

The minutes presented within this document provide a summary of the discussion that took place at the Board of Education meeting. For the complete discussion of the agenda items, please view the video of the Board meeting on our website at www.southingtonschools.org. These minutes are considered a draft until approved at the following regular Board of Education meeting.

SOUTHINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION

SOUTHINGTON, CONNECTICUT

REGULAR MEETING

FEBRUARY 23, 2017

The regular meeting of the Southington Board of Education was held on Thursday, February 23, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. in the John Weichsel Municipal Center Public Assembly Room, 200 North Main Street, Southington, Connecticut with Executive Session scheduled for 6:30 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Brian Goralski, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

Board members present: Mr. Robert Brown, Mrs. Terri Carmody, Mrs. Juanita Champagne, Mr. David Derynoski, Mrs. Terry Lombardi, Mr. Zaya Oshana, and Mrs. Patricia Queen. Absent: Mrs. Colleen Clark.

Administration present: Mr. Timothy Connellan, Superintendent of Schools and Mr. Steven Madancy, Assistant Superintendent.

MOTION: by Mrs. Carmody, seconded by Mr. Brown:

"Move to go into Executive Session, excluding the public and the press, for the purpose of discussing disciplinary matters, personnel (Director of Business and Finance Contract), and upon conclusion reconvene to public session."

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

2. EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS DISCIPLINARY MATTERS AND PERSONNEL (Director of Business & Finance)

Mr. Goralski declared Executive Session ended at 6:54 p.m.

3. RECONVENE MEETING ~ REGULAR SESSION

The regular session reconvened at 7:00 p.m. by Mr. Goralski, Chairperson.

Board members present: Mr. Robert Brown, Mrs. Terri Carmody, Mrs. Juanita Champagne, Mr. David Derynoski, Mrs. Terry Lombardi, Mr. Zaya Oshana, and Mrs. Patricia Queen. Absent: Mrs. Colleen Clark.

Administration present: Mr. Timothy Connellan, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Steven Madancy, Assistant Superintendent; Mr. Peter Romano, Director of Operations and Mrs. Margaret Walsh, Director of Pupil Services.

Student representatives present were Miss Samantha Steeves, Miss Samantha Martins and Mr. Joseph Martin.

4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The student representatives led in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Goralski called for a moment of silence in memory of Donna DeSando who was employed by the Southington Public Schools as a teacher for 35 years and retired in 2005 and Zora Gura who retired from the Southington School system where she worked as a paraprofessional for 15 years.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES ~ January 26, 2017

MOTION: by Mr. Oshana, seconded by Mrs. Carmody:

“Move to approve the regular Board of Education minutes of January 26, 2017, as submitted.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

a. Communications from Audience

Ms. Danielle LoCascio, 19 Church Street, had issues regarding a change in location for CREC buses to pick up and drop off students from Southington High School (SHS) to Kennedy Middle School (JFK). Her two children go to different CREC schools and ride different buses. Her son, a senior, had a parking pass for SHS, but cannot park at JFK. She noted that parents were given only two days’ notice before school started of the change in bus pick up and drop off, which she found out via Facebook from other parents. She had made numerous phone calls to a number of people and heard different reasons and justifications for this move. She thought there was a major breakdown in communication between Southington Public Schools and CREC.

Mr. Goralski stated that CREC organizes the transportation and advised Ms. LoCascio to contact her children’s CREC magnet schools first to discuss the changes. She could then call Mr. Connellan to discuss the parking situation at JFK.

b. Communication from Board Members

MOTION: by Mrs. Carmody, seconded by Mr. Oshana:

“Move Agenda Item 10.c ‘Out of State / Overnight Field Trip Approval’ to Agenda Item 6.e.”

Motion approve unanimously by voice vote.

MOTION: by Mrs. Carmody, seconded by Mr. Oshana:

“Move to add Student Expulsions to the agenda as Item 10.h.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

Board members discussed the following:

- A question raised was if the Board of Education had to reexamine Board policies regarding transgender bathroom use and immigration changes due to President Trump’s recent executive orders. Mr. Madancy explained that, per the legal firm of Shipman & Goodwin, Connecticut’s anti-discrimination laws still protect students for gender identity.
- At the Southington Library, there are over 5,000 online courses that are free to every student, teacher, paraeducator and administrator in the Southington school system whether they live in Southington or not.
- The Kelley Elementary School Drama Club production of “Willy Wonka” and Strong Elementary School Drama Club production of “Suessical Junior” were very professional and helps develop confidence in the young students.
- “Taste of Culture” at DePaolo Middle School on February 23, 2017 was well attended with students giving performances representing different countries.
- Mr. Brown, Mrs. Lombardi and Mrs. Queen will be attending the “Day on the Hill” with the legislators on Wednesday, March 8, 2017. The three Board of Education Student Representatives were invited to attend.
- “Read Across America” is next week in recognition of Dr. Seuss’ birthday and it is a highlight for Board members to read at the schools.
- Southington Education Foundation (SEF) is hosting a Family Day Fundraiser at the Crystal Bees entertainment complex in Southington on March 12, 2017 from noon to 5:00 p.m.

c. Communication from Administration

Administration reported on the following:

1. Office 365 Email Pilot: Mr. Connellan reported that Mr. Jamie Olander, Technology Director, piloted Office 365 for email with his Technology Department, which is a web-based package as opposed to buying individual Office packages. Office 365 Email recently was implemented in all central office departments; once it is implemented district-wide, there is the possibility of a \$35,000-\$45,000 savings.
2. DePaolo Traffic Pattern: Mr. Connellan reported that the Calendar House construction will be starting late March and that he and Mr. Romano met with the DePaolo administration to discuss new traffic patterns for student safety and to help alleviate ongoing traffic problems. Parents will be notified of the changes. Mr. Derynoski advised having police at DePaolo during construction to help with traffic in the morning and at dismissal and to ask the construction crew to limit construction during those times.

3. NARCAN: Mr. Connellan explained that this is a lifesaving drug administered to individuals who have overdosed. Currently, the Resource Officer at the high school has NARCAN in his police cruiser. The School Medical Advisor issued standing orders that will allow the school nurses to administer NARCAN and they will be offered formal training. NARCAN will be available at the high school and middle schools and an option for Southington Catholic School where the school system has a nurse that services that building.
4. Professional Development Day – Tuesday, February 21: Mr. Madancy reported Ms. Walsh secured a speaker, Margie Gillis, Executive Director of the Haskins Lab, who is nationally renowned in the area of Dyslexia and gave a presentation at the Municipal Center. Mr. Madancy discussed at length his visits to the various schools offering Professional Development and their presentations.
5. CAS Executive Leaders: On February 2, 2017, Mr. Madancy, Mrs. Carmody and Mr. Brian Stranieri attended the CAS Executive Leaders, which is a monthly roundtable for Superintendents. The discussion was on Mastery-based Learning.

Mr. Madancy acknowledged that the Professional Development offered on Friday, February 17, before a long weekend, was well attended by faculty and staff.

d. Communications from Student Representatives:

Miss Steeves reported on the following:

- The Unified Theatre Show is scheduled for March 16, 2017 with the theme “Around the World.” She and Miss Martins will be representing Africa.
- The Robotics season recently started with scouting and designing meetings.

Mr. Martin reported on the following:

- On Thursday, February 9, 2017, “Navigating the College Process” was held for sophomores and juniors at the high school.
- The Marching Band Surround Sound #8 show is “Peer Imagination” and will be held on Friday, March 10, and Saturday, March 11 from 7:00pm-9:00pm and on Sunday, March 12 from 6:00pm-8:00pm.

Miss Martins reported on the following:

- The Multicultural Club hosted a Fashion Show on February 17.
- The Student Council Think Tank is hosting a Volleyball Tournament on March 8, 2017.
- A Substance Abuse Awareness Night will be held on March 10, 2017.
- She thanked the Board for the invitation to attend the “Day on the Hill.”

e. Out of State /Overnight Field Trip Approval (formerly Agenda Item 10.c)

MOTION: by Mrs. Lombardi, seconded by Mr. Derynoski:

“Move to approve the field trip request for the Southington High School Key Club to attend the annual conference in Springfield, MA, as presented by the administration.”

Mrs. Beth Hosmer, Key Club Co-Advisor, explained in detail the convention itinerary. The Southington Kiwanis Club pays for the bus and treats the students to a meal on Saturday evening. Three Southington students are running for district-level positions.

Mrs. Hosmer announced that on Saturday, February 25, 2017 the annual Kiddy Carnival would be held at the high school from 9:00am-12:30pm. Admission is a box of macaroni and cheese. Miss Steeves is the Key Club President.

Mr. Madancy introduced Mr. Patrick Nobou, Key Club Co-Advisor, who will also be chaperoning the field trip and is a French and Spanish World Language Teacher at Southington High School.

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

7. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

a. Personnel Report

MOTION: by Mr. Derynoski, seconded by Mrs. Carmody:

“Move to approve the Personnel Report, as submitted.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

8. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Curriculum and Instruction Committee Meeting ~ February 1, 2017

Mrs. Carmody reported that Mr. Duffy, Science Coordinator, presented three course proposals to the committee: 1) CCP Physics (revised course), 2) Honors Physics (new course) and, 3) CCP Environmental Science (new course). The committee approved all three courses. Mr. Levin, Director of ALTA, discussed course credit alterations with the committee to give more of an incentive to ALTA students and keep them on track for graduation. The committee reviewed language in the current graduation policy that reinforces the idea that special arrangements should be considered for students within alternative learning programs and approved his request. Mrs. Carmody reported that the committee discussed at length the requirements for mandated testing for both SAT and CAPT Science for the spring. The administration proposed combining SAT and Science Day into one Southington High School assessment day on April 5 along with several changes to to the day that would affect the students. The committee agreed with the changes and requested that the high school administration notify all staff members and families of the rationale for these changes.

b. Policy and Personnel Committee Meeting ~ February 13, 2017

Mrs. Queen reported that the committee reviewed two job descriptions that were updated to reflect current expectations for each job. The committee reviewed and discussed a number of policies and regulations with some that are up for review later on the agenda. Mrs. Queen discussed each policy and regulation change at length. The policy updates for tonight's review are for 5111, Students, Admission; 5133, Students, Participation in Athletics and Other Co-curricular Activities; 6172, Instruction, Gifted and Talented Program. At the next Board

meeting, the committee will present a motion that will contain anti-discrimination, protected class language that affects seven policies.

c. Finance Committee Meeting ~ February 16, 2017

a. Preschool Tuition Rates 2017-2018

MOTION: by Mr. Oshana, seconded by Mrs. Lombardi:

“Move to approve a five percent (5%) increases in preschool tuition for 2017-2018 as recommended by the Finance Committee.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

b. Vehicle Lease

MOTION: by Mr. Oshana, seconded by Mr. Derynoski:

“Move to approve entering into a four-year lease to purchase a 2017 Ford F-150 truck.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

c. Online Payments – Activities & Fees

MOTION: by Mr. Oshana, seconded by Mr. Derynoski:

“Move to use MyPaymentsPlus as the online payment system for school activities and rolling the fee into the activity as stipulated by the Finance Committee.

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

9. OLD BUSINESS

a. Town Government Communications

Mr. Goralski reported on a recent Farm Heritage Committee meeting that he attended and discussed their collaboration with LEAF, the farmland next to DePaolo Middle School (former Pleasant View Stables) and the opportunities for the high school Ag-Science Program. As a fundraising opportunity for the PTOs, the Farm Heritage Committee plans to get approval from central office for LEAF to collaborate with the PTOs to help grow crop-sharing opportunities.

Mr. Goralski stated that March 6, 2017 is the Board of Finance public hearing on the 2017-2018 budget. The Board of Education workshop with the Board of Finance is March 21, 2017. The Board of Finance and Board of Education are working on a date for another workshop to discuss government scenarios.

10. NEW BUSINESS

a. Leonard & Gladys Joll Scholarship Committee Appointment

Mr. Oshana, Mrs. Lombardi and Mr. Derynoski volunteered to serve on this committee.

b. Approval of Job Descriptions

MOTION: by Mrs. Queen, seconded by Mr. Oshana:

“Move that the Board of Education approve the revised job descriptions for Information Systems Specialist and Bookkeeper at Southington High School as recommended by the Policy and Personnel Committee.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

c. Out of State / Overnight Field Trip Approval *(moved to Agenda Item 6.e)*

d. Girls Ice Hockey Club Team

Mr. Connellen reported that a group of parents requested joining with another district (Avon) to form a Girls Ice Hockey Club. An independent club level team, with Southington residents participating, already exists and has been playing for several years. Club level play would be at no expense to the Board. The ice rink in Newington would be used. Mr. Connellan and Mr. Greg Ferry, Athletic Director, discussed at length the opportunity and noted that if Avon could no longer sustain the club status, then Southington would not be able to offer it, which had been made clear to the parents. The Board discussed liability insurance, cost and sustainability.

e. Policy Updates (5111, Students, Admission; 5133, Students, Participation in Athletics and Other Co-curricular Activities; 6172, Instruction, Gifted and Talented Program) ~ First Reading

Mr. Goralski noted that this would be voted on at the next meeting. If a Board member had any questions or concerns, they are to contact Mrs. Queen.

f. Stipend Position ~ Outdoor Track

Mr. Connellan explained that the participation rate in track and field continues to grow and the ratio of students to coaches is very high. The same situation occurred with Indoor Track. The request is for an interim assistant track and field coach for a better adult to student ratio, improved student safety, instruction, and supervision. This would be funded from current appropriations.

MOTION: by Mrs. Carmody, seconded by Mrs. Queen:

“Move to add one interim Assistant Track and Field Coach at Southington High School.”

Mrs. Lombardi recused herself from the conversation. The Board questioned the number of track meets, the different track and field events, if this stipend position was for both boys and girls, and the increase in participation.

Motion carried by voice vote.

g. Drug Abuse Prevention Presentation

Mr. Goralski welcomed Mrs. Christina Simms as the new Youth Services Director and noted the importance of the partnership between Youth Services, STEPS and the Board of Education.

Mr. Goralski addressed a comment made at a Town Council meeting regarding drugs at the high school and noted that nothing matters more to the Board than the safety of the children and that the students at Southington High School are safe. The Board, in partnership with STEPS, will always work to make it safer. If there is a concern about drugs in schools, he requested that it be addressed with the Board of Education, not at other town meetings.

Mrs. Kelly Leppard, Prevention Specialist for the town of Southington, introduced Mrs. Christina Simms, Megan Albanese and Kiana McDavid who accompanied her. Mrs. Leppard gave a lengthy and informative presentation to the Board on current and local youth substance abuse trends and what is being done by the town in partnership with the Board and community to address it. See *Attachment #1* for details.

Mrs. Leppard announced that there will be a Parent Educational Awareness event at Southington High School on March 15, 2017 from 6:30pm – 8:00pm addressing alcohol and drug trends, followed by a resource fair.

Mr. Brown requested Professional Development for teachers and staff regarding drug trends, how to recognize behaviors of concern, what teachers could do if they have a student that they suspect is abusing alcohol and/or drugs and if the teacher is protected.

Mrs. Lombardi questioned prescription drugs. Mrs. Leppard announced that there was a new law recently passed that the doctors can only prescribe a 7-day supply to eliminate access of unused prescription drugs. Mrs. Simms stated that there needed to be a culture shift and wrap around approach. The Board had a lengthy discussion on the topic and how to get parents involved.

h. Student Expulsions 2016-2017-13, 2016-2017-14 and 2016-2017-15

MOTION: by Mrs. Carmody, seconded by Mr. Oshana:

“Move to expel students 2016-2017-13, 2016-2017-14 and 2015-2017-15 as stipulated by the Superintendent of Schools.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

11. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: by Mr. Derynoski, seconded by Mrs. Lombardi:

“Move to adjourn.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

The meeting adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Blanchard
Recording Secretary

Good evening. My name is Kelly Leppard and I am the Prevention Specialist for the Town of Southington. I am joined here tonight with Christina Simms, who is our new Director of Southington Youth Services, my co-worker, Megan Albanese, and our intern, Kiana McDavid. Our goal in the next 15 minutes is to give you all information on current and local drug trends, our work and how we have come together as a community to tackle the issues of youth alcohol, tobacco, electronic cigarette & vaping, marijuana and prescription drug abuse. These issues have recently been put in the spotlight in our community and we are here to inform you on the progress we have been making but with requests on how to strengthen our partnership as we move forward.

I personally have been working to combat these issues for the past nine years, when our coalition first started, alongside numerous community volunteers. I want to first start tonight out by saying that combating the war on drugs is no simple fix. Youth substance abuse is not just a problem here in Southington, but a problem facing our entire nation. But the difference is, we can make a difference here in Southington with our efforts. We can make a difference on the local level. When we join forces between each sector of the community, where we are all working to make substance abuse prevention a priority – change can happen. Through education, reducing access and policy change is how we make it work.

Joining forces within a community is exactly what a coalition is. A coalition is a diverse group of organizations and individuals who agree to work together to achieve a common goal and 9 years ago, we created that collaboration and called it the STEPS Coalition – Southington's Town-wide Effort to Promote Success, which is Southington's substance abuse prevention coalition. Most of you may have heard of our work through our Asset Building Classrooms initiative but we are so much more.

Our coalition is made up of sectors within our community that include our police department, clergy association, media, business community, parents, youth, town government, civic organizations, and very importantly, our education sector. We are using the wrap around approach so that all players are at the table when working on youth substance use. Just as it takes a community to raise a child, it takes a community to build protective factors for our youth.

In addition to knowing that we can make changes on the local level, we know that prevention works. In a society that continually promotes alcohol and drug use at every level, from celebrities to advertisements at sporting events, the need to provide education on the dangers of alcohol and drug use and its effect on children has never been greater. Education on this critical threat needs to begin as early as possible in people's lives. Properly educated children and youth are much more likely to avoid such dangers.

A great example is our prevention efforts and educating youth at an early age is with our Asset Building Classrooms initiative. With the support we receive from the Southington Board of Education and the Southington School System, we are building protective factors in youth in every school and in every classroom. Having staff and students be kinder and more supportive for one another is a research based initiative to build a safety net to protect kids. The more assets kids have, the more likely they will be healthy and successful and not engaged in risk-taking behaviors such as drug and alcohol use.

In addition to the education system, families, communities and individuals are not helpless to prevent substance abuse. Research confirms the benefits of parents providing consistent rules and discipline, talking to children about alcohol and drugs, monitoring their activities, getting to know their friends, understanding their problems and concerns, and being involved in their learning. The importance of open communication between parents and their kids regarding the negative effects of alcohol and drug use play a significant role in decreasing the chances of developing a substance use disorder. Such communication continues to provide benefits through adolescence and beyond.

In addition, proven effective areas in prevention for underage drinking alone include changing cultural misconceptions and behaviors about alcohol use through education, curtailing the availability of alcohol to young people under age 21 and consistent enforcement of existing laws and regulations regarding alcohol purchases. These are all prevention strategies we are doing here in Southington.

With the help and support from the Southington Board of Education, we are able to survey our students every two years by administering the Search Institute's Attitudes and Behavior Survey to students in grades 7, 9, and 11. Through the collection of this data we know our four core measure data which includes youth previous 30 day use of substance use, their perception of harm, their perception of peer risk and their perception of parental disapproval.

Here in Southington, we also know that for social access, youth obtain access to alcohol from their homes with or without parent permission and they are exposed to alcohol through retail entities with bars, restaurants and package stores selling to minors. We know that there is a low perception of harm regarding marijuana, due to our current laws and legislation, regarding medicinal and recreational use as well as the decriminalization. Parents and youth are unaware of side effects and long term consequences and youth feel that their parents are dismissive of youth marijuana. For vaping and e-cigarette use, there is a large misconception that they are 'less dangerous' than traditional cigarettes and they are known to be easy to disguise due to the products being odorless. For prescription drugs, we know there are many sources of how youth

obtain them including from medical professionals, from peers who have a prescription, at their own homes or family members' homes with or without permission. Youth report taking prescription drugs without knowing what they are, that parents do not discuss the dangers of prescription drug abuse with their children and youth believe the myth that because prescription drugs are medication, they are safe.

All of our work is research based and data driven. From the data we have collected (which includes our student data, student supplemental survey data, focus group data, and law enforcement data) we worked with consultants and our board members to create logic models to determine our problem statements, the root causes of our problems and the local conditions as to why these problems are happening here in Southington. This then creates our action plans to bring our prevention initiatives into our community.

Some of the prevention initiatives you may or may not be familiar with include our permanent medication drop box that is located in the lobby of the Southington Police Department for unwanted or unused prescription drugs, which helps keep medications out of the hands they do not belong to. The installation of our drop box and media campaign to advertise our box was followed up with the 'Lock or Drop it' campaign to educate Southington residents on the importance of keeping medications in a secured location when they are still using them. We did a 'Lock your liquor' campaign on the importance of knowing the alcohol supply in your homes and keeping your supply in a location where minors can't gain access. We have worked very closely with the Southington Police Department by conducting compliance check operations, where we send underage youth into bars, restaurants and package stores to ensure those with liquor permits are following the rules. Within the past year, we have worked with the Police Department and their Special Investigations Unit to create a follow up survey for anyone from town that has overdosed from heroin to see where the addiction started. As of today, there has been 13 interviews done and the majority of reasons of initiation was a result of an accident or injury, that led to a prescription drug addiction and then heroin use. We have provided professional development for our police officers on controlled party dispersals, behind the scenes of social media, and topics related to our focused substances. Just this past year, we paid for breathalyzers for the administration at Southington High School for school sponsored events such as dances and prom to deter students from drinking.

We have worked with our business community, to provide multiple TIPS Trainings (which is a training for invention procedures when serving alcohol), hosted a forum for business owners with the CT State Liquor Commission on the current laws and regulations and we provide ongoing merchant education supplies to liquor permittees on how to properly check identifications.

We have a large youth involvement in our work. Aside from the hundreds of students involved in our Asset Building Classrooms initiative, we have a STEPS Youth Committee that volunteers throughout the community and the STEPS Youth Council, which is made up for 30 students working specifically on prevention initiatives. There is a misconception that STEPS only has 'good kids' involved. Well... every kid is a good kid when you have a community that provides them with protective factors and all kids can be at risk if we aren't paying attention. Although being part of the STEPS Youth Council builds the student's leadership skills and gives them the opportunities to have their voices heard, they are working on projects that impact the entire Southington Community. A few examples include the 84 Campaign, which was based off of our collected student data - it's not what you think, 84% don't drink which was an awareness campaign that went against the misconception that 'everyone drinks.' This group created and has had two town ordinances passed, which includes one for the placement of tobacco delivery products, that they must be behind the counter of convenience stores just like cigarettes so that our stores don't look like smoke shops (which was also based on research when advisory board members conducted environmental scans and found this really was an issue here in Southington), and the second being that all alcohol advertisement specials created by local establishments must say we ID and 21 and older on them. Just this past Tuesday, students created another public service announcement regarding what is in an e-cigarette that should be ready to air next week. These students are making long-lasting, positive changes that affect everyone in our community.

As a coalition, we have worked on numerous projects and initiatives in these past nine years and although change doesn't happen overnight, we are making a difference. As a community, we are making these issues a priority.

Here are some statistics we are proud of :

For the developmental assets, since we have started...

- The caring school climate asset has increased by 12 percentage points
- Parent involvement in schooling has increased by 10 percentage points
- Youth feeling that they are a resource in our community has increased by 9 percentage points
- Family Boundaries has increased by 9 percentage points
- Adult role models and positive peer influences have both increased by 13 percentage points
- And the equality and social justice asset has increased by 12 percentage points
- 30 day use rates for alcohol has decreased 6 percentage points, 4 percentage points for tobacco, and for marijuana and prescription drugs, the percentage has remained the same, which in today's culture, that is a positive.

- The perception of parental disapproval for alcohol has increased by 7 percentage points, meaning youth believe their parents would not approve of them using alcohol and perception of risk has increased 14 percentage points, meaning more kids think using alcohol is risky.
- A red flag in our data is that the perception of harm for marijuana has decreased by 17 percentage points since we have been surveying our students. This is no surprise again, due to our current potential legislation regarding the recreational use of marijuana. Kids do not believe marijuana is dangerous or risky. One way all of you in the audience tonight and help our efforts is to reach out to our legislators, specifically the ones on the public health committee and voice your concerns.

In addition to my work here in Southington, I am also the current President of the Connecticut Association of Prevention Professionals, which is a state-wide network of prevention teams working on the same issues. This expands our work on the local level to the state level, which is just as important. For example, if our community is doing our jobs by not providing alcohol to kids and off premise merchants (package or liquor stores) are passing compliance checks, we want to make sure our kids are not going to the town next door to buy their alcohol.

Our overall goal is to provide our community, parents and educators with the best resources to reduce the impact of substance abuse and empower young people to live successful lives.

How can you help and what are our future plans:

In addition to our on-going initiatives that are supported by the Southington Board of Education, including our annual Prom Promise Campaign and our 5th and 8th grade transition days, letting us being part of the process when issues arise is a start. We are collaborating with the Southington Police Department and the Administration at Southington High School on March 15th for a parent educational awareness event on current alcohol and drug trends, followed by a resource fair with our partners such as Wheeler Clinic, the Connecticut Clearinghouse, Rushford, The Southington and State Police, Youth Services, The CT Association of Prevention Professionals (CAPP). CAPP will be debuting their Hidden in Plain Site backpack, which is a backpack of filled with current items kids might have to hide their substances in, such as a hair brush that opens from the top to conceal marijuana or a Pringles can that opens from the bottom that doesn't really have Pringles inside. Flyers for the event will be sent out through the SHS Administration and can be found on our website, www.southingtonsteps.org

In addition, we have met with Mr. Connellan and Mr. MaDancy regarding professional development for staff in regards to current drug trends and getting updated information to health class professionals on an on-going basis. We also want to hear from you and the Southington Public Education staff. You are the ones working day in and out with students. How can we be more of a resource for you?

All of us are here tonight because we care about the kids in this community. Although we have successes, we certainly have our work cut out for us. Is substance abuse still a concern in our community? Absolutely. Our coalition and community partners have no illusions that it's not. We know the difficulty of the task of changing community norms, both attitudes and behaviors, and decreasing youth substance abuse is something that will not happen over- night - but with our efforts and the support of community stakeholders like yourselves, we are going to continue to make the difference on the local level.