Vaping Epidemic (please see links below and attached resources to share with your community)
- SMS has anti-vaping campaign on screens around school, flyers in vestibule for parents

- Tuskers Committed is a new program at SHS funded by the Drug Free Communities grant. Athletes have been trained by an elite athlete/coach and two Navy Seals in making healthy lifestyle choices, including getting enough sleep, eating healthfully, and not abusing drugs/alcohol and vaping. The students learn what an impact these elements have on their performance as an athlete and student, and have made a pledge to live healthy lifestyles. The plan is for these students to ‘recruit’ others students at SHS to join the movement. The students will then speak with and influence students in lower grades.

- Next summer more students from SHS, likely from student council, will attend the conference with the coach and Navy Seals.

- Hoping to partner with youth sports coaches to provide clinic on how to speak to kids about vaping and healthy lifestyles.

- It was discussed whether other communities are combating the vaping epidemic with anything more forceful, with stronger ‘shock value’ to get kids to understand how dangerous vaping is.

Partners in Prevention is holding a vaping education program for parents on Oct 28 in the SHS auditorium, 7-9pm. Guest speaker is Stephen Hill, a recovering addict. https://speaksobriety.com. Hill will also hold smaller sessions with students at SHS during the day.

SHS Rotating Schedule/Community Lunch
The new schedule at SHS is getting great reviews from students, teachers and parents. The goal of the rotating, drop schedule was to slow down the pace of the day and reduce stress and anxiety. Mr. Bayer reports he already senses a positive change in the tenor of the school community.

Community lunch is going well. There are lots of activities going on - corn hole, basketball, Wii, extra academic help, club meetings. Seniors can leave with parent permission. Eventually the fitness center will open two days/week during colder months.

Gender-Neutral Bathrooms
Over the summer, our maintenance department converted an existing bathroom to create two fully enclosed restrooms that are gender-neutral. Dr. Blanch says that students appreciate that we are recognizing who they are and what they need.

Several more monitors were hired to patrol during community lunch, which enabled SHS to open many of the bathrooms that were locked last year due to vaping. Monitors only enter bathrooms if there is a clear sign of trouble.

Safety and Security Bond
We are in the design and build phase of the projects included in the safety and security bond, including security film on 1st floor and interior windows/doors and swipe card access. We hope to get state approval for the projects over the winter and begin construction late spring/early summer.

VoIP phone system - all staff has ability to lock down the school. For example, if a student is having a medical emergency, the school can have all the students hold in place until it is resolved.

Declining Enrollment
Enrollment continues to decline, with projections showing the numbers leveling out in 2025/2026. At that point we’ll have roughly 750 students at SHS. Currently there are 1100.

So far the district has managed to lower the number of necessary staff and teachers with retirements, rather than laying off talented employees.

International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program
Under the leadership of Dir. of Learning Innovations, Kevin Guidotti, SHS curriculum leaders are conducting a feasibility study for the 9th and 10th grade component of the Middle Years Program. They will report their findings to the Board of Education in late January. Full implementation would be in 2023/2024.

The middle school is progressing with its transition to the Middle Years Program. Teachers in each core subject are teaching one full MYP-approved unit this year. Next year they will teach two units, and three the following year before full implementation.

Students in 6th grade are now taking World Language - Spanish, French or Italian.

Embedded Honors
9th grade embedded honors in social studies and English has been a great success. Embedded honors means that all levels (regents, honors) are taught in one class and every child has the opportunity to achieve an honors distinction. Next year, all 9th grade English and Social Studies classes will be embedded honors classes. Then those students will have same structure when they get to 10th grade. When learning in an embedded honors class, students tend to push themselves more.
Meeting Notes 2.5.20

Dr. Blanch gave an overview of the work done by the Transportation Task Force. This task force was formed after the Somers bus driver was arrested for driving while intoxicated. The members presented their work to the Board of Education during the January 28th meeting. They recommended tighter policies and procedures including:
- better breathalyzer tests
- specific protocol on calling 911
- notifying parents about bus incidents
- stronger oversight by a 3rd party (Altaris safety and security firm)
- Dual signoff on disciplinary citations
- Improved technology such as live GPS on buses
- Magnetic “How Am I Driving” stickers with phone number on back of buses
- VOiP phone system at bus garages so administrators and School Resource Officers are notified when 911 is called by the bus garage

Tennis Courts
A group of parents have approached the district about building tennis courts at the high school. Currently the tennis team uses the tennis courts at Reis Park, maintained by Parks and Rec. These courts are multi-use surfaces, not typical tennis courts. Building tennis courts at SHS would cost $1-$1.5 million. Benefits include adding tennis instruction to all physical education classes. Separately, the district will be asking the community to approve a new capital reserve campaign that will last several years. Eventually tennis courts could be built using those funds, if community members so desire.

2020-2021 Tax Levy
The SCSD tax levy is expected to be at or below the cap for the 10th year in a row.

VIPS
VIPS (Volunteers in Public Schools) is a new initiative in Somers schools seeking volunteers from the community to work with children in the schools. Some of the volunteers are helping with the school gardens, tutoring in the middle school, working with journalism students at the high school and helping in the library. A one-page document with more information is included in this email.

Private STEM school on old IBM campus
The private STEM school on the old IBM campus is expected to open in 2021. It was asked if this school would be a competition to the Somers public schools? Dr. Blanch answered no. Many of those students are expected to be from other countries, and in fact it may be a nice opportunity for SCSD, given our schools focus on International Baccalaureate programs.