

# **Central Parent Council Minutes**

## **Wednesday, 10/25/2023**

- 1. Pledge of Allegiance**
- 2. Call to Order, Chair Report**  
— CPC Chair, Tara Belfi  
Meeting called to order at 9:05AM
- 3. Approval of Minutes from 09/27/2023 CPC Meeting**  
— CPC Secretary, Joann Kuncewitch  
Erin Rechler moved to approve the September 2023 minutes, and Fara Satin seconded.
- 4. Treasury Report** — CPC Treasurer, Erin Rechler
- 5. School and Organization Reports:**  
Goosehill Primary School (GHPTG)  
Lloyd Harbor School (LHSPTG)  
West Side School (WSSPTG)  
CSH Junior/Senior High School (CSHPTG)  
Arts Booster Club (ABC)  
Cultural Arts Committee (CAC)  
Families of the Community United with Schools (FOCUS)  
CSH Educational Foundation
- 6. District Updates** — Jill Gierasch, Superintendent; Genevieve LaGattuta, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction

Ms. Gierasch spoke about last night's BOE work session where the Board goals were presented; Their goals include improving academic achievement, improving communication to parents and guardians, and improving student safety.

A new emblem was created for CSH Unites in which each of our four schools in the district are represented.

Our students in our science research program have received a Lemelson-MIT InvenTeam® grant to create an invention geared towards active and passive tick mitigation strategies that do not require pesticides. The students in the robotics team are involved as well. This is a prestigious honor which only eight schools were selected nationwide.

Mr. Joe Monastero and several staff members are working on a STEAM newsletter. It will be a publication to show the community the student projects being worked on throughout the process from beginning to end.

The Homecoming event was a wonderful community and district-wide event. It wasn't possible without the help of the parent and faculty volunteers throughout our district. Our administration appreciates any feedback to continue improving future Homecoming events.

## **7. Parent Questions/New Business**

The CPC agreed to hold the parent questions portion earlier in this meeting due to time constraints of multiple community members who wished to ask questions.

A parent asked if there's a possibility to hold a 9<sup>th</sup> grade English Honors class as there is no opportunity until 10<sup>th</sup> grade. The parent stated that there are opportunities to advance in math and science, however few opportunities exist in English. Ms. Gierasch explained that a new 7<sup>th</sup> grade math class was put in place to enrich successful learning for 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Ms. Gierasch stated that independent reading is stressed as it is a strong indicator for high performance in language arts. Additionally, small group instruction in reading is established to provide instruction at all levels.

A parent expressed concern that the hold on the Brown University Department of History Choices Program subscription is causing teachers to be denied of resources that would be useful in teaching particular topics (such as critical thinking in debate as well as providing resources to cite opinions in AP History).

Ms. Gierasch stated that the Choices Program was originally used for the Diversity & Justice in History course and was then able to be accessed and used by the rest of the Social Studies department. She explained that the BOE did not have access to the content when they first tabled the decision to renew the subscription. The BOE had access to the content the second time in which the subscription renewal was tabled; The decision to table the decision on renewing the subscription was made because they would like to look into additional resources that could provide more balance in content. Ms. LaGattuta is looking into more instructional resource options, as we are currently lacking a Humanities Director.

Related to the Choices Program, a parent asked for clarification on why the program lacks balance. At this time, a community member provided a reminder that the BOE meetings are recoded and posted on the district website so that community members know what was discussed without getting any missed messages. It was also mentioned that at last night's BOE work session, the administration stated that there was no immediate need for approval of the Choices Program.

Related to the Choices program comment above, a parent asked if BOE decision making on this level of detail is normal and expected.

Ms. Gierasch explained that the BOE has the responsibility to oversee that the curriculum is sufficient and that the BOE also looks to administration for recommendations.

Several parents added that our students need to learn different perspectives so they are not surprised with different viewpoints when they move on to college. A parent emphasized that the time for students to learn different viewpoints is while they're in high school so that they can continue those discussions at home with their parents and guardians.

Ms. Gierasch responded that it is a goal of our district to diversify our teaching. She added in later

comments that the Choices Program is not the sole source of the curriculum, rather, it is used as an enhancement.

Also related to previous parent questions, a parent asked about the involvement that the social studies teachers have in finding their classroom resources.

Ms. Gierasch explained that the history teachers use their meeting time to brainstorm what resources they might use in the future. Additionally, teachers find many resources by word of mouth and do further research to verify whether these are reputable sources.

A parent brought up a concern about social studies curriculums, in general throughout our country, which is much different than it has been a few decades ago when the current parents were students themselves. Examples raised were current events, such as the war in Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas war, are not being discussed yet school organizations are accepting donations for people in need that are affected by these wars. Ms. Gierasch agreed that many teachers are hesitant to discuss these topics.

A parent added that as a former teacher, she felt teachers need to be prepared for anything a student may say about controversial topics and that teachers may be hesitant to discuss certain matters, not knowing where the student comments may lead to. Another parent suggested that the teachers may be afraid of the parents' reactions to certain topics being discussed.

Ms. Gierasch added that the teachers also must teach that there are other perspectives to what they are reading.

A parent asked if the community could donate additional funds to the MIT research grant. Ms. Gierasch responded that additional funds could be accepted and that for projects such as this, the school looks to organizations such as the CSH Ed. Foundation.

In the conclusion of this portion, community members were reminded that the BOE can be reached by email regarding any thoughts or questions.

## **8. Presentations: Special Education Parent Teacher Organization (SEPTO) – Maggie Lovett, SEPTO President**

**Special Education and Support Systems Provided Within the District — Dr. Nicole Schimpf, Executive Director of Special Education & Pupil Personnel Services; Jill Gierasch, Superintendent**

We welcomed Maggie Lovett, SEPTO President, to speak about how the organization helps parents and caregivers throughout the community. While SEPTO does represent the special education community, the organization has also expanded to supporting parents who have students with mental health needs.

Along with Dr. Schimpf, Executive Director of Special Education & Pupil Personnel Services, approximately 15 staff members participated in our round table meeting with parents; This was a

very productive conversation where parents were welcome to share any thoughts or questions, and parents really opened up.

In addition to SEPTO's monthly meetings, FOCUS (Families of the Community Unites with Schools) & SEPTO join together for special presentations. Last week, FOCUS & SEPTO joined together at the Cold Spring Harbor Public Library and welcomed therapist Dr. Donna Theile to speak about Navigating Anxiety through School Years.

Presentation link:

[Navigating Anxiety Through School Years](#)

Ms. Lovett reminded attendees that SEPTO is welcoming any ideas for future meeting presentations and to please reach out with any thoughts.

SEPTO is looking to increase membership. Dues are \$30 per family via PayPal or check and dues collected are used for funding Homework Club and for funding meetings and special presentations. At the moment, there are approximately 40 SEPTO members. For more information on upcoming meetings and events, please visit SEPTO's Instagram page @csh\_septo

Ms. Gierasch added that our district has an instructional support team available at every building. Services are also provided for temporary needs such as in coping with the death of a family member or close friend. She emphasized that students don't need an IEP (Individualized Education Program) in order to get help.

Ms. Nicole Schimpf continued the presentation informing parents that AIS (Academic Intervention Services) are given to students even before identifying what the student's specific needs are. Parents have the right to make a special education referral at any time.

Some of the services we offer throughout Goosehill to the High School are Speech & Language and Behavioral Services. Our district also provide instructional support teams throughout the elementary schools. 1:1 Teacher Aides are available with the goal of reaching independent learning. Resource room is provided – in this case, students are pulled from their classroom and are paired with students that have similar needs. The goal of resource room is to target the deficits rather than to complete a specific assignment. Special classes are provided for students with moderate to severe learning disabilities. In high school, an integrated co-teaching model is in place where the special education teacher and the general education teacher work together to support all of the students in the class.

Parents asked about the class size for a co-teaching classroom and the grade level co-teaching is provided for. Ms. Gierasch answered that per NY State, no more than 12 (or 40 percent) of the students in the class can have IEPs. Ms. Gierasch added that teachers did complain about needing more support for special education students and an additional special education teacher was hired to create more balance. Co-teaching starts at the high school level. Integrated Co-Teaching is something not every district offers but we do provide it for our students. Ms. Gierasch explained that we don't have enough special education students in the elementary schools to provide an additional teacher and that we use other models to support the elementary students' needs. In this case, Teacher assistants may be in the classroom for half the day.

**9. Important Dates to Remember:**

November BOE Meeting — Tuesday, 11/14, 8 PM

Next CPC Meeting — Thursday, 11/16, 9AM District Office

Capital Reserve Liquidation Vote —Thursday, 11/16, 6:30am-8:00pm

CSH Jr/Sr High Field House

Regarding the vote, Ms. Gierasch added that absentee ballots may be submitted through the district office.

**10. Meeting Adjournment** — CPC Chair, Tara Belfi

Dori OBrien moved to adjourn, and Joann Kuncewitch seconded. Meeting adjourned at 10:50AM