

Hamden High School (HHS) School Governance Council

AGENDA

November 16th, 2020, 6pm (on Zoom)

Members Present (alphabetical order): Evelyn Cumberbatch, Darce DeCosta, Frank Dixon, Nadine Gannon, Imani Gatison, John Hannah, Elizabeth Marini, Jack Purdue, Nancy Restivo, Ann Stiltner, Mark Zarillo

1. **Welcome and Housekeeping** – *Frank Dixon*

- a. Welcomed new student member, Imani Gatison – she spoke about herself: doing schoolwork is very important for her and she likes fashion; later she told us that she is in the Black Hispanic Student Union and the Health Professionals Club (HPC).
- b. Reviewed Goal of SGC – which is generally to improve student achievement and the school culture and climate in order to enhance learning.
- c. Status of new applicants (teachers, parents, students)
 - i. Students: received 3 student applications and then Imani Gatison was voted in to fill the 1 open student position
 - ii. Parents: received 4 parent applications
 1. Frank emailed these to the school; he later said that Erica Tamsin had emailed him the process of posting the parent applications for voting; he will review this process
 - iii. Teachers: need 2 teachers
 1. Liz and Ann said they have talked to 10-12 teachers and no teacher is interested.
 2. Ms. Gannon sent out an email last week to help recruit; but she has received no response.
- d. Open council positions – as above
 - i. The 2 parent positions – need to be posted and voted on
 - ii. The 2 teacher positions – waiting for interested teachers
 - iii. Need a co-chair
 1. Frank discussed options
 2. Then, Liz Marini offered to be co-chair until someone else is interested to do it
 3. Motion was raised to approve Liz Marini to be co-chair; motion was seconded, and vote of SCG approved Liz Marini as Co-chair for 2020.
- e. Parent election date – not addressed

2. **Approval of Minutes (September)** – *Evelyn Cumberbatch*

- a. Motion, seconded, and passed to approve minutes from 9/21/20 SGC meeting; *Eve will email them to the media specialists*

3. **Principal's Update** – Ms. Gannon

- a. Ms. Gannon reported that students have been very responsible & respectful of the new guidelines and resilient dealing with this hard time.
- b. Teachers have risen to the occasion to teach as they have never had to teach before.
 - i. Hard to teach in-class and on-line at the same time
- c. Issues dealing with:
 - i. A main focus is to work with disengaged students
 - ii. Missing grades are a zero; but lowest grade students can get is a 50%
 - iii. Present topic under discussion is whether to have mid-terms; may not be as they were in the past (not 2 hours...); Ms. Gannon has surveyed some other schools and colleges what they are doing; Ms. Gannon asked the SGC for feedback:
 - 1. Jack doesn't think having or not having a mid-term is necessarily so important for preparing students for college because most students have had many mid-terms before, so missing one semester of mid-terms is not such a big deal
 - 2. Liz asked about schedule of blocks for mid-terms; Ms. Gannon said that it wouldn't be what it has been, but not sure yet what it will be
 - 3. John – said he is concerned that if don't have mid-terms, because it takes away a chance for some students to raise their grades, and in a system that ranks students, this could be detrimental to some students. He also brought up again the idea of leveling all classes and not having classes ranked in order to come into compliance with the Office of Civil Rights Commission (exact name?) report. Also, he asked that whatever format the mid-terms are in, that they be standardized somehow so they don't disadvantage some students.
 - 4. Frank wondered how having or not having mid-terms would really affect class ranking; again, John noted that for some students, taking mid-terms can help them, but Nancy and Jack both said that for some other students, taking mid-terms hasn't helped them as test taking may not be their strength.
 - 5. Eve said that she is concerned that classes remain rigorous and having some kind of assessment of what students have learned over the semester; this doesn't have to be the usual mid-term format; it could be a take-home test or longer home-work set covering the semester, but some format to measure students' understanding of the semester's material.
 - 6. Ann said that it would be good to offer students some choice in what their mid-terms would be like so that they can choose a format that best suites them.
 - 7. At end of discussion, Ms. Gannon checked in again – she had the impression that, overall, the SCG seems supportive of having some kind of mid-terms - not the usual 2-hour

exam, but some adjusted form.

- d. Hamden is going full-remote Monday, 11/23/20; but if/when can't staff HHS this coming week, HHS may become full-remote earlier
 - i. 2 more positive COVID cases today
 - ii. Contract tracing showing that spread is happening outside of school, not in school
- e. Jack and Imani brought up some individual issues with teachers not following guidelines set out by the administration, and Ms. Gannon asked them to send her emails directly to her about these individual issues.

4. Board of Education Report

- a. No one from Board of Education was at meeting to give a report

5. Council Goals – Frank Dixon

***Skipped due to time constraint and getting to New Business below

- a. Review goals set – Frank briefly discussed SGC goals in Welcoming and Housekeeping above
- b. Assign Subcommittee members – didn't occur today

6. Subcommittee Reports – Committee Chairs

***Skipped due to time constraint and getting to New Business below

- a. Education/Counseling
- b. Safety/Operations/Communication
- c. Mental Health/Supports ***touched on in discussion under New Business
- d. School Promotion/Climate***touched on in discussion under New Business

7. Old Business

- a. No old business to review here ***except open SGC positions which was main issue in Welcoming and Housekeeping above

8. New Business

- a. Ann and Liz introduced an idea to support the school community (students, staff, and faculty) in these unprecedented and tough times
- b. After trying to find teacher members, they both realized that the climate in the school and the mood among teachers is very low; teachers feel overwhelmed and they aren't getting the positive feedback from interacting with students that they got before when teaching in-person. So, they had some ideas:
- c. Liz brought up developing a platform for teacher appreciation and then possibly extending it to students also:
 - i. Have some kind of signs – maybe lawn signs – to show teachers appreciation; maybe somehow nominating a number of teachers in a time period and giving them a lawn sign; however, the issue of cost may make this difficult.
 - ii. Develop an on-line platform – like in Padlet (“Put the Link in the Chat”) – where students, teachers, staff could shout out their appreciation; this would be free
<https://padlet.com/emarini/56nvmjscrpsv0um>
 - iii. Nancy asked some questions about Padlet

- iv. Ms. Gannon said that in her Dragon Updates she put kudos to teachers; she thinks that in google classrooms there may be a way to put kudos to students, but Jack and Imani didn't think so; Jack later said that he couldn't find it; Ms. Gannon said maybe they can start shouting-out to students in her Dragon Update as well
 - v. Ms. Gannon also thinks HHS needs to do something for students; she mentioned getting a grant or some money to support a staff member doing special things for the students
 - vi. Liz said she has already started to develop a Padlet page and she will send an email to the SGC with a link in order to get some initial feedback about it.
- d. Later in the meeting, Jack brought up the idea to start a sub-committee to facilitate communication between students and teachers; he said that especially now, due to on-line learning and all the technical problems occurring, there is a need to for students and teachers to communicate more directly;
- i. Frank said it would be good goal of the SGC to improve student-teacher communication and relations
 - ii. Ann offered to take the lead in considering ways that this could be done – or some kind of forum or group where students and teachers could communicate about how things are going; for instance:
 - 1. Maybe having a group where different HHS clubs could send students and teachers regularly to discuss issues, OR
 - 2. Maybe having a panel of some students and teachers on Zoom; Jack asked for this to be open to all students and teachers and maybe having break-out sessions for the to talk directly
 - iii. Ann will send an email out to the SGC to query interest in working on this.

9. Adjournment – Frank Dixon

- a. Frank checked the member list.
- b. Frank checked in with Jack and Imani regarding whether clubs are still occurring
 - i. Imani said she is a member of the Black Hispanic Student Union and the Health Professions Club (HPC) and they have both been meeting.
 - ii. Jack knows clubs are still running but he can't participate in clubs due to attending ECA every afternoon
- c. Frank asked whether the HHS student government is still meeting; Jack said he was aware that this exists but didn't think it is very active presently; Frank asked that Jack and Imani check into having student council members join the SGC regularly to bring topics that are active from the student perspective.
- d. As noted above, Frank brought up figuring out setting up the process to vote on parent applications; Erica Tamsin had sent him a summary of the process; Ann offered to look at that process and help Frank with any tasks

that need to be done in the school and *Ann asked that Frank send her an email with the process for voting on parent members that Erica sent.*

Next HHS SGC: Monday December 21, 2020, 6pm