

Hamden Board of Ed October 11th

Jessica Powell <jsarahpowell@gmail.com>

Tue 10/11/2022 12:09 PM

To: input, public <publicinput@hamden.org>

Cc: Melissa Kaplan <makaplan6@yahoo.com>; Khan, Mariam <mkhan@hamden.org>

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Please find below my public comment for tonight's Board of Education Meeting. I have also attached it to this email as a word doc. My address is 85 Mather Street in Hamden.

Hamden Board of Education Meeting

10/11/2022

Public Comment

Dear Members of the Hamden Board of Education:

My name is Jessica Powell. I am a parent of two children in Hamden and an Associate Professor of Education at Southern Connecticut State University. I am writing today with concerns regarding two items on the consent agenda: the approval of the 1) Search and Seizure policy and approval of the 2) Metal Detector Policy.

I understand that the development of these discipline policies stem from a place of concern for the safety of our children and educators. However, from an equity perspective, I ask the members of the board to consider the unintended consequences of these policies. Given what we know about how implicit racial bias shapes the ways such discipline policies play out, it is critically important for the members of the Board to reflect deeply on these policies while taking into consideration the plethora of research that calls into question the efficacy of metal detectors and police presence in schools.

In order to give these policies the deep consideration they require, I feel it should be removed from the consent agenda and bracketed as a separate item that can be discussed and debated.

I am particularly interested in student perspectives on search and seizure, metal detectors, and police presence in schools. How can we invite their voices into this conversation?

One specific question I have is, will SRO's be responsible for carrying out the actions in the policies where it indicates, "police will be notified?" Given the presence of SROs in school paired with policies that invite subjective interpretations of who appears dangerous, I am concerned that these policies will cause physical and psychological harm to our youth.

I believe we have a shared concern: the emotional and physical safety of *all* of our students. How can we create policies and practices that will not disproportionately harm children of color?

While we debate these policies, I want to encourage the board and our community to imagine new possibilities where we can use our resources to cultivate safety and belonging for all of our students. Possibilities that don't require our children to prove that they are not a criminal from the moment they walk through the school doors.

Thank you for all your time and commitment to the students, educators, and community of Hamden.

Sincerely,

Jessica Powell

Mather Street

Jessica Powell, PhD
Associate Professor of Education
Co-Director, Educational Justice Collective
Southern Connecticut State University

I acknowledge that Southern Connecticut State University and my home are located in the traditional territory of Paugussett and Quinnipiac peoples.

Police, Militarism, and Education are not a health mix

Patricia C Vener <vener@vener-art.com>

Tue 10/11/2022 12:09 PM

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Greetings members of the Board of Education of the Town of Hamden, CT,

I am writing to protest the idea of allowing "search and seizure" as well as police presence, and metal detectors in any of our schools. What are we saying to our children, ourselves, and the wider world by allowing these invasions of militarism into what should be places of calm and support? Experience shows us that none of these is a deterrent to any force that wishes to harm others in school environments. All it does is encourage fear and fear is a motivator of the worst reactions in human beings.

These changes to the school environment do not engender confidence. Police do not belong in schools except as very rare visitors. Seeing an adult wandering around, armed, tense, possibly bored or nervous, helps no one and is not worth the money it will cost to fill this role. Being able to search students' belongings infringes on their civil rights and yes, students have civil rights. Why would anyone feel comfortable in an environment that apparently encourages violence? If there are problems, then deal with the individuals involved. Stop trying to erect a filter that stresses kids out more than it gives them comfort. Work with appropriate professionals to help those who might be in need of help. Lock all doors so random people can't come in. Enforce a policy that ALL visitors check in at the office and have a guide to escort them to where they need to be. Kindergartens with their own entrances should also be locked if said entrances are in any way accessible to the public. I am sad that this may be necessary, but apparently gun madness has overtaken Hamden as much as other places. I hope it will not be for very long.

Ban guns (with the possible exception of licensed hunters who are tracked!)

Patricia

Patricia C. Vener -- Dancer, Artist, Rogue Astronomer 203.787.8953

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October 11th Board of Education Meeting

Marisa Simone <simonem23@hamden.org>

Tue 10/11/2022 12:38 PM

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Metal detector and search & seizure policies.

Hello Board of education,

As a student at Hamden High School, I believe that the metal detector and search & seizure policies should be removed completely from our school. I believe that this system is discriminatory against Hamden High Students because it singles us out and is targeting us as a threat. We are forced against our will to walk through metal detectors and we are not allowed to consent or not consent to this policy. I believe that this system is creating problems with trust between students and staff members and I believe this is causing stress and anxiety amongst students. As a student at Hamden High, this system has created problems for me personally such as panic attacks and fear of staff members, as well as security and police officers as well as not wanting to go to school and getting to class late. Many students at HHS do not want metal detectors to be in our schools but have had no say in this decision. I believe that a better solution is to create trust and bonds between students and every staff member. I think this will be a better solution because when students can trust adults and staff members in schools, if a student has a problem with another student or if a threat is being made, we have trusted people we can go to.

- Marisa Simone 152 Circular Avenue Hamden,CT

Marisa Simone

Hamden High School

Class of 23'

Public comment BOE 10/11

megan goslin <megangoslin664@hotmail.com>

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Dear Members of the Board of Education:

Thank you for the many hours you give each week to ensure that Hamden Public Schools are as strong as they can be. I am alarmed by the increased “hardening” of our schools that is unfolding on your watch. Unfortunately, there are no data supporting the effectiveness of metal detectors for deterring violence, notwithstanding anecdotal accounts. Instead, there is expert consensus that building strong relationships with students is the best way to identify threat and prevent tragedy from occurring. I am writing to encourage you to consider the following as you review and revise the Metal Detector and related policies for our schools:

- Notably absent is any mention of when and how metal detectors will be removed once it is deemed “safe” to do so. Since metal detectors offer no additional safety, just the appearance of it, it seems we may never shift away from them.
- The proposed policy gives a much broader reach of metal detectors than our current use (e.g., “These metal detectors may be used for entrance into a school building, on school grounds or at any school district activity where the Superintendent or his/her designee believes a security threat may be present.”)
- There is no mention of age/grade where metal detectors shall be in use. At what age do we think it is “reasonable” for a child to walk through a metal detector to participate in their education? Should my 2nd grader walk through one? Or get wanded? What about a 12-year-old?
- We have not collected systematic data about the impact of metal detectors on our students’ mental wellness. Although some students may feel less anxious in the presence of metal detectors, studies show that many others are likely more anxious with them, for a variety of reasons (e.g., “Wow, my school has metal detectors, there must be a constant threat of violence!”). The physical intrusiveness of metal detectors may be particularly difficult for students who have experienced sexual abuse or assault and some members of the LGBTQIA+ community, both of whom already have higher rates of mental health concerns, compared to their peers. The proposed policy has no mention of trauma-informed approaches to implementing these measures or how to protect vulnerable populations. There is no mention of ways to safeguard against the school-to-prison pipeline with these measures, and we can anticipate that it will likely be black and brown students and those with disabilities who suffer most.
- Refusing to go through a metal detector cannot be grounds for expulsion, as is suggested in the proposed policy. What are alternatives for students who want to or need to opt out? What about students in wheelchairs?
- It is notable to me that metal detectors were implemented before a school-based mental health clinic. In forum after forum on school “safety”, students called loudly and clearly for more and more accessible mental health support. All these months later, the HPS website indicates that we have ONE social worker as part of our school-based mental health clinic (for a school with ~1500 students!)
- Hamden Public Schools is living through a time of extremely limited resources, and that is not likely to end soon. Recently, our schools made headlines due to concerns that children in Title 1 schools may not have field trips due to rising bus costs. This summer, the Board went through the painful process of considering

a consolidation in bus service which would significantly impact school start times (and therefore impact working families). As with schools across the country, we have seen decreases in our children's reading and math skills. We have open teacher positions that we cannot fill and current teachers are covering for one another, at the expense of their own prep and rest time. But we have money to invest in metal detectors? We can afford the initial purchase costs, the ongoing maintenance costs, and the ongoing training costs? In a world of limited resources, HPS is doubling down on the wrong priorities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best,

Megan Goslin, PhD
Haverford St