



CDSP General Meeting

January 14, 2021 9:15 a.m.

Via Zoom

In attendance: Julie Best, Lori Olson, Alan Addley, Ellen Abbot, Raquel Bird, Cristina Boudo, Leila Buckjune, Taylor Carter, Lisa Cerussi, Libby Cook, Amy Daniels, Stefanie Desai, Belinda Fang, Kristen Fiordalis, Gina Gromelski, Alex Hall, Crystal Hill, Ashley Hinchman, Beth Jacobs, Carol Kennedy, Sarah Leopold, Kelly Lasage, Jessica Levey, Kadi Lublin, Sarah Madson, Jill McCammon, Alicia Mehlberg, Mia Mihopoulos, Cristi Mohr, Jenn Moller, Beth Morgan, Jennifer Morici, Robin Nelson, Tiffany O'Connor, Amy O'Kane, Jim Palen, Sara Parent, Catherine Piorkowski, Byrne Pozzi, Jennifer Sherman, Yesim Cil Sukhrani, Meghan Thornton, Stacey Tie, Joanna Walsh, Tara Wurm, Jeff Zimmerman

Meeting called to order by Julie Best at 9:16 a.m.

Vote to approve the minutes of November 19th, 2020 by Julie Best. Passed unanimously.

Co-Chair Update:

- *Welcome:* A reminder that it's important to solicit feedback from all points of view. Make sure parents feel comfortable coming to the PTO's with their questions and comments. Also, a reminder to plan Spring events from a socially distant perspective. Thank you to all who participated in Super Saturday. The questions were wonderful. The facilities meeting has not yet been rescheduled, so please keep an eye out for that.
- *Notes from the Tuesday BOE meeting:* The Darien Foundation is gifting the district a robotics club for K-12. The Ox Ridge build has broken ground. Dr. Addley reported that we have over 600 remote learners, which is a large increase from this Fall. There is a proposal to the state regarding the number of learning hours. MMS and DHS are okay with their hours, but the administration needs to work on the elementary level. It is likely the solutions will be a-synchronous learning on Friday afternoons. They are trying to get MMS and DHS students back full time, but the Covid numbers are not trending down right now. There have been 58 new cases since December. Full time could possibly lead to more quarantining. The primary data used for school model decisions is case rate, but it is not used alone. There are a mix of factors and guidance of medical professionals that determine the ultimate decision. The administration is open to any in person back to school structure, but is concentrating on those that do not mix up cohorts. A lot of the teacher's professional development has been focusing around students' social and emotional needs. The policy committee will be taking a look at busing needs to see if they would recommend making a

change. The CT Department of Health is supportive of reinstating sports on the 19th. CIAC still needs to meet to make the final decision.

· *Questions, Comments, Discussions on Superintendent's Recommended 21/22 Budget:*

- [2021-22 Superintendents Recommended Budget.pdf](#)
- [BOE QUESTIONS.pdf](#)
- [District 21/22 Budget Information Link](#)

The BOF guidance was a 2.5% - 3% increase. RC-28 is the new RC where all Covid related expenses live. The BOE Finance sub-committee voted to ask for an appropriation from the BOF. At this point it is still the superintendent's budget. The RTM has met to discuss their initial thoughts. There are new STEM requirements for graduation. Open Choice is already in other districts in the area, but may not come to fruition this year.

· *PTO Budget Feedback from Principals:*

DHS: Will be meeting further with the principal, but parents are feeling this might not be the year to take away the team model.

Tokeneke: The principal believes that the SESS facilitator change still leads to a collaborative process, but thinks it will make the process easier. Fully supportive.

Hindley: Supportive of SESS change. Feedback regarding the lunch monitor vs. para - that even though it is losing one FTE that it is gaining more class time and therefore doesn't hurt kids.

Ox Ridge: Principal is supportive of everything. Wants to meet with SESS facilitator and parents to get a better perspective on their thoughts.

Holmes: Principal is very supportive. Feels that what you get for the additional salaries is absolutely worth it.

Royle: SESS rep has said there is concern among parents, but the principal felt the value was high. The PTO would like high level budget bullets that could be shared with parents through their wire.

MMS: The Principal is okay with the budget. The main concern is the elimination of a library media staff as it could be a disadvantage during these times where digital learning support is highly needed.

· *Budget Discussion/Questions from the floor included;* Principals should be talking to parents to explain the SESS change. What is the purpose of the building study? With such a low total budget increase are the new rolling covid costs of education raising the overall budget, but taking away from the resources that we need to support our students when they are back in school next year? What is the actual percent increase of the new budget if it was up against the original 19/20 budget, one where we had not had atypical savings last year due to the school shut down?

Officer Updates:

- *Nominating*: It is time to start thinking about the CDSP executive slate for next year. If you have interest in joining the board, or questions, please reach out to Jennifer Morici. Also, every school should provide a CDSP representative. Please reach out with interest and representatives by February 10th.
- *Community Outreach*: Amy Daniels will be putting together proposed budgets for the charities the PTO's will support next year.

School Updates:

- *Hindley*: Will be launching Instagram later this month. This is their first social media channel. The Diversity & Inclusion committee getting started. December held some small events. Planning a remote Valentine's Day craft and a Bingo night. Will also hold a parents meeting with the principal focused on executive functioning.
- *MMS*: The website was hacked in December. Now have a new URL and website. Working with the YWCA, Darien Library and Ok2Delay to hold parent discussion groups about the Social Dilemma. Will have a Q&A with social support services at the end of the month.
- *Holmes*: Parent coffee with the principal regarding curriculum and remote learning discussions. Diversity & Inclusion is launching a cooking class, an adult only book club, and a remote art project. They will begin with France and move on to China, Colombia and South Africa. Is working with Hands on Pottery for the art project. Also trying to set up a community dinner through Darien Butcher Shop.
- *Tokeneke*: In December held a virtual art craft with the Darien Arts Center. Created a book table as a holiday gift for the teachers. The holiday lunch was rescheduled to January. Launched a Diversity & Inclusions survey and found that the communities main interests are read alouds, music and crafts. Will be attempting an outdoor book fair in April or May. Looking to hold a Kahoot night and a talent show. Trying to bring typical Spring events to life in a creative virtual way.
- *DHS*: They were able to hold the teachers Holiday lunch before the school went full remote. January 28th will be holding a DHSPA elective expo. Starting to work on Senior Celebratory events. The Student Council will be giving input. Would like to hold as many in-person, outdoor events as possible.
- *Ox Ridge*: Will be holding a Mad Science Virtual presentation on Jan 25th and 26th. Kits for the children will be shipped to school. Will be holding author visits for Black History Month. K-2 "Jump at the Sun" and 3-5 "Class Act". Held a biscuit morning with biscuits from Chick-fil-et for teacher appreciation. Hoping to do some sort of passport night this year.
- *Royle*: Diversity & Inclusion is getting started. Want to hold a Kahoot and Magician family night later in the spring. Also working on a parent event. Have Mad Science, High Touch High Tech and Authors visits planned. Will schools be allowing valentines?

Update from Dr. Addley: Discussed that his priority is to bring all students back as soon as possible. He recognized that this is a challenging budget. The current draft rolls to a 3.9% increase over last year and of that 3.5% is fixed expenses. There are certain Covid operation expenses that will continue to roll into future years. The budget has a large emphasis on STEM; K-2 1:1 program, support for technology needs, adding DHS course offerings to increase access to technology education. The SESS facilitators is also a big topic. And, possible diversity initiatives including Open Choice which is a program that would start at the kindergarten level. There are tradeoffs to this budget. He appreciates the CDSP's support of Education. Also, he thanks The Darien Foundation for offering a gift of robotics for K-12. Questions/Discussions from the floor included; What happens to those SESS facilitators who don't have the qualifications for assistant principal? Would it be okay for PTO's to reach out to you to schedule zooms for their school? Will teacher vaccinations be happening in town? If support is needed we can ask the parent community. Does eventual vaccination mean we will be reopening the schools in full without remote learning options? MMS would like more information on learning models and what is needed to return MMS to full time rather than remote. Why in the budget is there the elimination of a library media specialist at MMS when this role typically provides tech support? DHS would appreciate more communication. Maybe we could use the BOE meeting videos with time stamps to communicate with parents.

New Business: Sending a Doodle Poll for the Elementary PTO's regarding the next elementary meeting.

Motion to adjourn at 11:08. Stacey Tie, first; Jennifer Morici, second.

Respectfully submitted by Carol Kennedy, Secretary.