



WILTON BOARD OF EDUCATION
395 DANBURY ROAD
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January 18, 2022 - NOTES FROM THE BOARD TABLE – Mid-Year Update

It's hard to believe we are almost half-way through the school year. As we know, an incredible amount of work and energy by our district leadership and staff go into making every school day as positive and enriching as possible for each student. We thank our staff for their amazing talents and efforts.

To oversee and support this work, the Board adopted goals which align with Superintendent Smith's priorities. Here's a highlight of progress on our goals most directly linked to students:

1. Ensure health and safety during COVID while providing in-person learning.

The district has been utilizing a full range of mitigation strategies and Superintendent Smith communicates regularly with families. Our protocols are guided by the CDC, state agencies, and local health experts and are continually updated to best fit the situation, such as the recent Omicron surge. We have maintained in-person learning in spite of the challenges thanks to the amazing work of our teachers and the partnership with families and students.

2. Focus on unfinished learning from last year while following grade-level curriculum for this year. We implemented an "accelerated learning" model based on frequent student assessments to identify specific skill needs which are then addressed through targeted small-group or individual intervention.

How are we doing? Reports indicate the model is well-implemented and the Board will review the mid-year MAP (standardized) assessment at a meeting in the coming weeks. The MAP assessment, as well as state assessments, given at the end of the year will be the best indicators.

3. Focus on high academic achievement for all students. Our test scores were lower this fall because of COVID. This pattern was reflected at the local, state, and national levels as well – reading and math scores dipped with math scores at the earlier grades being the most impacted. Even before COVID, we focused on improving our math program. We continue the work this year; the Middlebrook math course sequence was revised as well as certain high school math courses. Our work in literacy also continues with updated teacher strategies to support phonics and phonemic awareness instruction. In addition, the "accelerated learning" model and the increase in interventionists supports both literacy and math improvement.

The Board approved several exciting, challenging new WHS courses for next year: two revised math courses that continue the updated MB sequence, Marine Biology, Black and Latino Studies, Introduction to Exercise and Sports Medicine, and Level 3 American Sign Language.

4. **Support the Portrait of a Graduate** - The POG is a shared vision of the attributes we wish for our graduates. After over two-years of work by staff, students, parents, and community members, the Board approved the final version. Attributes include multi-literate scholarship, creativity and entrepreneurship, ethical leadership, active citizenship, and a healthy lifestyle. Moving forward entails ensuring our programs, beginning in kindergarten, align with the POG. A recent planning session examined resources in our own backyard – the Wilton community – which hold possible opportunities to collaborate on the work. (Think visiting experts, internships, school-local business collaboration, etc.)
5. **Determine best practices to support diversity, equity, and inclusion.** We are expanding curriculum resources where appropriate to include more diverse voices, background and perspectives. “Windows and mirrors” was a helpful analogy presented at a Board workshop. For example, in reading, all students should find both “mirrors” – topics and characters that students identify with or see themselves in – and “windows” – topics and characters that open students to differing perspectives and experiences and a wider world. Parent workshops have been presented at the schools to provide school-specific information and examples. The recently approved WHS Black and Latino Studies course will begin next year. The Board Policy committee will present a draft of a DEI policy in the coming weeks.
6. **Support the social and emotional needs of students.** After last year, schools everywhere saw an increase in anxiety and stress and Wilton is no exception. The district implemented mental health screening tools, with parent consent, to help identify needs and the staff provides follow-up with students and families. The district continues the RULER program which helps all students with self-awareness and self-regulation of emotions and behavior. This year we increased social worker staffing at the high school. For next year, the Board recently approved a WHS Wellness Seminar course for recommended students which will teach self-care mental health strategies.

There is much work still to be done and the Board welcomes feedback and questions (boe@wiltonps.org). Communication and collaboration between faculty, staff, students, families and the community are essential to an excellent school system.

Thank you,

Wilton Board of Education

Deborah Low, Ruth DeLuca, Jen Lalor, Pam Ely, Mandi Schmauch, Nicola Davies

