support the teachers. The district also has a good math consultant who has been in contact with math teachers. Mrs. Roy asked if the math consultant has a focus in special ed as well and Mrs. Quarato stated that the consultant was the math department chair and the math coordinator for Glastonbury Public Schools. She is very good at what she does and has a lot of experience with different learners. The only difficulty is that she is no longer located in Connecticut and they are working to find a way to help her connect with coaches.

Mr. Mennone asked what happens with students who have had a significant decline. Mrs. Quarato explained that the teachers will look at the data to try to figure out which learners are struggling and then look at intervention. Mr. Mennone also asked who sets the SAT goal and Mrs. Quarato explained that that is the SAT board.

Mrs. Caramanello asked how many coaches are in each school and Mrs. Quarato explained that there is one coach at each of the elementary schools, two at Strong and a learner-centered coach that supports all of the coaches. The coaches are now considered to be instructional coaches, so they focus on both ELA and math. One of the goals with reimagining is to bring more cross-disciplinary activities into the classroom. Dr. Schuch added that they went to the leadership team over the summer and asked them how

the coaching model had been working. There had been some discontinuity with the coaches splitting their time between schools, so they were happy to have one coach focused in each school. He added that the coaching is to support teachers in all aspects of their work and not confined to content. Interventionists remain split between math and ELA. Mrs. Durkin felt that there were advantages to being in one building consistently. Mrs. Caramanello felt that the math consultant not being able to be in the buildings defeats the purpose of having a consultant. Mrs. Quarato has gotten feedback from the teachers and has found that they all sing her praises.

Mr. Mennone asked how many coaches are at Coginchaug and Mrs. Quarato explained that there were no coaches or interventionists there. Mr. Mennone asked why and Dr. Schuch noted that that decision predates their time in the district. The high school has department heads that are much more available. Mrs. Durkin explained that the coaching model has been elementary and middle school, but there had been talk about changing that model to the department chairs taking on that instructional coaching role. Mrs. Durkin added that she believes that the math consultant has only done work in grades 6 through 12, where it is more content-specific.

Mrs. Caramanello feels that the staff needs to have as much support as possible and coaching is great, but it can only go so far. They need help working with the kids and catching them up to where they need to be. Mrs. Caramanello also asked who is currently in charge of overseeing the curriculum and it was explained that they are working as a team on that. They do meet with the team leaders and talk about what supports they need. They are also giving the teachers the autonomy to decide how they want to spend professional development time on November 8<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Mennone felt that with no fault of the teachers, there are students who have had difficulties because of the pandemic and not having hands-on time and if there aren't coaches and people in place to identify these kids and they fall behind, catching up will not be easy. He felt it was extremely important and that they need to focus on that. It explained that they are using iReady diagnostics and have the subscriptions for the learning paths.

Dr. Darcy commended the leadership for the fact that the first response was a systemic response and all of the data and research is showing that the way to make up for the lag is to focus on grade-level standards, to prioritize those standards and when a gap is found, you deal with that one piece. She felt that the steps are being taken to help address the learning loss and to help the learners get up to grade level.

Mrs. Roy asked what coaching looks like and Mrs. Durkin reviewed that every year she was in the coaching model, it looked a little different. They did write a coaching vision for the district, however it started in one trajectory, the pandemic hit and all of the coaches became remote learning teachers. After that, the coaches were split between schools. She believes that the district is trying to get back to it being guided by the needs of each school. The instructional coach at Memorial looks at the data and works closely with the literacy specialist. The coaches take the lead on formative assessments to be used based on diagnostic and benchmark data from iReady. The coaches and teachers meet together during PLCs and look at the data, decide on resources and the coaches model that with the teachers.

Mrs. Caramanello left the meeting at this point.

**B. Security Program Update - Ken Pietrasko**

Mr. Pietrasko reviewed that they vetted two anonymous reporting apps, Say Something (which is through Sandy Hook Promise) and Anonymous Alert. Both have two-way communication and that communication is key because the initial report may not be detailed enough. There is anonymity in both directions with Anonymous Alert. With Say Something, everything is done by their professional staff and they would alert the district if they felt something needed action. Anonymous Alert would be available for the community as well as the district, through the app or the website, but everything would be processed by the district. Say Something classifies everything as life safety or non-life safety and would call 911 and district personnel with any issues 24/7. Off-hours could be designated with Anonymous Alert.

Say Something is free, however the earliest we could on-board with them would be the 2023-2024 school year and that is not guaranteed. Districts using this program include Hartford, Guilford and Madison. Anonymous Alert is a little over \$3,600 for a one-time set-up fee and a \$3,100 renewal every year after. The district could join whenever they'd like and other districts using it include New London, Norwalk, Groton and Newtown.

Because of the after-hours component with Anonymous Alert, Durham-Middlefield Youth and Family Services has offered to partner with the district to take some of those calls.

Dr. Darcy thought it was ironic that Newtown school district uses Anonymous Alert, rather than Say Something. Mr. Pietrasko explained that they got the information from the vendors and have not spoken to anyone at different districts.

Mrs. Petrella thought they were looking into this to give students an opportunity to privately report any incidents that happen, including those that do not require 911 assistance. She asked if both of these apps would fit that scenario and how long it would take for the district to be made aware of any instances. Say Something staffs the program themselves, but they do provide training for 6-12 to staff and students on how to identify emerging issues and make an informed report. Their team vets everything within minutes and pass on what they feel is credible, but the district can, in fact, see everything that has been reported. Anonymous Alert would leave the heavy lifting to district personnel to act accordingly.

Mrs. Dahlheimer believes that Newtown went with Anonymous Alert because they wanted more control over what was being reported. She also wondered if DMYFS can partner with the district as they are funded by the towns. Dr. Schuch felt that if their involvement meant significant staff time and the taxpayers are funding it through a different funding stream, it may be budget issues. He felt that there may be the potential to have to go to the bargaining units to staff it as well. Mrs. Dahlheimer was worried that they could receive confidential district information and have it go through DMYFS staff. Mrs. Dahlheimer hoped there might be a simpler solution and asked for further research. She felt that 24/7, 365 was too much and most people would want to get at what's going on in the district.

Dr. Darcy agreed with Mrs. Dahlheimer and would like to see the efficacy of these apps compared to calling 211 or 911. She wondered if families would be more likely to use the app vs. calling 211 or 911. Mrs. Dahlheimer didn't want to confuse it any more than is necessary. Dr. Schuch felt that the apps are trying to prevent big events which is very different than the day-to-day things.

Mr. Moore believes this takes the role of the principal out of the picture and whether or not the issue gets dealt with. He felt that the principal has the responsibility to take action. The district would be responsible for disciplinary action, not the apps. Mr. Moore agreed that these apps go way beyond what they were currently looking for and Mrs. Petrella agreed. Mrs. Petrella reminded everyone that the students were loud and clear that they wanted to be able to give information about things that are happening.

Mr. Mennone reviewed that the bullying policy is a 30-page policy and no one has to put their name on a form to submit it, but it does have to be done in a way that the child feels safe. The only point is to make sure that the child feels comfortable reporting something.

Dr. Darcy added that there haven't been school shootings in Hartford and it is communities like this one where often students feel so helpless that they do something like that. School shootings are not an urban problem. Interestingly, Madison and Hartford use the same app.

Mr. Pietrasko went on to review the emergency apps, one being Mutualink which has a heavy price tag. This seems to be the only thing that can take all the various security systems (cameras, doors, radios, intrusion alarm and fire) and hold them all together in a time of emergency. The State Police are on board with them and they have proprietary hardware and software that will take any system and tie it in in an emergency event. It can be triggered with panic buttons, an app or by the district themselves. It can be used for drills as well.

Triggering an event would open up a case with first responders who would be granted immediate access to cameras, doors and be tied into the radios. Cell phones can also be tied in, to provide phone and/or camera service as well. Mr. Pietrasko has not seen any other product so far that can tie all the systems together. Plainville just on-boarded with Mutualink and Mr. Pietrasko is trying to set up a site visit. The vendor is very willing to come talk with anyone.

The other two apps, Warnable and Catapult, could be used in conjunction with something like Mutualink and would be the district's emergency management software. These apps have a significantly lower price tag because they are not hardware-based, but just software management platforms that the district would use during an event. These apps could tie into Mutualink, but do not have to. Mr. Pietrasko reviewed that these two apps do not have immediate tie-in to first responders.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if the SRO has looked at any of these and Mr. Pietrasko explained that he did look at Mutualink and preferred that type of program. The current alarm company is American Alarm, with panic buttons in the office but no app-based buttons. They are also working on programmable buttons on some of the newer radios.

Mr. Moore asked how much is left in the security budget and Mr. Pietrasko did not know the overall security budget. He believes that some grants could potentially cover this, but Mrs. Dahlheimer stated that they have been denied every single grant related to this. Mr. Moore thought there was some money left in the security budget.

Mr. Roraback recalled that about four years ago, the State Police did a safety assessment on all of the district's locations and wondered if that information would be helpful. Mr. Pietrasko didn't feel that that involved door access, etc. Mrs. Dahlheimer stated that this was a sore spot for her after being at the

CABE conference and hearing that the state feels the district is not eligible for those grants. She is working to have CABE advocate for that in legislation.

Mr. Mennone felt that these conversations should probably be held off-line, but appreciated Mr. Pietrasko's efforts on this. He asked for these discussions to be tabled to a private work session.

### **New Business**

**A. Vote to authorize staff to gather information related to a potential school facility utilization reconfiguration that would expand/renovate Memorial School to serve all learners in grades K-5, repurpose Brewster Elementary School and close John Lyman Elementary School**

Mrs. Petrella reviewed that at the board's September 28<sup>th</sup> work session, they reviewed the history of the reconfiguration efforts and discussed next steps. There was unanimous consensus to research a new reconfiguration plan and it was agreed to vote to authorize the district to gather information on a feasibility plan. Mrs. Petrella asked if it was possible to get Mrs. Caramanello on the phone at this point and moved on to the next item.

**B. Vote to appoint Jason Stone to the Finance Committee**

*Ms. Betty made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mennone, to appoint Jason Stone to the Finance Committee.*

*In favor of appointing Jason Stone to the Finance Committee: Ms. Betty, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Mrs. Roy and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.*

**A. Vote to authorize staff to gather information related to a potential school facility utilization reconfiguration that would expand/renovate Memorial School to serve all learners in grades K-5, repurpose Brewster Elementary School and close John Lyman Elementary School**

Returning to this item, Mrs. Dahlheimer reported that she was not able to get Mrs. Caramanello on the phone.

*Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mennone, to authorize staff to gather information related to a potential school facility utilization reconfiguration that would expand/renovate Memorial School to serve all learners in grades K-5, repurpose Brewster Elementary School and close John Lyman Elementary School.*

Mr. Moore wondered what the cost would be as this would make Memorial the largest school with 600+ students. They had looked at about \$10 million for improvements to just house Middlefield students. He wasn't sure that the community will be very supportive of the cost of this because it was overruled in the past even though the idea of K-5 was well-received. They had also looked at a \$40 million K-5 site at Korn School. He felt that it makes a lot of sense, but it will also be expensive. Mrs. Petrella reviewed that, in the past, it was the board that never put that idea forward. She also didn't believe the \$42 million included state reimbursement, which would be approximately 52.5 percent. Mr. Moore noted that state reimbursement is based on available space and since they have two schools that are not closed, that would go down as well.

Dr. Schuch felt that part of the study would be to do further research on that. He believes it should be a renovation/expansion and not just an expansion. Mrs. Dahlheimer reviewed that they felt that they really can't engage the community until they have more information. She added that it was troubling to see the Middletown Press article with misinformation.

Mr. Mennone asked what the cost would be for this study and Mrs. Dahlheimer thought that Mrs. Neubig had that information. Dr. Schuch felt that they were not asking for a dollar amount tonight but they can come back at the next meeting with an amount, if necessary. Dr. Schuch reviewed what he believes would be part of the study. He felt that they need to have details in order to present a plan to the community.

Mrs. Dahlheimer would be happy to not wait as she trusts Mrs. Neubig to engage the right people. Mrs. Petrella asked what other choices they had and they need to research something. The board felt this was a good educational plan and would consolidate the district's resources into three schools. It also allows for students and families to be together from kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade which enhances school community development. It would also involve only three transitions for students and provides equal education opportunities in both communities. This would also provide significant cost savings for the communities.

Dr. Schuch noted that some of this would involve work that would be hired out and some would be work that Mrs. Neubig would do. He felt that this would be an educational best practice and also show fiscal responsibility.

Ms. Betty is in favor of moving forward with the study as they have got to do something different. She feels it is probably the best option, even though she wasn't in favor of sending her kids to Middlefield for six years but came to realize that it makes more sense to have the kids together. She also reminded everyone that there is one track now, not ID or Hot School anymore. She also noted that it still says that on the John Lyman website and shouldn't.

Mr. Mennone explained that his question was specifically about the cost of the study, not total cost of the project and Mrs. Dahlheimer reiterated that she trusts Mrs. Neubig. Dr. Schuch thought that Mrs. Neubig felt that the work that needed to be done could be handled within existing budget lines and if it was higher, she would probably come back to the board.

Mr. Roraback reiterated that they have heard over and over again to just make a decision. Mrs. Caramanello was able to join the meeting via phone.

*In favor of authorizing staff to gather information related to a potential school facility utilization reconfiguration that would expand/renovate Memorial School to serve all learners in grades K-5, repurpose Brewster Elementary School and close John Lyman Elementary School: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Mrs. Roy and Mr. Stone. Motion carried unanimously.*

## Committee Reports

### A. Building Committee Meeting - October 5, 2022

Mr. Moore reported that the Memorial roofs have been completed and the committee should be getting the final documents in about a week. Memorial mechanicals have a punch list of just a few items, but this is not funded by the state. It will need to be closed out as it is under bonding.

The Building Committee had a lot of discussion about the pump house and where it should be located. Mr. Croteau doesn't feel there is any space within existing buildings, but they will also look at putting it into the side hill. The culvert is mostly completed and can now be driven over. It will not be fully paved until the road is paved. The paving from Main Street to Allyn Brook has started and will take three to four weeks. The engineers are arguing about the options for paving Pickett Lane and will come up with a final plan.

The Building Committee has basically finalized an RFP for the field storage building and Mrs. Neubig is ready to send it out. It will request a design build for a metal framed building. Mr. Moore suggested they have a mural challenge and have the kids paint athletic figures on the outside. Their next meeting has been rescheduled to the same night as the board meeting in November.

## Communications

Mrs. Petrella received an email from Joanna Schmidt regarding the student app for anonymous reporting which was forwarded to Mrs. Neubig and reported on tonight. She received an email from Jim Martinelli regarding an article about historic increases in Connecticut school district per pupil spending. Mrs. Petrella also received an email from Stephen Lis about the district's Latin program.

Mrs. Dahlheimer received an email from Christine Cowen about conferences and possibly having evening times. Dr. Schuch received that email as well. Mrs. Dahlheimer also announced that Jennifer Benson, from Durham, has been elected to the Finance Committee and Teresa Opalacz was re-elected.

Mr. Moore mentioned that Columbus Day has been changed to Indigenous Peoples Day and Mrs. Petrella stated that they will revisit that when the district calendar is being developed.

## Public Comment - at the end of the meeting should refer to items not on the agenda

### A. In-person public comment

None.

### B. Remote public comment

Georgia Ieraci, from Durham, wanted to speak in favor of Unified Sports. She has one daughter at Brewster who has a physical disability. She felt that it's a great opportunity for the district to create real-world experiences for the children and to be exposed to the diversity of the ever-changing world. It's important for special needs students to be included, but it's good for all students. There have been a variety of different obstacles for her daughter and a simple nature walk takes a lot of planning and

thought. We need to realize that Unified Sports is good for all children and adults as well. It's also important that these relationships are formed at an early age and promote acceptance at an early age. It creates community and understanding and will promote positive interactions between disabled and non-disabled kids. This will lead to new relationships, improved self-esteem and positive changes in attitudes for all students. Mrs. Ieraci hopes that the discussion continues in the future.

**Adjournment**

Mrs. Petrella thanked everyone for their teamwork and all of their input.

*Mr. Stone made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Dahlheimer, to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board of Education.*

*In favor of adjourning the regular meeting of the Board of Education: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Mrs. Roy and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.*

Meeting was adjourned at 9:27 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Debi Waz

Debi Waz  
Alwaz First