Pulse Coalition Meeting 10.28.21

COVID-19 Updates
Number of mandated quarantines are low at high school due to high vaccination rate (approx. 75-80% students)
Middle school slightly higher quarantine rates because lower vaccination rates
Elementary schools: one full class at SIS and one at Primrose have had to quarantine. Teachers and students fully remote through Zoom.
   When one or two students are quarantined, they are assigned a teacher who facilitates learning and checks in with them.

“Test to stay” – potential new protocol, depending on whether Westchester County Dept of Health adopts it. If a student is exposed to COVID, that student is tested every day at school for a certain number of days. If tests remain negative, student stays in school.

Voluntary, random testing – very low participation rate in the district because of pool approach. Suggested – reiterate to parents that tests are saliva test, not nasal swab

New remote learning protocol at SHS – students required to quarantine will now have modified zoom access to classroom. It’s not an interactive experience, but that student can at least observe class.

This will also be available at SMS – for classes that carry high school transcript credit: algebra, geometry, world languages.

Question:
Are students in MS and HS not staying home while not feeling well as they don’t want to have to quarantine if testing positive?
Dr. Blanch says the problem isn’t with the students. It is parents who send their kids to school when they don’t feel well. On occasion, the covid tests have come back positive, resulting in exposure that shouldn’t have taken place.

Academic and SEL supports in all 4 schools
Assessing learning loss, identifying students, and then providing support; after school tutoring, Academic Support Center, homework club with tutors.

Additional supports services provided through covid dollars

MYP and IB Update
Update coming at Board of Ed meeting next week.

5th year of IB diploma programme. Official assessment by the IB organization will take place. A team will come to review the program. It is a “bearing of our educational soul” to see how we’re doing and how we can improve.
This will also happen with 6-8 grade MYP once certified. This adds value in terms of gaining critical feedback and opportunity to improve.
Learner Profile of a Somers Student
Focusing on bringing awareness across district – among teachers, staff, students of the Learner Profile - what we see as most critical elements of a graduate from SHS. Enforce the idea that what we need to connect with is our own humanity. Getting kids together, connect, clearly define what it means in our district K-12. Bring even more specificity to what we see as a successful child.

Universal Pre-K
Notified late last spring that we would get funding. We will be piloting a program in mid-January. State funds will not fully cover costs, parents cannot subsidize so district will have to pay for some percentage of program.

Plan to be housed at Primrose: 1 teacher, 1 teaching assistant, 15 children. Has to be 100% lottery because it is state funded. We are looking at other districts who have done this for a while for their experiences. Stacey Elconin is leading project implementation.

Next year hoping to expand to 30 children.

Athletic facilities
-hoping to build tennis courts. Helps not only tennis teams, but kids can learn tennis in gym
-softball field needs upgrades
-refurbish baseball
Timeline: get feedback from our citizens finance committee. When do they think we should get started? Possibly spring 2023 to get started. Don’t want to get a bond for it. Want to use savings account. Could community get involved? Help with actual labor? Probably not - liability. Fundraising could help for extras...not for the funding of the main projects.

District would fund these improvements through a capital reserve account (savings account). Plan to ask community for permission to establish that in spring.
(Did that a couple years ago. Created a $5 million savings account. Used those funds to resurface turf fields with savings, as well as funded part of safety/security enhancements)

Energy performance contract
Replacing boilers, other infrastructure improvements

District is going to have to pay back some taxes from revised assessment to 2 corporate properties (tertiary). It’s in court now. Pepsi property and IBM property. Should be resolved within next 2-3 years.

Question about downward trending school enrollment – Still where we anticipated. 520 students at Primrose. That’s the floor. They were 800 a decade ago. SIS 525 – at floor SMS – getting closer to floor: 625. Going to be around 580 next year. SHS 1053 this year. Next year 278 graduating seniors. Next year’s incoming freshman class – 230. Year after that will be 180. SHS floor will be 770-800

How do we handle that with staff? In elementary schools thru attrition. 6th gr same 7-12 are specialists so there may be a reduction of teaching positions eventually.
Partners in Prevention
Somers opted out of allowing marijuana dispensaries and lounges out of the town. 1 of 16 opted out already. Prohibited vape rooms or stores also.
COMMUNITY PULSE COALITION NOTES APRIL 6, 2022

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS
- World language expansion to 3rd and 4th next year, eventually to 5th grade
  Asst Director of Learning Claire Comerford leading effort
  Most likely Spanish
  BOE has discussed. Community meeting with community 4/7
  Need to find language teacher with elementary certification - difficult

- Hiring another social worker (currently one social worker splits 3 days/wk SHS, 2 days/wk SMS).
  Adding one more full-time position
  Goal – identify students struggling academically, behaviorally, not engaged in school w extra-curriculars
  Engage all students at personal level to find success in global society

- Class sizes
  Goal: give teachers a caseload of 100 teachers rather than 125 so they can better connect with each student, have r/s, a team of teachers to support kids.
  K-8 is at floor in sizes. SHS will have smaller classes while these students rise
  Physically restructure high school to 9th/10th section, then 11th/12th section
  Teachers will collaborate more, engage with kids more, have central hub for everything.

- Middle Years Program, expanding program, grade 6-grade 10
  SMS - Accreditation this fall, with site visit
  Next year 3 MYP units taught in every core subject
  At SHS – accreditation in 3 years. Current 6th graders will have MYP in 9th

- Pre-K expanding to 2 classes
  No cost to district
  Housed at Primrose
  They are able to use library, gym, get started in reading Fundations program
  State mandates lottery for admission. Had 60 applications. 85% who wanted it got a spot

Capital Reserve fund Proposition – athletic facility needs
  Fund filled by end-of-year surpluses, up to $10 million, instead of bonding the finances
  Build tennis courts (keeps tennis teams on campus, physical education program can include tennis, also modified program for middle school)
  Softball and baseball field improvements - Ideally do a synthetic surface so weather doesn’t impact season
  Interior work in SHS – upgrade locker room, refresh old classrooms
  Paving, concrete work

Wellness Work
- Youth mental health first aid
  All staff will be trained to identify and triage mental health problems and get counselors involved
  40 employees trained this year across district
Using Drug Free Communities grant to train
Hoping to get rest of staff trained next year
The intent is to have more eyes, radar more sensitive to kids’ issues

**Somers Educational Equity Advisory Team (SEEAT)**
- Goal: make school welcome environment for all ...special needs, diverse backgrounds
  - Professional learning for faculty and staff
  - Operational structures and providing access appropriate for all learners
  - Working on code of conduct....restorative practices – include consequences but also learning opportunities
  - Hiring new Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Coordinator – just posted on OLAS

**New Athletic Director** – Roman Catalino retiring. Marc Hattem taking over – he has been in the district 5 years. Was Dean of Students at SHS. Rob Carreira will be Dean of Students. Will help grow Student Athlete Leadership Council in the fall.

**Parents in schools?** Will there be an opportunity to get parents into buildings?
  - On individual basis, yes
  - 5th graders will get in person tour of SMS
  - 8th grade went to SHS a few months ago for club fair, welcome, walk halls

**TEAM Tuskers Mentoring**
Had 70 mentors before covid. Now only 18
Phyllis Morrison is coordinator
Next year will restart. Spend summer getting more mentors

**VIPS** – Volunteers in Public Schools
Goal: meaningfully engage with community. Opportunities include gardening club, walking club, tutoring, etc. Hoping to start in fall. Gardening volunteers, etc. Hoping to restart in fall.

**Transportation committee** – new committee seeking members

**Somers High School official host of Westchester Science & Engineering Fair**
Largest science and engineering fair in country. Both competition and awards ceremony at SHS.


**Tax rate certiary** – IBM and Pepsi cases still in courts
They are asking for 6-7 years of overpayment in taxes
One property will likely be settled in next couple of months

**STEM school** - not happening. Overseas investment dried up. Some interest in IBM property but not happening for a long time