

Hamden High School (HHS) School Governance Council (SGC)
Meeting Minutes
November 15, 2021, 6pm (on Zoom)

Members Present (alphabetical order): Darce DeCosta, Frank Dixon, John Donahue, Nadine Gannon, Katie Gurski, John Hanna, Mia Hoffman-Kamrat, Andrew Hull, Elizabeth (Liz) Marini, Karlen Meinsen, Kevin Mensah, Nancy Restivo, Susan Schultheiss, Tykia Terrell

Members Not Present: Frank LaDore, Mark Zarrillo

Guests: Scott Trauner

BOE Representative: None

1. Welcome – Frank Dixon

- a. Called meeting to order at 6:09pm

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes – Nancy Restivo

- a. Liz Marini motioned to approve the October 18 meeting minutes. Andrew Hull seconded. All approved.

3. Governance Council and Administrative Remarks – Liz Marini

- a. Apologized for sending the wrong date for this meeting to some members
- b. Open position for Community Member. Karlen sent possible candidate for executive board to review then to present to council
- c. Member terms are 2 years each but can serve 2 consecutive terms
- d. Frank asked if still only need a community member for this year. Liz said she needs to check bylaws
- e. Liz will send a member roster to all members

4. Principal's Remarks – Nadine Gannon

- a. Hired 2 security guards
- b. Interviewing for substitute security guards (casuals)
 - i. 4 possible
 - ii. Frank asked who they work for. Gannon said they work for school system
- c. Report cards available today. 48% made high honors and honors
- d. For struggling students the admin has house meetings with social worker, counselor, psychologist, possibly teachers to discuss concerns. Meet weekly. Working to improve academic status
- e. Admin met with Central Office to request positions: 2 climate specialists, technology person just for HS, clerical
- f. Completed 9th & 10th class meetings. Met 100 students at a time. Went over expectations but made it motivational
- g. Sent message to parents on how to obtain report cards – let Gannon know if issues
- h. Virtual Conferences Nov 17, 6-8pm. Signups ongoing
- i. Vaping a major health issue with students

- i. Sent info in Dragon Update on how to identify vaping apparatus
 - ii. Health teachers zoomed with staff to review
- j. Spirit Days Th, F, M, T, before Thanksgiving
- k. Hamden High Pride Bracelet given to students that go above and beyond. Then they get another one to give to someone who has inspired them
- l. Another Bracelet "I can and I will" given to students who are struggling to inspire them. Positive reinforcement
- m. Scott Trauner stated this is the first year without a 9th grade administrator. 3 houses based on alphabet. Now with admin from 9th to 12th grade
 - i. Teachers refer students for intervention with a team of psychologist and counselor
 - ii. Check to make sure all are on track to graduate
 - iii. 9th graders on freshman team to keep in check
- n. Darcie DeCosta stated the Sandy Hook Promise Club is doing Kisses for Kindness – teachers can award this to students that are seen being kind. Alternative Learning Center helped put this together.
- o. Frank D asked about former 9th grade principal. Scott said she is now the third house principal but is out on maternity leave.
- p. Karlen asked who gives out the bracelets. Gannon answered that the admin has them and teachers can recommend who to give them to
- q. Karlen asked which positions have been promised. Gannon answered not a social worker or a psychologist but a PPT coordinator is being hired.
- r. Frank D stated that he feels COVID has contributed to the erratic behavior of the students. He and Karlen are drafting a letter to BOE and town addressing these concerns. Will share when finalized. Want to know what the town and BOE are doing to support and protect the school population
- s. Andrew asked if change from 9th grade admin to being 9-12 due to maternity leave or permanent change. Gannon said it is a permanent change to make it more consistent for the students for 4 years.
- t. John H said there are two open positions in guidance, one was filled today. There is a concern that there are not enough minorities in guidance department. Hiring practices should include inclusion. If Mrs. King stepped down there will not be any
 - i. Frank said it is a systemic problem in town.
 - ii. Karlen commented that Hamden Diversity Advisory Council wrote a 50 page report regarding this. In hiring section it states there should be a priority to make the staff reflect the town population. Planning to present to BOE in February/March 2022
 - iii. Frank D asked if there are candidates to pull from
 - iv. John H was told by HR that they only recruit from SCSU
 - v. Scott said he has been on hiring committees and there is a limited pool. The program used by candidates to apply may limit candidates
 - vi. John H said that current faculty could "recruit" if they felt like they were treated fairly. New Haven went down south to recruit.
 - vii. Frank D said fighting a historical precedent

5. Board of Education Report – None

- a. Frank D stated they are transitioning to new members

6. Yearly Goals & Survey results – Liz Marini

- a. Liz said should have been removed from the agenda
- b. Frank would like SGC as a whole to set a goal. Suggested we send a poll to ask for suggestions

7. Sub-committee Goals and Members

- a. Education/Counseling – John Donahue
 - i. Set some goals
 - 1. Create a Students Educating Students Mentor Program (SES) for freshman to be paired with upperclassman to help them acclimate to the school and answer any questions
 - 2. Equity and class leveling
 - 3. Vocational Program reboot
 - ii. Tyika suggested maybe student ambassadors could do SES Prog
 - iii. Frank D asked if there was another program like SES
 - 1. Scott said student ambassadors' role is fluid so this would be good for them. Over 100 of them
 - 2. Nadine stated upperclassman went to the middle school to talk to 8th graders. In college called Big and Littles. Student ambassadors not comfortable in big group, but better 1 on 1. Trying to get student ambassador group up and running.
 - iv. John H stated that the grading and the leveling is at the heart as to why our school is segregated
 - 1. Nancy asked if John was working with another committee outside of the SGC on this or if he would like to be a part of this committee. He said he would like to be on this committee
 - 2. John H has tried to address this through guidance. He feels SpEd students are discriminated against because of leveling. Not sure if or how HECA is leveled which effects class rank. Give all students class rank. Not equitable system
 - 3. Nadine stated the district is talking about leveling system and improving grading practices. Created equitable practices with central office and directors. Lowest F is a 50. Meeting with CO on Nov 17 to discuss.
 - 4. John H hopes no one sues the system
 - 5. Karlen asked if teachers and/or John H could be a part of this meeting. Nadine said yes. Created an equitable grading committee with teachers from every department
 - 6. John H wants to distinguish between leveling and grading. Things changed at HMS, why not at HHS?
 - 7. Mia stated once you are put in one level you are stuck there

and some students don't understand what grades mean in those levels. Leveling does not seem equitable

8. Frank D stated there are known disparities and need to keep addressing
 9. Karlen asked if this should be a goal for SGC for the year
 10. Frank D asked how this would be a measurable goal. Needs to be done by CO, administration and teachers
 11. Nadine stated the conversation is happening now
 12. Karlen said we are a segregated town and school system because of leveling
 13. John H said need to change the underlying math of the leveling system so it is possible to move up
 14. Frank D asked from a SGC perspective how do we make this a measurable goal
 15. John H stated in 2000 the grading system was changed then changed back
 16. Frank D stated we need to stay on top of this and hold district accountable
 17. Nadine stated we need to develop an equitable leveling system. Disagreed with statement regarding the fact that students don't know about leveling. Students are being told but not happening to the degree it should be due to size of student population. Need to develop concrete system that can be shared with people making these decisions
 18. Liz stated that in certain AP classes 56% are minorities
 19. Tyika stated her child was informed about leveling. Need to get the word out to all
- b. Safety and Operations
- i. Karlen stated never met because there was confusion as to who is on the committee. Right now just her and Mia.
- c. Mental Health and Counseling
- i. Created two polls to get information on what both students and teachers are thinking and feeling. Need to pass on to Nadine and then decide when to distribute. Nadine asked Mia to send it to her.
 - ii. Nancy asked John H to be a part of the committee again
 - iii. Last year committee asked for a mental health professional to be on staff at central office as part of the administrative team – has not happened yet. Others positions asked for have happened.
- d. School Promotions and Climate
- i. Goals: to plan and encourage student participation in school based events, to boost school spirit and have students more involved, hire more diverse staff and teachers, have families share their culture with others in the building, add teacher room numbers to website
 - ii. Create poll of activities the students would be interested in to give to students
 - iii. Make more students aware of school newspaper. Nadine asked

Kevin to stop by her office to talk about the paper. Kevin asked if the Dragon Update could be sent to the students' email. Nadine said they have tried but has not worked yet. Nadine will add newspaper link to the Dragon update

- iv. Karlen asked if groups can gather and if some of the spirit events can be with big groups
- v. Nadine said yes with restrictions and mitigating strategies. Pep rally too much. Students asked for movie night in the courtyard – working on logistics. Need to go through health department to do any gathering. Not sure about audience for indoor winter sports.
- vi. Tyika suggested having movie night in several different classrooms. Nadine said possible but need teacher chaperones
- vii. Katie asked Nadine if she would like to see the activities poll. She said yes but wants it separate from the mental health poll. Wants to include a food survey with the school spirit survey
- viii. Working with Dr. LaSalle from UCONN on Connections topics – looking at “Choosing Love” as theme. Mental Health survey works well with this topic.

8. Old Business

- a. None

9. New Business

- a. None

10. Adjournment – Frank Dixon

- a. Next Meeting December 20 at 6pm via Zoom
- b. Liz M. made motion to adjourn meeting at 7:44pm. Andrew seconded. All approved. Meeting adjourned.