HHS SCHOOL COUNCIL MINUTES

October 21, 2020 (5 PM) via Zoom

Members in attendance: D. Comer (Gr. 12), S. Cyr (Parent), R. Estes (Parent), G. Garland (Faculty), J. Hoguest (Adjustment Counselor), B. Holleran (Staff), L. Jefford (Gr. 11), B. Louchheim (Faculty), J. McPhillips (Community Representative), C. Morley (Community Representative), P. Struzziero (Faculty), K. Sutton (Parent), P. Swanson (Community Representative) & R. Swanson (Principal) - 14 total.

Absent: E. Bienfang (Parent), E. Cavanaugh (Gr. 11) & M. Melendes (Parent) - 3 total.

1 - INTRODUCTIONS

All members in attendance (14 total) introduced themselves.

2 - OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL COUNCIL

R. Swanson described the Council's origins and summarized its main functions.

3 - REVIEW OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

RS led a review of the most recent School Improvement Plan for the 2019-2020 school year:

1. Explore the possibility of expanding the "Freshman Advisory" program in order to serve students in other grades.
2. Systematically review Hingham High School graduation requirements.
3. Bolster the cultural proficiency of HHS students and staff.
4. Strengthen the school's commitment to (and practice of) "Environmental Stewardship" as a Core Value.

The current School Improvement Plan for the 2020-2021 school year includes three goals:

1. Promote a greater sense of safety for all members of the school community.
2. Expand and improve the effective use of technology.
3. Bolster the school's commitment to and practice of "Environmental Stewardship" as a Core Value.

4 - ACTIVITY & DISCUSSION

The group completed a brainstorming session in which all members contributed to an interactive Google Doc. The completed document is attached as an addendum below.

5 - HHS UNITY PROJECT

RS explained that a new task force will seek to promote a more inclusive school community by confronting issues of racism, prejudice and bias at HHS. A first meeting will be held virtually on Election Day (Nov. 3rd) at 9 AM; subsequent afternoon meetings will be held in late November, mid-December and early January; another longer workshop will be held on MLK Day (Jan. 18th). The group will include students, teachers and administrators. It will 1) develop the first draft of an action plan to be shared with the faculty on Jan. 20th; 2) refine the plan; and 3) work on aspects of the plan's implementation.

6 - UPCOMING MEETINGS

Next HHS School Council meetings: 11/18/20, 12/16/20, 1/20/21, 2/24/21, 3/17/21, 4/28/21, 5/19/21, 6/16/21

Addendum

School Improvement Goal #1 -

Promote a greater sense of safety for all members of the school community.

Activity # 1

	What do you mean when you say "safety"?
1	Feeling comfortable being authentic
2	No one will harm me emotionally or physically. I think ensuring the former is the priority here as the latter is pretty decent for most in our town. There is a lot of harm occurring that you can't see and especially that people do not believe when they hear it. Believe people when they tell you they are harmed. When we believe people, they will feel safer.
3	The removal of anxiety/worry that clouds one's mind about having reassurance that everything will be okay. Knowing that nothing out of the ordinary will occur and disrupt the wellbeing on a mental, emotional, or physical level. Protection that goes more than just saying and putting an effort into
4	Peaceful/mindful space
5	Safety can mean multiple things, it can mean security for some, belonging for others, Especially now with COVID-19 the school is doing everything they can to make sure everybody in the school is as safe as they can be while at school. I think there are plenty of the normal safety precautions but safety is not always the number of cameras a school has. We should be asking if every student feels comfortable while at school and if the answer is no we need to find out why and address the problem.
6	I wonder if the most important element of safety at HHS isn't physical safety (locks, police officers, cameras, social distancing protocols, contact tracing) but students' perceptions that they are safe and encouraged to explore their identities and to try new things in a positive, supportive environment.
7	When all students and staff feel comfortable sharing and expressing themselves. Social & emotional health and well-being is often overlooked and if people do not feel safe in school they cannot teach or learn.
8	Being comfortable enough in surroundings so you can do what needs to be done - be a student, be a working person, be a parent, be a community member - whatever - without worrying that you have to watch out for negative consequences happening to you for any reason.
9	comfortable with surroundings
10	Calm and relaxed
11	Physical safety but, equally important, emotional safety and a sense of confidence that you will be accepted and respected by other members of the community. Also: a

	willingness to take risks and express your views. And a belief that the community will be open to change.
12	To feel comfortable and secure physically and emotionally, and that your needs will be listened to with respect, and that you will be supported by the entirety of the school in any situation
13	As a parent I think of safety as the daily groundwork of seeing a happy student.. Developing the student by creating confidence to learn and fully utilize the resources available at HHS could only result if the student feels good about themselves both physically and emotionally. Confidence seems to be a direct result of safety.
14	The confidence to say and express oneself without feeling cornered or shut down; also freedom from physical harm. I'd been thinking of this from the student side, but Ben's (?) point about being able to feel safe in one's roles outside the building as well is equally important.
16	Comfort being oneself without concern of criticism or retribution from those who have differing views or approaches; acceptance and respect from those in positions of authority
17	A school community that provides an emotional and respectful culture.

Discussion points:
"Nothing out of the ordinary" (point #3 above) - sums it up well
Everybody needs to feel comfortable expressing themselves
Lack of validation sometimes for students; views must be validated and heard to promote safety
Inherent subjectivity of "safety" - difference in perceptions

Activity # 2

	If you can, please describe a time when you felt "*safe*" in our school community.
1	The building feels welcoming to community members--accessible while still being secure. That comes from spending time in the building, as a parent, and with this year's safety protocols in place limiting visitors, that will be difficult to replicate.
2	At XC meets. I know a lot of those kids and their parents so that makes me feel safe. Much easier to feel safe when you know people.
3	This is no one time but the relationships that are made with teachers when I see one of my freshman teachers or sophomore teachers and I have a conversation with them. I think a lot of students would agree when they have bonded with a teacher or teachers and they can have a conversation with them or see them in the hallway it provides a sense of community in the high school and lets kids feel more safe for example if they are talking to a teacher maybe they have never met before it can be easier to break the ice making it feel safe for the student.
4	On August 27th I felt safe when Rick extended our faculty meeting from 60 minutes

	to 150 minutes to field teachers' questions about COVID safety protocols. I remember not feeling safe in January 2009 when our faculty meeting, our required once a month meeting to help us achieve our school improvement goals and get better at teaching, was watching the inauguration of President Obama. I usually vote for Republicans, but that's not something you want to say out loud in a school, especially on that day. If you believe in local control and low taxes, then the perception is that you are a misogynist and a racist.
5	This will seem odd but I felt safest in the building after our intruder training. I felt as though I had some control of the situation and understanding of possible plans for dealing with dangerous situations.
6	On one occasion I was in a very delicate situation with a student and there were as many people as needed there as backup waiting just outside the room, and back up for the back up, and it was clearly the situation that needed all hands on deck and we received that support fully
7	Feeling safe at the school begins with the front door. It becomes very obvious as you try to gain entrance to the school that physical safety is a priority.
8	I remember the lockdown last fall when the school received a prank call that set off some real fears in the short term. Our on-site SRO responded with sound guidance within 30 seconds and members of local law enforcement arrived on-site within three minutes to help us ensure the safety of our students and staff.
9	I see the current state of high school experience to be 100x better than that of a 1980's high school experience when hazing and upperclassmen reigned over the school. As a parent, I see this experience to be way better already. Perfect? No, but way better than it used to be. What I mean by this is society evolves. We get better with each generation.
10	Probably silly, but every time I'm out walking, either in the halls but especially around town, and a student voluntarily calls out a hello. Also every time I can turn to a colleague and ask for help.
11	At any one of last year's Friday night football games among friends, students and other residents in the stands supporting our team.
12	I am speaking from the experience of my Latinx children who are now adults. My daughter never felt comfortable at Hingham High School. She was interested in art and for her there seemed to be a void at the time at the school. My son was a successful wrestler and that program gave him a sense of well-being which extended to some other aspects of school life.

Activity # 3

	If you can, please describe a time when you did not feel "*safe*" in our school community.

1	Receiving a text from my sons that the school was in lockdown due to a knife wielding kid in 2018?
2	There is only one time I really did not feel safe and that was in freshman year when we had a lockdown in the middle of the day and the SWAT team had to come in and we could not leave our classrooms. Even then my feeling of being unsafe was brief because I had built a relationship with my study teacher and the peers in my study. It definitely made the room feel more safe because everyone knew each other and we were comfortable around each other.
3	Not sure that I have ever felt unsafe at HHS. The digital world does concern me, however, as it is very easy to gang up on kids via social media.
4	In the past two weeks, HHS administrators have encountered frustration in trying to get Instagram to shut down some offensive sites that list hurtful rumors about our students (mostly ninth graders). I am frustrated by our inability to 1) identify the people responsible for the harmful site and 2) get a giant corporation like Instagram to take action. I know the sites are harming our students emotionally but have very limited ability to affect the situation.
5	When I was in a tense argument with another faculty member about a disagreement. Other times I have had issues on "safety" is during emotional class discussions. I am nervous about how other students might feel during that discussion and if they feel safe.
6	To be honest, mostly I never feel terribly unsafe. I blend right in. More worried about others.
7	I can't remember exactly when but there was a lockdown a few years ago that gave me a different feeling than usual, just the energy around it felt more authentic
8	I don't think I have ever felt safe in Hingham. I get a lot of looks and a lot of glares. I feel more safe surrounded by the people I associate with myself more than the school. My experience at the high school has been through ups and downs, with a majority of the downs happening in the beginning. This year by far is off to a good start in comparison to the others.
9	Kinda right now. Aside from all the covid issues, I don't get as great a sense of what the kiddos are thinking, how they're reacting, and to me, that's always been how I gauge the safety level of the school. When I don't know that, I don't know quite how to react.
10	Generally, a feeling of helplessness and lack of the ability to do anything to help facilitate getting back to a normal educational experience for the students.
11	During times when both students were bullied.

Activity # 4 - Please complete the following sentence.

	To become *safer*, HHS needs to….
1	Show their students and faculty that they are significant no matter when and where they are
2	Find a way for each student to feel comfortable being themselves. Through teacher or upper class mentoring, it is important for all students to feel that they are part of a special community that they are most proud.
3	We need to be able to in the best way we can make every student feel like they belong can express themselves.
4	Agree with #3
5	Evolve. Know that we strive for a better tomorrow. Unfortunately, it is not a light switch to just turn it around. Communicate, educate, tolerate.
6	Do whatever we can to encourage dialogue, self-expression, and trust, and through a variety of formats. Book groups will only get the kids who like to read. I'm a big advisory supporter, so kids can talk in smaller groups, where, hopefully, some trust gets built. I also well remember a pep rally from my own high school where it wasn't just about the athletes, but everyone. We were all asked to come onto the floor, form into circles and figure out a way to have everyone sit without anyone's bum touching the ground. Won't work in covid, but it was cool to see everyone working together and needing to support each other. People talked about that for months.
7	More affirmative and independent outreach from faculty and counselors to students to ensure each has a solid relationship with at least one faculty member or administrator. There are still students flying under the radar with the "popular" or more outgoing kids getting most of the attention. Maybe develop a student/faculty mentor program.
8	Hire a more diverse staff. People from different cultures (racial and class) bring different experiences for the purpose of mentoring students.

Note: Time constraints prevented full attention to the final question.