

HOLMDEL TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION
CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION/SPECIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE OF WHOLE MEETING NOTES
MAY 20, 2020 AT 6:30 PM

Board Members Present: J. Collins, Chair | V. Flynn | M. Sockol | E. Briamonte | T. Wall | E. Urbanski | J. Hammer | P. Reddy | B. Foster

Administrators Present: R. McGarry, Superintendent | M. Petruzzo, Board Secretary | D. Seeley, Director of Curriculum & Instruction | M. Gill, Director of Special Services | M. Peart, Director of Human Resources & Compliance

Meeting Location: Remotely via Zoom

1. The board met on Wednesday, May 20, 2020 at 6:30 pm for its Curriculum and Instruction/Special Services Committee of the Whole Meeting.
2. The meeting opened up with a request from the board's Vice President that the academic integrity policy and regulations be amended to allow for non-academic consequences such as suspension of parking privileges or attendance at athletic events. Mr. Sockol stated that board members are receiving reports from parents of cheating in the District. Mr. Sockol suggested that an investigation might be undertaken to determine the state of academic integrity in the district and whether or not there needs to be refinement of the mechanisms for the reporting of cheating. He questioned whether we might be putting too much pressure on our teachers to be the prime instigators of reporting, whether we needed to do things to make teachers more comfortable about reporting, whether we can improve testing processes, change exams, and so forth. Mr. Schillaci presented a slideshow on Academic Integrity in the District which included data from the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years broken down by number and type of infraction.
3. The administration indicated that a series of parent surveys would be administered due to (1) the State's new requirements for annual health related closure plans (2) Summer Programming related to Title I and the CARES Act (3) grade 1-8 summer assignments related to Math and Language Arts; (4) high school summer assignments; and (5) Remote Learning. Mr. Wall asked whether the Administration would be using Qualtrics for these surveys or would they continue to use Google Forms and Survey Monkey. Dr. McGarry indicated that the administration would be continuing to utilize Google Forms and Survey Monkey at this time. He also indicated that the administration is currently in the process of looking for a Data Consultant who would be making decisions regarding selection of surveys, but that would not happen until July 1.
4. Graduation for Satz and the High School will be virtual and prerecorded. For Satz, Mr. Loughran indicated that to the extent possible, the recording will include the typical elements of the ceremony including roll call of graduates, awards, student council presidential address, chorus performance of National Anthem and the band performance of the recessional. For the High School, Mr. Schillaci indicated that it will be virtual and prerecorded as well and will be produced in house. It will include the typical elements such as the processional, roll call, and speeches and will be aired on June 18. The recordings for both schools will be aired regardless of whether or not a live graduation will occur. Mr. Wall suggested a car procession through Bell Works where a student disembarks in cap and gown, is personally handed this or her diploma and would have

the opportunity to have professional photos taken. Dr. McGarry and Paul Green, board attorney, indicated that before something like that could happen, they would need direction from the Department of Education. The Board President indicated that we should remain flexible to all possibilities. Dr. McGarry indicated that the administration is looking into hiring event planners to explore the possibility of having the ceremony in an outdoor space such as Cross Farms or Bayonet Farms.

5. Regarding honors placements for this year:
 - a. For the high school, the process consists of prerequisite qualification, waivers and final course placement.
 - b. For Satz and Indian Hill (6-8th grade Math and 7-8th grade English), the process consists of placement letters to parents with a link to request departmental reviews of decisions. Dr. Seeley indicated that many students are given the placements they desire during this review period. If however, they are not given the placement they desire, the parents have the opportunity to meet with Dr. Seeley and the Supervisor for further discussions and have the option of signing a waiver at that time.
 - c. Dr. Seeley indicated that placement decisions were made based on three marking periods (as usual), teacher recommendations, winter MAP administration, and the Critical Reading & Writing and Math Assessments that had been administered prior to remote learning. The administration was satisfied that it had sufficient data points to make placement decisions. In response to commentary from board Vice President that perhaps there should be a moratorium on the process, Dr. Seeley indicated the importance of keeping the process in place due to her concern that students might “test run” honors classes and drop back to grade level class, making the grade level classes too large and the honors classes too small. She also expressed concern about interfering with the integrity of the process.
 - d. Dr. McGarry expressed the importance of the meeting between Dr. Seeley, the department supervisor and the parents as it provides invaluable feedback for parents regarding the students.
 - e. Dr. Seeley indicated that the administration has received about the same number of requests for departmental reviews as last year.
 - f. Finally, Dr. Seeley indicated that the administration is on track with Departmental Reviews and will be finishing placements by the end of this school year.

6. Regarding AP’s and the possibility that the district will require its students to sit for AP exams to obtain a weighted grade, the administration indicated the following:
 - a. They are not recommending such a change at the time.
 - b. Paying for the exam will certainly increase participation of students in AP exams and the administration will review the results for the new school year to determine if there was a positive impact of the change.
 - c. The administration believes that the rigor of an AP course is not altered by a student taking an AP exam.
 - d. The AP course extends six weeks beyond the AP exam, so there is material that is not covered on an AP exam.
 - e. Five teachers will be trained in APs this summer.
 - f. The administration is working with guidance counselors to encourage more students to take APs and they will make sure that students know they can suppress their results.

- g. The administration would like to solicit feedback from students and their role in rankings and APs.
 - h. They did not know the number of students that took APs offhand since they are not taking them at the school this year, but Dr. Seeley will request that information from Mr. Swensen.
 - i. The AP test is standardized for the purpose of students obtaining college credit and is not determinative of course rigor. It doesn't change what the course is to students. It would be an anomaly to make AP students take the test for weighted credit when honors students or Rutgers students get weighted credit. A student's performance on the exam is not indicative of their classroom performance throughout the entire year.
 - j. Preparation for AP classes starts in the lower level grades, much earlier than the AP course and it may be interesting to get feedback from the students themselves in this regard.
- 7. The board Vice President expressed the community's concerns over rankings and the board's desire for the administration to provide a proactive plan/step by step initiative for the June meeting to address:
 - a. Getting more students to take at least one AP course and exam, not getting students who are already taking APs to take more APs
 - b. Since APs are only one of many factors that impact our rankings, how can we address other factors that affect our rankings.
- 8. Mr. Schillachi indicated that AP students in all grades in the high school who sit for AP exams do not need to sit for finals for the affiliated AP class.
- 9. Mr. Reddy asked if the administration would be sending out a senior survey again this year, and Dr. McGarry indicated that he was not sure that we can learn the same things as last year, but that he will give it more thought. The board president suggested that the survey would give us feedback on remote learning going forward.
- 10. The administration plans to post summer assignments in June. Grades one through eight will have assignments in Language Arts Literacy and Math. The administration will send out a summer survey about elementary assignments to inform its decisions. The administration will enhance its summer offerings in the high school due to the concerns expressed by the C&I committee in the fall and expressed its desire that the high school students feel well supported. The administration will include in the summer assignments a rubric for grading, a pacing guide, indicators of how the assignment will be reviewed by the teacher, and how it will count in the new school year.
- 11. The administration shared an updated presentation on remote learning data and they will have new data for the next Committee of the Whole meeting as well. Pre-recorded screencasts, which students can watch multiple times, followed by a live check with the teacher afterward, has been found to be the most favorable for student learning. Students have been frequently requesting follow up conversations with teachers via Google Meets and Hangout. Teachers also post office hours, where students can attend a live session. Dr. Seeley indicated her desire that students get real time responses. At this time, there are no set office hours, but in Satz, it has been set up that so that live learning times don't overlap. The difficulty with this is when students are doing work

late at night. There is a much better chance during school hours and school day to reach a teacher. The data fluctuates for students attending live non mandatory live sessions.

12. The administration indicated that teacher evaluations are on track.

13. Ms. Simonelli provided information on induction into the Language Honor Societies.

Next Meeting Date: June 10, 2020 at 6:30 PM.