

Hamden High School (HHS) School Governance Council (SGC)
Meeting Minutes
January 24, 2022, 6pm (on Zoom)

Members Present (alphabetical order): Frank Dixon, Katie Gurski, John Hanna, Mia Hoffman-Kamrat, Andrew Hull, Elizabeth (Liz) Marini, Karlen Meinsen, Kevin Mensah, Nancy Restivo, Susan Schultheiss, Vicki Simiola, Julie Stewart

Admin Present: Darce DeCosta, Nadine Gannon, Scott Trauner

Members Not Present: John Donahue, Tykia Terrell, Mark Zarrillo

Guests: Jody Goeler

BOE Representative: Mariam Khan

1. Welcome – Frank Dixon

- a. Called meeting to order at 6:06pm
- b. Asked to switch order of Agenda. All approved.

2. Guest Speaker – Superintendent Jody Goeler

- a. Responding to letter sent by HHS SGC regarding requests for MH support
- b. Mental Health (MH) at the source of schools' challenges. Need more MH supports: counselors, social workers, psychologists, etc.
- c. Working on developing a partnership with Clifford Beers (CB), based on New Haven Public School (NHPS) model. Jody shared with the SGC the Partnership Agreement with them.
- d. They need to do screenings and scans of HHS to determine how many clinicians they need to hire
- e. CB has a staffing issue, as does HPS. HPS allocated money through ESSERF to hire more mental health supports, but hard to find. Other districts have same issue
- f. Hoping by partnering with CB will broaden MH supports, for teachers as well
- g. National problem – all competing to hire the same people
- h. CB will help create a more robust support system for students and staff
- i. Community has expressed this is a student and staff mental health issue
- j. Karlen asked what the vision of the program is? How does it fit into the school day? Will you need parent permission?
 - i. Yes, during school day. 1-2 clinicians for HHS. Also, wrap around services for after school, weekends, vacations, summer. 12 month program
 - ii. Not sure about parent sign-off. Similar approach to NHPS. Will need parent cooperation for this to work
- k. John Hanna asked if possible to hire a MH specialist to be permanent part of central office (CO) staff? No one there to help with serious MH concerns. Would be helpful in programming across district
 - i. Yes, it is possible but feels money will be most impactful working with students and families. Already have some staff in place. Needs to talk to team about how that would work.

- ii. John said person could help influence policy across the district. Decisions have been made absent of MH specialists and feels some decisions made have exacerbated the problem.
- iii. Would need to see how MH specialist would fit in with current staff and the roles they have. Ben Dix and Kelly Hillard have been involved. Not against it. Need to look at cost effectiveness and how it would enhance the work of those in field. Partnership with CB has been top priority
- l. Karlen asked how this funded, through ESSERF? Is it sustainable?
 - i. Yes, ESSERF funded but BOE and CO know this needs to be sustainable. Want to spend money at the root of the problem.
- m. Frank D stated that part of the letter is about long term safety
 - i. What doing currently is not sustainable. Installed metal detectors because needed at the time. BOE interested in developing a policy to determine when to use detectors and search backpacks. Admin is also discussing this.
- n. Frank D wished Jody well in his future endeavors and thanked him

3. Board of Education Report – Mariam Khan

- a. Introduced herself
- b. Wants relationship with SGC to be collaborate and to have a comprehensive, sustainable and proactive approach
- c. New board sworn in Nov 28
- d. BOE meetings this week:
 - i. Special BOE meeting tonight, contributions from SEPTA
 - ii. Tomorrow another special meeting regarding superintendent contract
 - iii. Wednesday is curriculum meeting. Mariam is member of curriculum meeting and chair of equity committee
 - iv. Thursday special BOE budget meeting
- e. Has to leave this meeting early to go to BOE meeting
- f. Contact info: mkhan@hamden.org 203-443-1512
- g. Frank thanked her for being our BOE representative

4. School Climate Committee Report – Katie Gurski & Kevin Mensah

- a. Ayanna Iovieno, student BOE representative and leader in the Dragons United Club (DUC) at HHS, was to help present but had to go to the BOE meeting
- b. Kevin is also a member of the DUC, which has similar goals as School Climate Committee. Katie attended their last meeting
- c. Both groups working together to have a Spirit Week Hallway. Spoke to Nadine about it at last DUC meeting
 - i. Goals: drafting a letter to class advisors and student council reps to help assist, get approval from Nadine
 - ii. Idea is to create school spirit by having each grade level decorate a hallway on the second floor during spirit week, have all students

- walk through, have teachers vote on best one, have all students be involved.
- iii. Want to send Google form to all grades to get ideas for theme
- iv. Have students decorate the night before spirit week
- v. Want to meet with class advisors and student council reps to work out details. Will send draft email to Nadine

5. Governance Council and Administrative Remarks – Liz Marini

- a. Introduced new SGC members
 - i. Vicki Simiola as Community Member
 - ii. Julie Stewart as Parent Member to take over Frank LaDore's spot who resigned since last meeting. Julie had initially applied to be on the council at the beginning of the year
- b. Liz motioned to vote Mark Zarillo out since he has been inactive since the beginning of the year. Nancy seconded. All in favor
 - i. Frank LaDore had suggested Judite Vamvakides as a candidate. Since there were no other parents from the original applicants that showed interest in joining, Judite will be considered for the council. Her credentials will be shared and she will be voted on later in the meeting

6. Principal's Remarks – Nadine Gannon

- a. Welcomed new members
- b. Working on getting students in through safety screening
 - i. Takes one hour and 15 minutes physically with admin and security guards working nonstop going through bags
 - ii. Not sustainable – made this clear to Safety Team that met on Friday and with CO
 - iii. On duty from 6:30am-8am
 - iv. Purchased large plastic bags for the students to put all metal objects in – less invasive. Can walk thru detectors with backpack
 - v. From 6:45-7:25a runs smoothly. 7:25-7:45a most challenging time
 - vi. Met with principal at Hillhouse. Want to visit Wilbur Cross
 - vii. Asked for additional support
 - viii. Will make statement to BOE through the Safety Committee that this cannot be sustained and need BOE's directive on how to proceed
 - 1. Frank D asked if the Safety Comm meetings were public. Nadine was not sure but they meet monthly
 - 2. They will continue with current process until directed otherwise from BOE. Nadine will not make the decision to change current practice
 - 3. Frank D agreed BOE needs to work on a long term plan
 - ix. Vicki asked what happens if there is an issue that admin needs to deal with during morning screening?
 - 1. Teachers are helping from 6:45-7:30a – they are stationed on the floors for additional support

2. Frank D stated this is why we need to stay diligent on making sure CO supplies additional resources
- x. Nadine stated doors open at 6:40a
 1. Large group of students that still walk in at 7:28a and are not getting to class until 7:45-7:50a
 2. Encourage students to arrive early and be ready
 3. Alternating periods 1&2 so no one class gets hit
 4. Andrew agreed this is not sustainable. Students are struggling and missing too much class – even alternating periods 1&2 isn't working
 5. Karlen stated she appreciates what is being done but there are unanticipated consequences. Need to stay focused on ultimate problem. BOE and Council need to solve problems
- c. Social and Emotional Lessons rolling out in Feb
 - i. Each dept will teach a S/E lesson, on different weeks
 - ii. Also during Connections
 - iii. Dan Cocchiola working with Dr. LaSalle from UCONN
 - iv. Half day on Thursday to work with teachers on lessons
 - v. De-escalation room
 1. Hoping to be staffed with current staff
 2. Darcie said it will be a quiet space with items such as exercise bike, manipulatives, positive posters, poetry magnets, sand raking, etc purchased with a grant
 3. Counselors and Social workers will help setup
 4. Nadine said Mental Health Club is also helping setup
 5. Mia connected with Christina Logan who is helping to facilitate the MH Club – working on same goal
 - vi. Nadine will tweak the student survey that the SGC MH subcommittee put together. Once approved will be put in students' Google Classroom for them to fill out
- d. Welcome Ms. Felton as Counseling Dept chair/ 504 coordinator
 - i. Counselors met with 9th graders
 - ii. Course recommendation day this week
 - iii. Course selection for grades 9-11 will start next week
 - iv. Parents and students should review
 - v. It will happen via paper and online
 - vi. Parent Portal opens Feb 4
 - vii. Counselors will meet with students to finalize
- e. Dragons United Club
 - i. Looking at policy, curriculum, staffing
 - ii. 85 students. Will be combing with student ambassadors. Goal is to have all students involved
- f. Social Media a huge problem
 - i. Content is awful
 - ii. Continue to encourage parents to review their child's accounts
 - iii. A lot of harm caused by it

- iv. Vicki asked what the kids are doing on Instagram
 - 1. Nadine said there are mean spirited accounts causing issues
 - 2. Report it to police and Instagram. Trying to get accounts deactivated but Instagram is not working fast to get this done
 - 3. Try to investigate through police but can't find out who is responsible
 - 4. On all social media sites
- v. Karlen stated students start pages about fights
 - 1. Purpose is to have fights, video tape them, post them - all to get followers
 - 2. What are the consequences?
 - a. Nadine said they can't catch who is doing it
 - b. Can't trace last threat. Police were involved.
 - c. Can block usage at school but use own data
 - d. Students are using tip line
 - e. Keep contacting Instagram and report to police

7. Approval of Meeting Minutes – Nancy Restivo

- a. Liz motioned to approve the December meeting minutes. Karlen seconded. All in favor.
- b. Nancy shared Judite Vamvakides's resume with council for the open parent position. Liz motioned to vote Judite on council. Karlen seconded. All in favor

8. Committees Review – Liz Marini

- a. Mental Health
 - i. Follow up on MH survey committee made for students
 - 1. Nadine will tweak and send to students
 - 2. Will decide what to do with data
 - ii. Discussed need for alternative programs
 - 1. MH strongly impacted by students not having the right opportunities especially for those not on college track – need vocational programs
 - 2. Is HECA program serving the broad community?
 - iii. Follow up on MH survey committee made for staff
 - 1. Nadine needs to review
 - 2. Want to make sure addressing staff needs
 - a. Hard to address staff needs via zoom but need to meet via zoom
 - b. Used to supply food for staff
 - c. Do prepackaged snacks now
 - d. Still need S/E support
 - e. Advocating for additional staff
- b. Education
 - i. John D shared the committee's Google Doc with goals with Liz
 - ii. They also are advocating for vocational programs to come back

- c. Safety
 - i. Has combined with MH because only Mia and Karlen on committee and they are also on MH committee

9. Old Business

- a. Susan asked about student ID's
 - i. Nadine has them. Purchased lanyards but waiting for the plastic protectors for them. Hopes to distribute next week

10. Adjournment – Frank Dixon

- a. Motion to adjourn meeting at 7:21pm. All approved. Meeting adjourned.