

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, June 10, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in the library Coginchaug Regional High School.

Board of Education Members Present: Mrs. Petrella, Mrs. Cowan, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Moore, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Darcy, Mrs. Caramanello, and Mr. Konstantino.

Board of Education Members Absent: Mr. Stone and Mr. DelVecchio

Administration Present: Dr. Leggett, Superintendent of Schools and Mrs. Neubig, Director of Finance

Mr. Moore called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda

Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Cowan, to approve the agenda as presented.

All in favor of approving the agenda as presented: Mrs. Petrella, Mrs. Cowan, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Moore, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Darcy, Mrs. Caramanello, and Mr. Konstantino. Motion passed.

Presentation

A. Lyman 3rd Graders and Frog Research

A group of third-grade students from John Lyman School presented the results of their EL Literacy research unit, "Adaptations in the Wide World of Frogs." During the project, students acted as scientists, researchers, writers, and presenters by investigating different frog species, learning about their habitats, life cycles, adaptations, and survival strategies. They developed skills in critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, research, writing, and public speaking.

Students shared excerpts from essays and books they created about various frogs, including red-eyed tree frogs, poison dart frogs, wood frogs, and bullfrogs. They discussed unique adaptations such as the bright warning colors of poison dart frogs, the wood frog's ability to survive freezing temperatures through a natural antifreeze process, and the diverse diets and habitats of different frog species. Students also created frog trading cards highlighting interesting facts, such as glass frogs being transparent and goliath frogs being the largest frogs in the world.

In addition to informational writing, students produced visual projects including black-glue frog artwork and habitat models. They also wrote fictional "pourquoi" stories, which explain why something in nature is the way it is. One student shared a creative story about how golden dart frogs became golden after being covered in pollen.

Following the third-grade frog presentation, Board of Education members praised the students for their knowledge, confidence, and preparation. Board members asked questions about the students' projects and invited students to display their frog books and artwork.

Students enthusiastically answered questions about frogs, including how bullfrogs sound, how frogs catch insects with their tongues, and the differences between frogs and toads. One student explained that toads spend more time on land while frogs are often found in water, while another shared the observation that all toads are frogs, but not all frogs are toads. The students demonstrated a strong understanding of the material and confidently responded to follow-up questions. When asked why frogs are important, a student explained that frogs help control insect populations and that without them insects could become overwhelming. The discussion included some lighthearted humor about whether frogs could be taught to make coffee.

Board members commended the third-grade teachers for creating an engaging project and preparing students so well. They highlighted the students' ability to present publicly, answer questions thoughtfully, and demonstrate their learning. The presentation concluded with additional praise for the students' excellent work and curiosity, including a question about whether they had gone outside to look for frogs during their studies.

B. BOE Scholarship Recipient – Charlotte Young

The Board of Education recognized graduating senior Charlotte Young as the recipient of the Board of Education Scholarship, honoring her academic achievements, personal growth, and contributions to the school community. CRHS Principal Stone praised Charlotte for embodying the district's core ethical values and highlighted her perseverance, determination, and resilience throughout high school. Through hard work and dedication, she strengthened her academic skills, successfully transitioned from earlier support services to independent success, and earned an impressive 3.66 GPA.

In addition to her academic accomplishments, Charlotte was recognized for her active involvement in school activities, including Eco Club, serving as a class counselor, and participating as an educator. She also balanced two jobs, as a camp counselor and a hostess, demonstrating strong responsibility, leadership, and time-management skills. An administrator described her as kind, mature, compassionate, and someone who consistently has a positive impact on others.

Charlotte shared that she plans to attend Southern Connecticut State University and pursue a degree in social work. When asked whether she might someday return to work in the district, she said it was a possibility she would keep in mind. She also discussed her plans to continue working at summer camp and maintain part-time employment while focusing on her college studies.

Board members congratulated Charlotte on her accomplishments, thanked her for a thoughtful thank-you letter she had written, and expressed confidence that she would continue making a positive difference in the lives of others through her future career in social work. They wished her success as she begins the next chapter of her education and career.

C. Regional School District 13 Retirees

Regional School District 13 recognized three employees retiring at the end of the school year for their years of dedicated service to students and the district.

The first retiree recognized was Doug Wipfler, who was unable to attend the meeting. Mr. Wipfler served as a job coach at MTA since 2013, supporting students in workplace experiences, life skills training, and transition programming. Mr. Brough noted that he has been an integral part of the MTA program and will be greatly missed in retirement.

The second retiree honored was Cheryl Warriner, who joined the district in 2023 as a teaching assistant at Brewster School. Brewster Principal Deb Murray praised Cheryl's selflessness, flexibility, and dedication, highlighting how she willingly stepped into a kindergarten teaching role when needed and consistently put students and colleagues first. Ms. Warriner was described as a reliable, patient, and positive presence whose extensive teaching experience benefited both students and staff. She also served as a mentor and trusted resource for fellow educators. Ms. Murray thanked her for her contributions and wished her happiness in retirement, including spending time with family and enjoying activities such as Camp Nerden.

The final retiree recognized was Greg Morrone, who joined the district in 2005 as a physical education teacher at Memorial School and spent nearly two decades serving students before moving to Strong Middle School. Strong Middle School Principal Dave Kimball spoke about Mr. Morrone's extraordinary impact on students and staff, describing how students of all ages regularly stop to greet him, give him high-fives, and seek him out because of the positive relationships he built throughout his career. He was praised for his contagious energy, genuine care for others, and commitment to ensuring that students and colleagues felt supported. Mr. Kimball noted that the connections he formed with students will have a lasting impact long after his retirement.

Following the recognition of retiring physical education teacher Mr. Morrone, two students delivered heartfelt tributes highlighting the impact Mr. Morrone had on his students. The students described him as more than just a teacher, praising his kindness, helpfulness, sense of fun, and ability to inspire others. They congratulated him on his retirement, joking that school was now "dismissed forever" for him.

In his remarks, Mr. Morrone expressed gratitude to the district, his colleagues, and the community for their support throughout his career. He gave special thanks to his mentor, Mr. Brough, whom he identified in the audience, and reflected on how much District 13 has meant to him. Mr. Morrone also thanked his wife for her support and emphasized the district's commitment to always putting students first. He concluded by expressing his desire to return and see the new school gymnasium once it is completed, and Mr. Moore assured him that he would be invited to the opening. The exchange ended on a warm and appreciative note, with board members sharing personal anecdotes and thanking him for his years of service and wishing him well in retirement.

The board expressed its gratitude to all three retirees for their service, dedication, and positive influence on the district and its students, and wished them well in retirement.

D. Recognition of Outgoing Board Members

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education formally recognized Maura Caramanello for her years of dedicated service as she concluded her tenure on the board. Through a formal resolution, the board acknowledged Mrs. Caramanello's service since 2019 and expressed gratitude for her commitment to the children, families, and communities of Durham and Middlefield. The resolution stated that her dedication, sound judgment, and contributions would be remembered by fellow board members, the towns she served, and the students whose education she helped support. Mrs. Cowan highlighted the valuable perspective Mrs. Caramanello brought as an educator, noting that she consistently viewed issues through the lens of student access, educational quality, and staff support. Her thoughtful and constructive input was recognized as having helped shape board decisions and would serve as an example for future public servants. The resolution also praised her attention to fiscal responsibility, efforts to control costs and prevent waste, and unwavering focus on the well-being of district students. In addition, the board recognized her extensive work on numerous committees, including Finance, Human Resources, Policy, Safety, and Student Achievement, where she contributed significant time and effort beyond regular board responsibilities. The Board of Education concluded by expressing its sincere appreciation for Mrs. Caramanello's unselfish service and acknowledging the positive impact she made on the district's mission. Mrs. Cowan stated that her work brought pride to the community and benefited hundreds of students, leaving a lasting legacy within Regional School District 13.

After receiving the Board of Education's recognition, Mrs. Caramanello thanked her fellow board members and community members, stating that it had been both an honor and a privilege to represent Middlefield since 2019. She expressed pride in advocating for the town's families, students, educators, and schools during her years of service. Board members responded with appreciation for her dedication and reflected on the unique circumstances of her tenure. Mr. Roraback recalled campaigning for her reelection during the COVID-era period, describing it as a particularly unusual and challenging time for public service. He noted that together they navigated significant district challenges, including numerous virtual meetings and the process of hiring superintendents, while continuing to support the district's mission. The exchange concluded with board members thanking Maura for her service, leadership, and commitment to the district, recognizing the important role she played during a period of significant change and challenge for Regional School District 13.

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education formally honored James Roraback for his service as he concluded his tenure on the board after serving since 2017. Through a formal resolution, the board recognized Mr. Roraback's dedication to the students, families, and communities of Durham and Middlefield. Mrs. Petrella praised his positive attitude, sound judgment, and commitment to public service, noting that his contributions would be remembered by fellow board members, district residents, and the students whose education he helped support. The resolution highlighted Mrs. Roraback's consistent attendance and active participation at board and committee meetings, where he regularly provided thoughtful and relevant insights. Mrs. Petrella emphasized that he could always be counted on to step forward when needed and that his reliability and commitment made him a valued colleague and leader. Mr. Roraback was also recognized for bringing his classroom experiences and educational perspective into board discussions, helping inform decision-making with practical knowledge of teaching and learning. Mrs. Petrella described him as friendly, approachable, and genuinely interested in

supporting both students and fellow board members. In addition to serving on numerous committees, including Educational Resources, District Climate, Student Achievement, Utilization, and Well-Being, the board noted that Mr. Roraback frequently attended subcommittee meetings even when he was not a member, demonstrating an exceptional level of dedication and engagement. The Board of Education concluded by expressing its sincere gratitude for Mr. Roraback's years of selfless service, recognizing the significant role he played in advancing the district's mission and improving educational opportunities for students. Mrs. Petrella stated that his leadership, work ethic, and commitment had brought pride to the community and left a lasting positive impact on Regional School District 13.

Following the Board of Education's recognition, Mr. Roraback offered brief remarks reflecting on his time serving the district and his lifelong connection to the community. Humbly accepting the recognition, Mr. Roraback suggested that the praise was generous and emphasized that his service was motivated by appreciation for the district that shaped him. Having attended Regional School District 13 schools from kindergarten through high school, he reflected on the positive influence of the teachers, staff, and community members who supported him throughout his education. Mr. Roraback stressed that education extends beyond the schools themselves and depends on the strength of the entire community. He described the district as special because of the people who invest in students' success and help create a supportive environment for learning and growth. He also shared fond memories of attending high school and meeting students from Durham, noting that bringing students together from different communities was one of the most valuable aspects of the regional school experience. He expressed enthusiasm for the district's future plans to create even greater cohesion among students and communities, describing those efforts as a significant benefit for future generations. Reflecting on his own experience, Mr. Roraback said he felt well prepared by the district for both college and career opportunities. After graduating from college, he chose to return home, a decision he attributed in part to the strong foundation and positive experiences he received through the district and community. He concluded by expressing gratitude to the entire school district and community, describing his board service as an opportunity to give back to a place that had given him so much.

Before the discussion of Restorative Practices, Dr. Leggett, through the help of an administrator, announced the recipient of Regional School District 13 Teacher of the Year Award. This honor is recognizing Jessica Biancardi, 5th Grade Teacher at Strong Middle School.

E. Restorative Practices and Empathy in Art

The board received a presentation on the district's restorative practices initiative, which is centered on teaching core ethical values through authentic classroom experiences. This year's focus is on kindness through empathy, and each art teacher is leading an empathy-themed art project. Selected student artwork will be displayed in local businesses throughout Durham and Middlefield during the coming school year.

Amy Schaefer, Strong Middle School Art Teacher, began by expressing her appreciation for departing board members Mrs. Caramanello and Mr. Roraback. She recalled first becoming involved with board subcommittee work many years ago and meeting Mr. Roraback through that process, while later getting to know Mrs. Caramanello after she joined the board in 2019. She described both board members as familiar and welcoming faces at board and subcommittee meetings, noting that their support and encouragement had always been appreciated. She offered special thanks to Mr. Roraback, calling him a

champion and steadfast supporter throughout her involvement with the district, and said she was saddened to see him leave. Mrs. Schaefer described how she integrated the empathy project into her eighth-grade art curriculum. Initially concerned about fitting the project into an already full curriculum and helping middle school students understand a complex concept like empathy, she intentionally spent several weeks building students' understanding through discussion, restorative circles, and reflection before beginning the artwork. Students created printmaking projects accompanied by artist statements explaining how their work represented empathy.

Mrs. Schaefer shared several student reflections that demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of empathy. One student created a sun with a calm exterior and chaotic interior to symbolize how people often hide their true feelings, while another described empathy as a light that comforts and warms others. She noted that the project led to meaningful discussions among students and that the language of empathy extended beyond the assignment itself. Students began using phrases such as "walking in someone else's shoes" and calling out situations as "not very empathetic," demonstrating that they had internalized the concept.

The project also provided students with a safe way to express emotions and perspectives that might otherwise remain unspoken. The teacher emphasized that restorative practices are most effective when integrated authentically into learning rather than taught as isolated lessons. She explained that empathy is a skill that builds trust, strengthens relationships, and helps students feel seen, heard, and valued.

Dr. Leggett praised Mrs. Schaeffer's enthusiasm and willingness to pilot the project, noting that she immediately embraced the idea and recognized its potential to establish a positive framework for the entire quarter. The discussion concluded with excitement about future projects focused on other core values such as respect and courage. Mrs. Schaeffer noted that the project format could easily be adapted for different themes, while another art teacher at the high school, Mr. Ryan Bothamley, is already creating a large collaborative batik quilt project that will highlight future restorative values and be displayed in the community.

F. Purpose, Vision, and Planning Draft

Dr. Leggett unveiled the first public draft of Region 13's comprehensive mission, vision, and strategic planning framework, describing it as the culmination of a year-long effort that began even before being hired for the position. The development process included extensive stakeholder engagement through 21 focus groups involving students, staff, parents, guardians, community members, business leaders, and Chamber of Commerce representatives. Surveys, review of prior district planning work, best-practice research, and follow-up meetings at each school were also conducted to ensure broad participation and continuity with past efforts.

The district's existing mission statement was retained because stakeholders felt it continued to accurately reflect the district's purpose: Empowering all students to thrive and contribute as global citizens through engagement and authentic learning experiences.

The new framework consists of four interconnected components:

- Mission (Purpose): The district’s enduring “North Star.”
- Vision of a Graduate: A promise to students, families, and the community about the knowledge, skills, and attributes students will develop.
- Vision of Instruction: The district’s commitment to providing the learning experiences necessary to achieve that promise.
- Strategic Plan: A five-year roadmap for implementation.

The Vision of Instruction identifies five commitments that will guide teaching and learning: instruction will be rigorous, authentic, responsive, inclusive, and coherent.

The Vision of a Graduate is organized around a tree metaphor. The district’s longstanding core ethical values form the roots, reflecting the strong community support for those values. The trunk combines essential attributes and durable skills, while the branches represent five core competencies that students will continuously develop throughout their educational journey: Growth-Oriented Learner, Innovative Solution Seeker, Responsive and Self-Directed Navigator, Conscientious Community Champion, and Purposeful Communicator and Collaborator. The first area of focus will be the Growth-Oriented Learner competency, which emerged as the strongest theme across all stakeholder feedback. Emphasis will be placed on productive struggle, resilience, curiosity, learning from challenges, and developing lifelong learning habits.

The five-year strategic plan is organized around four permanent pillars: Climate and Culture, Community Connections, Student Achievement, and Resources. In addition, two rotating priority areas were identified: Expanding and refining high school pathways and supporting a successful transition to Three Oaks Memorial School.

Dr. Leggett described the plan’s guiding philosophy as “Think Big, Act Small, Learn Fast,” emphasizing that ambitious goals are achieved through manageable, strategic steps. Objectives have been carefully sequenced over multiple years to avoid overwhelming staff and to ensure that initiatives build logically upon one another.

The draft plan will now be shared publicly for feedback through community outreach, including informational videos and direct communication with focus group participants. The board is expected to review feedback throughout the summer, with the goal of formally adopting the plan by August so implementation can begin during the 2026–27 school year.

Board members praised both the process and the final product. Mr. Brough highlighted the broad stakeholder involvement, thoughtful sequencing of goals, and the clarity the plan provides about district priorities. Dr. Leggett noted that the plan helps reassure staff and community members that the district is not trying to accomplish everything at once, but instead has established a clear, deliberate roadmap for future growth. Mrs. Neubig also emphasized that the process was highly collaborative and kept student outcomes at the center of decision-making. The planning effort was described as reflective, inclusive, and grounded in stewardship of the entire school community.

Dr. Leggett explained that the strategic plan was informed by an extensive engagement process that included 21 focus groups with roughly a dozen participants each, surveys, and input from students,

families, staff, community members, and business leaders. Dr. Leggett discussed plans to distribute the final document broadly, with particular attention to sharing it directly with focus group participants who had invested significant time in the process. Mr. Roraback raised questions about access to supporting materials, including a spreadsheet containing survey and focus group data, and whether newly elected board member Tim Viens would have access to the document. Dr. Leggett clarified that this presentation served as the public unveiling of the work and that the materials would become publicly available following the meeting.

Public Comment

A. In-person public comment

There was no in-person public comment.

B. Remote public comment

Dennis Boehm, a Durham parent, spoke during public comment regarding the district's early kindergarten admission process. The parent expressed concern about the process and the lack of local child care and preschool options. He believes the process for early admission screening creates unintended burdens for families who must secure another year of childcare or preschool services. He urged the Board of Education to review the early admission process and evaluate whether it is being administered appropriately and fairly.

Approval of Minutes

A. Board of Education Minutes - District Meeting - May 4, 2026

B. Board of Education Minutes - Special Meeting - May 11, 2026

C. Board of Education Minutes - Regular Meeting - May 13, 2026

Mrs. Cowan made a motion, seconded by Dr. Darcy, to approve the Board of Education Meeting Minutes from May 4, May 11, and May 13, 2026.

All in favor of approving the May 4, May 11, and May 13, 2026 Meeting Minutes as presented: Mrs. Petrella, Mrs. Cowan, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Moore, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Darcy, Mrs. Caramanello, and Mr. Konstantino. Motion passed.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Leggett provided several updates and recognitions from across the district. She highlighted the recent "Go Baby Go" event at Strong Middle School, praising teacher Mr. Mongillo, students, and staff for their work adapting ride-on vehicles for children with mobility challenges. Dr. Leggett described the event as an inspiring and memorable experience and Mrs. Cowan and Dr. Leggett encouraged others to attend future events.

Dr. Leggett also celebrated student success in the local America 250 competition, conducted in partnership with the Town of Middlefield. Essay award recipients included Aviana Demers (Grade 5), Kaiya Ayotte (Grade 6), Ainsley Ulstad (Grades 7–8), and special award recipient Kaitlyn Burritt. Art winners included Aria Gore of Brewster School and Evelyn Chapman of John Lyman School. Dr. Leggett noted strong participation, with 16 essays submitted from Strong School and 61 pieces of artwork from Lyman and Brewster.

The board received preliminary results from a survey of families regarding high school choice. Approximately 40% of eligible families responded. Among respondents, the most important factors influencing high school selection were preparation for a four-year college, a safe and supportive school environment, and the availability of academic, extracurricular, athletic, and elective opportunities. When asked about anticipated high school enrollment, 71% indicated Cuginchaug Regional High School as their preferred choice, while 11% selected vocational-technical schools, 11% private schools, 5% were undecided, and 2% preferred magnet schools. Dr. Leggett noted that the results were generally consistent with prior expectations.

Dr. Leggett also reminded board members of several upcoming governance matters. She stressed the importance of attendance at the upcoming joint Board of Education and Building Committee meeting, followed by the district meeting, because a quorum would be required for key decisions. Additional updates included plans to schedule a second summer session with CABA representatives, the continuing vacancy on the Board of Education for a Middlefield representative, and ongoing efforts to improve district communications. Construction updates continue to be posted online, QR codes linking to project information were included in the Town of Middlefield newsletter, and community members can now use a QR code to sign up for ParentSquare communications. Mrs. Cowan concluded by discussing the challenges of maintaining a quorum during the summer months and the board reviewed meeting schedules for the following week.

Chairman Update

Mr. Moore reflected on the recent budget meeting, acknowledging the challenges surrounding the budget process while expressing hope that voters would support the proposal. He noted that, ideally, the district would be moving forward with its original budget request and suggested that future budget efforts should be more closely tied to the district's emerging strategic plan. He emphasized the importance of clearly communicating long-term goals, desired improvements, and the associated costs before presenting future budget requests, allowing the community to better understand the district's vision and needs. He identified that Mr. Simmons would be aiding in next year's budget process.

A significant portion of the discussion focused on communication and community engagement. Dr. Darcy noted that she has started to see signs in the community regarding voting on the budget. Mrs. Petrella agreed that while parents generally receive information through existing channels, the district needs better ways to reach the broader community. Suggestions included expanding the use of email communications, informational videos, FAQs, and other accessible formats to explain district initiatives and budget proposals. Mrs. Cowan noted positive feedback on recent budget communications, including explanatory videos and question-and-answer materials, and encouraged using similar approaches for future projects such as the strategic plan rollout.

Mr. Moore reported that community feedback regarding the budget had been largely supportive, citing dozens of emails received in favor of moving forward. He also highlighted several recent and upcoming events, including Scholarship Night and the upcoming high school graduation ceremony. Board members briefly discussed graduation logistics and weather preparations.

Mr. Moore also shared concerns raised during a conversation with Mr. Yamartino regarding perceived tensions between Durham and Middlefield. The discussion centered on lingering frustrations related to the school budget, the school naming process, and broader perceptions of representation within the district. Dr. Darcy argued that, under the district's governance structure, Middlefield possesses significant influence because district actions can be blocked if one town fails to approve certain measures, making it inaccurate to characterize Middlefield as lacking power within the regional system. The conversation underscored ongoing challenges in maintaining community trust and unity across both towns.

Finally, Dr. Leggett noted that a meeting with attorneys regarding school building fees had been scheduled for Monday, June 15, signaling progress on an issue that had been under discussion for some time. The board members expressed optimism that the meeting would help move the matter toward resolution before transitioning to the next agenda item.

Staff Report

A. Director of Finance – Kim Neubig

Mrs. Neubig presented the financial update. As of the end of May, 85% of the General Fund budget had been expended, 99.5% was either spent or encumbered, and approximately 93% of anticipated revenue had been received. Mrs. Neubig reported that staff were actively closing purchase orders and reviewing encumbrances on a daily basis as the fiscal year approached its end. She explained that the district does not carry encumbrances forward into the next fiscal year and expects to have a clearer picture of final year-end results once most staff have completed their work in late June and early July.

At the request of Mr. Moore, Mrs. Neubig also confirmed the final gross budget amount for the upcoming fiscal year as \$43,969,710. Board members thanked Mrs. Neubig for her extensive work throughout the budget development and referendum process.

New Business - Discussions and Possible Votes

A. Class Gift

Recent graduate Liam Fitzpatrick returned to address the Board of Education and provide an update on the Class of 2025's senior gift project. He began by briefly reflecting on his first year at college, describing a positive experience at the university despite the adjustment from a smaller high school environment. He shared that he had remained connected with fellow Cuginchaug graduates and was enjoying campus life.

Liam then outlined the Class of 2025's proposal to renovate and enhance the existing welcome sign located near the school's main entrance. The project would preserve the sign's current location and

overall appearance while replacing the existing structure with a more durable design featuring stone pillars and a refurbished sign panel. He emphasized that the intent is not to replace the original gift from the Class of 1994, but rather to honor and preserve it. The proposed design would acknowledge both the Class of 1994, which originally donated the sign, and the Class of 2025, which is funding the renovation. He explained that the senior class believes this approach maintains tradition, respects the original contribution, and symbolizes continuity and unity across generations of graduates.

Liam also advocated for keeping the sign in its current location, noting its visibility to students, families, staff, and visitors as well as its historical significance as the site originally selected by the Class of 1994. He argued that relocating the sign would diminish the connection between the original gift and the updated version.

Board members confirmed that they had reviewed the project rendering and proposal. It was noted that the original contractor estimate would likely need to be refreshed because the proposal had expired after 30 days, though no substantive changes to the design were anticipated. Minor corrections were also identified in the rendering, including updating the class designation and ensuring that recognition of both the Classes of 1994 and 2025 is properly included.

Following Lam's presentation, Mr. Moore discussed the proposal and clarified that the board's previous conversation had not centered on removing the original Class of 1994 gift. Rather, the primary discussion had been whether the sign should remain in its current location or be relocated to an area near the gazebo where families often gather for photographs and events such as graduation ceremonies. Liam iterated that the proposal does not replace the existing sign. Instead, the original wooden sign would remain intact, with the project focusing on adding stone support pillars and refurbishing the existing structure. He emphasized that the lettering, design, and overall appearance would remain substantially the same, preserving the character of the original gift while improving its durability and appearance.

Dr. Darcy responded favorably to the clarification, expressing appreciation for the effort to preserve and honor the Class of 1994's contribution while extending its lifespan. Several members commented that the proposal struck a thoughtful balance between respecting tradition and allowing the Class of 2025 to leave its own legacy. There was discussion about whether members of the Class of 1994 should be consulted, but the general sentiment was that incorporating recognition of both classes demonstrated respect rather than replacement.

Mrs. Cowan also noted that gifts such as signs naturally age over time and may require restoration or enhancement to remain functional and attractive. Mrs. Petrella remarked that future graduating classes may someday undertake similar improvements and add their own contributions while continuing to acknowledge previous donors. The discussion concluded with broad support for the concept.

Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Cowan, to accept the Class of 2025 Class gift.

All in favor of accepting the class gift from the Class of 2025 as presented: Mrs. Petrella, Mrs. Cowan, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Moore, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Darcy, Mrs. Caramanello, and Mr. Konstantino. Motion passed.

B. Employee Resolution Procedure

The board considered a new Employee Resolution Procedure designed to provide a clear process for addressing workplace concerns and conflicts among district staff. Dr. Leggett explained that the procedure was modeled after a similar community and parent resolution process implemented earlier in the year, which has encouraged more direct communication and problem-solving at the lowest appropriate level. The employee version was developed through a collaborative process that included drafting by administration, review meetings with union leadership and district administration, feedback from union members, multiple revisions, and follow-up discussions. Dr. Leggett noted that the process had been thoroughly vetted and was ready for board approval.

Mr. Moore questioned where the procedure would be housed and agreed that it should appear both in district policy materials and within employee handbooks to ensure accessibility. Dr. Leggett emphasized that the procedure reflects a strong belief in encouraging individuals to address concerns directly with one another whenever possible while also providing a clear escalation path when issues cannot be resolved informally. She noted that the approach has already shown positive results in situations where it has been utilized.

Dr. Darcy specifically asked whether bargaining units had reviewed and supported the procedure. Dr. Leggett confirmed that every union had participated in the review process and that revisions were made in response to their feedback. Mr. Moore expressed support for having the expectations and steps documented in writing, noting the importance of fostering direct communication and face-to-face problem solving among staff.

Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to adopt the school district resolution policy for all Regional School District 13 employees as presented.

All in favor of adopting the school district resolution policy for all Regional School District 13 employees as presented: Mrs. Petrella, Mrs. Cowan, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Moore, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Darcy, Mrs. Caramanello, and Mr. Konstantino. Motion passed.

C. Action regarding the Ratification of the RSD 13 Nurses' 2026-2029 Tentative Agreement

The Board of Education considered ratification of a tentative agreement with the Regional School District 13 Nurses' Bargaining Unit covering the 2026–2029 contract period. Mr. Brough reported that negotiations had taken place over approximately four weeks and described the process as collaborative, respectful, and productive. Mr. Brough noted that both sides worked constructively toward a mutually acceptable agreement and successfully reached a tentative settlement that had already been unanimously ratified by the nurses.

The proposed contract is a three-year agreement. Health insurance contributions would remain at 15% during the first year (2026–27), increase to 15.25% in the second year, and rise to 15.5% in the final year of the contract. Mr. Brough explained that the parties also agreed to several language revisions intended to improve clarity, consistency, and efficiency within the contract document.

Other negotiated changes included adjustments to compensation for nurses covering additional duties. The agreement maintains the pool of substitute coverage days while modestly increasing the daily stipend in line with annual wage growth. Nurses who work additional hours outside their regular schedules would also receive an added stipend after exceeding a specified threshold of extra time. Mr. Brough characterized these provisions as reasonable improvements that were appreciated by bargaining unit members.

Regarding salary increases, the agreement includes annual step movement combined with a 2% general wage increase for employees on Steps 1 through 11, while Step 12 employees would receive a 3% increase.

Mr. Brough recommended approval of the agreement, describing it as fair, fiscally responsible, and beneficial to both the district and the nurses. He emphasized that both parties were satisfied with the outcome and expressed a desire to move forward with a new contract in place. Dr. Leggett added that the tentative agreement was unanimously approved by the nurses.

Mrs. Petrella made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Cowan, to accept the ratification of the RSD 13 Nurses' 2027-2030 Tentative Agreement as presented.

Mr. Moore asked for clarification regarding the reference to 51 pool days in the agreement. Mr. Brough explained that these days are used by school nurses during the summer months to perform essential duties that occur outside the regular school year. Responsibilities include preparing and organizing student medical records, transferring health information between schools as students move from one building to another, managing medication documentation, and completing other health-related tasks necessary to ensure schools are prepared for the opening of the new academic year.

Before the vote, Mr. Brough expressed appreciation for the work of Mrs. Petrella and Mr. Moore who were involved in the negotiations. He noted that they brought valuable perspectives to the bargaining process and that their contributions were greatly appreciated.

All in favor of approving the ratification of the RSD 13 Nurses' 2027-2030 Tentative Agreement as presented: Mrs. Petrella, Mrs. Cowan, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Moore, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Darcy, Mrs. Caramanello, and Mr. Konstantino. Motion passed.

D. Approve new CRHS Course: Cultural Cooking

The board reviewed a new high school elective course, Spanish Through Cultural Cooking, following a recommendation from the Student Achievement Committee. Mrs. Petrella explained that they had received detailed curriculum materials, including the scope and sequence, unit plans, essential questions, learning outcomes, standards, and instructional activities. The course is scheduled to begin in the fall and is designed as a cross-curricular experience that combines world language instruction, culinary arts, cultural studies, and elements of social studies.

The course will expose students to Hispanic cultures through the preparation and study of traditional foods from regions including Mexico, Spain, Peru, Argentina, the Caribbean, Central America, Cuba,

Colombia, and Afro-Caribbean communities. Students will learn relevant Spanish vocabulary and language skills connected to cooking and food while also exploring the history, geography, and cultural traditions associated with each region. The course will be collaboratively supported by both the Spanish teacher and the culinary arts program, creating an interdisciplinary learning experience.

Dr. Darcy, who had initially expressed reservations about the proposal, stated that discussions with the teachers helped address those concerns and reinforced the value of cross-curricular instruction as a way to make learning more relevant and engaging for students.

The board also discussed how the course would fit within graduation requirements. Dr. Leggett clarified that although the course is listed within the Spanish section of the Program of Studies and includes Spanish language instruction, it does not satisfy the district's world language graduation requirement. The course will be clearly identified as an elective. Mrs. Cowan raised questions about students who receive accommodations that exempt them from traditional language coursework and whether the class could serve as an alternative option. Dr. Darcy explained that while the course would not replace required credits, it could provide those students with practical language exposure and cultural learning opportunities in a more accessible format.

Mrs. Cowan also raised questions on balancing elective offerings with academic coursework. Dr. Leggett explained that the new class is replacing a discontinued Global Health course that could no longer be offered due to the loss of an outside partner, meaning it is not an expansion of the course catalog but rather a replacement for an existing elective slot. She also emphasized that the course was developed in response to demonstrated student interest and aligns with ongoing efforts to increase student engagement.

Mr. Konstantino noted that the course documentation listed the subject area as Spanish and questioned whether that might create confusion for students and families, particularly because the course does not satisfy the district's world language graduation requirement. Dr. Leggett explained that the issue had been discussed extensively during curriculum planning. While there was consideration of creating a separate section in the Program of Studies for electives that do not fulfill graduation requirements, this course would be the only class fitting that category. As a result, it was determined that creating an entirely separate section for a single course was not practical. Instead, the course will remain listed under the Spanish department offerings, but the course description will clearly state that it does not fulfill the world language graduation requirement. Dr. Leggett also highlighted that virtually every other elective offered by the district can be applied toward some graduation requirement, making this course unique within the current catalog.

Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to accept the approval of the new CRHS Course: Cultural Cooking.

All in favor of accepting the approval of the new CRHS Course: Cultural Cooking as presented: Mrs. Petrella, Mrs. Cowan, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Moore, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Darcy, Mrs. Caramanello, and Mr. Konstantino. Motion passed.

E. Award RFQ/P 2026-003 Materials Testing and Special Instruction Services

Mrs. Neubig presented a contract for materials testing and special inspection services for approval. Mrs. Neubig explained that these services are required as part of the construction process to ensure that building materials, structural components, and construction activities comply with applicable codes, specifications, and state construction requirements.

Mrs. Neubig noted that these services were not included within the primary construction contract and therefore required a separate procurement process. An initial request for proposals (RFP) generated only one response, and district officials determined that the firm did not possess the experience necessary for the project. In addition, state school construction requirements generally require multiple bids or proposals for this type of work. As a result, the district reissued the RFP.

The second solicitation produced a qualified firm with relevant experience and an established working relationship with contractors involved in similar projects. Mrs. Neubig reported that the proposal not only met the district's qualifications and experience requirements but also came in at a lower cost than the original submission. The recommendation had already been reviewed and approved by the Building Committee, which found the firm acceptable and supported moving forward with the award.

Mr. Konstantino made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Cowan, to approve the award of RFQ/P 2026-004 Materials Testing and Special Inspection services for the Regional School District 13 school state project number 213-0051 RNB/EA to IMTL with the base bid of \$40,460.00.

All in favor of approving the award of RFQ/P 2026-004 materials testing and special inspection services for the Regional School District 13 school state project number 213-0051 RNB/EA to INTL with the base bid of \$40,460.00 as presented: Mrs. Petrella, Mrs. Cowan, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Moore, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Darcy, Mrs. Caramanello, and Mr. Konstantino. Motion passed.

F. Award ITB RSD13MPH3-003 3.04 Masonry

Mrs. Neubig presented the award for the masonry contract for the Three Oaks Memorial School renovation and addition project. Mrs. Neubig explained that this contractor had been included in the original group of bid packages presented to the board but had not received final approval at that time because additional review of the scope and qualifications was still underway. Since the initial presentation, the contractor and bid package have undergone further evaluation and vetting by the project team and the Building Committee. Following that review, the Building Committee determined that the contractor met the necessary requirements and recommended proceeding with the award.

Mr. Konstantino made a motion, seconded by Dr. Darcy, to approve the award of the Regional School District 13 School State Project number 213-0051, RNB/EA ITB RSD 13 MPH 3-003 3.04 masonry to AMI Boston Masonry and Restoration Incorporated with the base bid of \$2,272,666.00.

All in favor of approving the award of the Regional School District 13 School State Project number 213-0051, RNB/EA ITB RSD 13 MPH 3-003 3.04 masonry to AMI Boston Masonry and Restoration

Incorporated with the base bid of \$2,272,666.00 as presented: Mrs. Petrella, Mrs. Cowan, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Moore, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Darcy, Mrs. Caramanella, and Mr. Konstantino. Motion passed.

G. Policy Review

1. First read on below policies

a. FMLA 4151

Mrs. Cowan presented Policy 4151 – Family and Medical Leave (FMLA). Mrs. Cowan explained that the proposed revisions were necessary to align the district’s policy with both federal Family and Medical Leave Act requirements and Connecticut’s Paid Family and Medical Leave provisions, which operate under different rules and apply to different employee groups. During the discussion, Mrs. Cowan noted an important distinction within the district’s workforce: federal FMLA provisions primarily apply to certified teaching staff, while many other district employees fall under Connecticut’s family and medical leave framework. As a result, the policy needed to clearly address both systems and the differing eligibility requirements and benefits associated with each. Dr. Darcy commented on the complexity of administering family and medical leave regulations, particularly since state and federal laws have evolved significantly in recent years. Mrs. Cowan acknowledged that managing leave requests has become increasingly complicated and requires substantial oversight by human resources and central office staff to ensure compliance with the various legal requirements.

b. Religious Observations in Schools (new)

The board continued its first reading of a proposed new policy addressing religious accommodations and observances for students. Mrs. Cowan explained that the policy template provided multiple language options, requiring the district to select among alternative provisions covering issues such as religious observances, absences, and accommodations.

Dr. Darcy asked about highlighted sections within the draft. Dr. Leggett explained that those areas represented language still under review. One highlighted section addressed dietary accommodations, and administration is consulting with the district’s food service director to ensure that the policy language would be practical and aligned with current meal service operations.

Another highlighted section concerned religious holidays and student absences. Dr. Leggett explained that the district wanted to align the policy with existing handbook language that encourages families to notify schools in advance when students will be absent for religious observances.

Mr. Moore questioned if this would be a new policy, and Dr. Leggett clarified that this would be an entirely new district policy, rather than a revision of an existing one.

c. Live Animals in Schools Form 1 (regulations only)

d. Live Animals in Schools Form 2 (regulations only)

The board reviewed updates related to the district's Live Animals in Schools regulations. Mrs. Cowan clarified that this was not a policy change, as the board had already approved the underlying policy previously. Instead, the current review involved updates to the accompanying administrative regulations and forms used to implement the policy. The revised forms are intended to standardize requests and approvals for situations involving animals in school settings, including therapy dogs, classroom pets, educational animal presentations, and similar activities. Mrs. Cowan referenced examples ranging from therapy animals to educational programs featuring animals brought into schools for instructional purposes.

Board members were given the opportunity to discuss the first read policy proposals. Dr. Darcy raised a drafting concern regarding the section that listed specific protected religious groups and classifications. Dr. Darcy noted that while the language originated from CAFE policy guidance and included wording such as "including, but not limited to," there is always a risk that enumerating specific groups can unintentionally appear less inclusive than intended. Dr. Leggett suggested that the policy might be strengthened by using broader language referring to all protected classes rather than identifying a lengthy list of specific groups. The rationale was that such wording would remain applicable if legal definitions or protected categories change over time and would provide a more universally inclusive framework. At the same time, Dr. Darcy observed that the existing draft was notably comprehensive, pointing out that it specifically referenced the Rastafarian faith, a group that is sometimes overlooked in policy language.

There were no proposed changes or objections so the proposed policies will move onto second readings.

2. Second read and possible vote on below policies

a. Graduation Requirements 5127

The board reviewed the changes made to Graduation Requirements 5127 since the first reading. Earlier drafts had included a parent waiver requirement for students choosing to complete only three years of English rather than four. After further discussion in both the Student Achievement Committee and the Policy Committee, the waiver provision was removed due to concerns that requiring a signed waiver could create an unintended equity issue by placing additional burdens on some families. Instead, the revised language requires that families will be notified if a student elects to complete only three years of English and/or Math, ensuring that parents and guardians are informed without requiring formal approval paperwork.

b. Quorum and Voting Procedures 9367

The board also reviewed revisions to the board voting procedures policy. Dr. Leggett explained that the changes were based on guidance provided by the district's legal counsel. The primary revision addressed language that had previously stated that an abstention would effectively count toward the prevailing side of a vote. Board members noted that the prior wording had created confusion and did not accurately reflect accepted parliamentary practice. The revised language clarifies how abstentions are treated and how votes are counted, particularly in situations involving tied votes or questions about determining a majority.

Mrs. Petrella made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Cowan, to approve the Graduation Requirements 5127 and Quorum and Voting Procedures 9367 policies as presented.

All in favor of approving the policies as presented: Mrs. Petrella, Mrs. Cowan, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Moore, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Darcy, Mrs. Caramanello, and Mr. Konstantino. Motion passed.

Committee Reports

A. School Naming Committee Meeting - May 13, 2026

Mrs. Cowan provided an update from the School Naming Subcommittee, reporting that its work on selecting a name for the new Memorial School had been completed. With the board's approval of Three Oaks Memorial School as the official name, the committee's immediate responsibilities have concluded. The committee plans to reconvene in the fall to begin discussing the naming of interior spaces and rooms within the new school. Dr. Leggett has informed the media specialist to start stamping and barcoding books with the approved school name Three Oaks Memorial School.

B. Building Committee Meeting - May 20, 2026 and June 3, 2026

Mr. Moore reported that the Memorial School project is approaching a critical milestone: the development of the Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) for construction. Mr. Moore noted that significant effort has gone into refining project costs and reducing expenditures where possible in order to keep the project within the voter-approved budget cap of approximately \$76 million.

To achieve that goal, the committee has made difficult decisions regarding project scope, including the removal or deferral of several alternate items that were considered desirable but not essential. Mr. Moore acknowledged that there was discussion regarding permit fees from Middlefield during the last meeting, and those discussions are ongoing.

C. Policy Committee Meeting - May 21, 2026

Mrs. Cowan identified that there were no additional updates from the Policy Committee, as the Policy Committee conducted the first readings of the FMLA and family leave policies, Religious Observances and Accommodations, and Live Animals in Schools, which the Board had just reviewed.

D. Student Achievement Committee Meeting – May 27, 2026

Mrs. Petrella provided a report from a lengthy Student Achievement Committee meeting that covered a substantial amount of curriculum, assessment, and student achievement information.

One of the key items reviewed was the Connecticut graduation cohort data. Mrs. Petrella noted that 92.5% of Regional School District 13 students graduated within four years, compared to the statewide average of 88.9%. The data was also disaggregated by categories such as gender, race, ethnicity, and

program participation. Committee members highlighted the district's strong performance relative to state averages.

The committee also reviewed the district's Curriculum ACES audit presentation and received updates on ongoing curriculum work throughout the district. Members were provided extensive supporting materials and presentations. Mrs. Petrella encouraged board members to review the documents carefully once available, noting that the scope of the curriculum work underway is significant and that many of the details could not be fully captured during the brief report.

The committee reviewed classroom walkthrough data collected across grade levels and content areas. Mrs. Petrella emphasized that these walkthroughs were not teacher evaluations, but rather brief observational visits intended to gather information about instructional practices and learning environments. Administrators and instructional leaders would spend a few minutes in classrooms observing indicators such as Classroom culture and climate, Level of student challenge and rigor, Instructional design and lesson purpose, Student engagement, and Assessment practices and evidence of learning.

The committee also reviewed Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), though members noted that much of the discussion focused on future implementation. PLCs are expected to become a significant component of the district's strategic plan, and additional work will occur next year to make them a more operational part of district improvement efforts.

Student achievement data was another major topic. The committee reviewed SAT performance data and observed that reading scores have generally remained stable while mathematics performance continues to lag behind pre-pandemic levels and remains an area of concern. Mrs. Petrella also discussed the state's Assessment Inventory initiative, which seeks to ensure that districts are not over-testing students. The emphasis is on administering assessments only when the resulting data will be actively used to inform instruction, rather than conducting assessments simply for compliance or data collection purposes.

Mrs. Petrella noted that Dr. Leggett introduced the Strategic Plan, which was reviewed during the Board of Education meeting.

E. School District Climate Committee Meeting – June 3, 2026

Dr. Darcy provided a report on the School District Climate Committee. A significant portion of the discussion focused on improving the district's use of data. Dr. Darcy reflected on the first year of the committee and concluded that one of the most important lessons learned was the need to move beyond reviewing data and toward using data in a more operational and actionable way.

Attendance data served as a key example. While overall attendance rates appeared strong, approximately 95%, Dr. Leggett cautioned that aggregate figures can be misleading. When attendance was examined more closely, a substantial number of students had missed more than ten days of school. As a result, the district plans to disaggregate attendance data more carefully in the future to identify patterns and target interventions rather than relying solely on overall attendance percentages.

The committee also reviewed data related to challenging student behaviors. Because the district recently implemented new referral and behavior tracking processes, Dr. Darcy discussed the importance of creating more consistent definitions and expectations across schools and classrooms. Particular attention was given to subjective categories such as insubordination, where one staff member's interpretation may differ significantly from another's. The district plans to continue refining behavior definitions, referral practices, and data collection methods to improve consistency and ensure that behavioral data accurately reflects student needs and school climate trends.

The committee also spent time reviewing examples of school climate and culture surveys used by other districts. Committee members examined sample survey questions and formats as part of the district's effort to develop a consistent process for gathering feedback from students, families, and staff regarding school climate, engagement, belonging, and overall school experience. To move this work forward, a subcommittee was established to draft the district's own climate and culture survey. The intent is for Regional School District 13 to administer its survey on an every-other-year cycle, while on alternating years the district would utilize data collected through surveys conducted by the local youth services organization, DMYFS (Durham Middlefield Youth and Family Services). The subcommittee will continue refining survey questions and structure over the coming months. The expectation is that by the end of the first semester, the committee will have a draft survey ready to bring back to the full board for review, feedback, and input before implementation.

Board Communications and Professional Development

Mr. Moore discussed community feedback received regarding the proposed school budget, noting that approximately 47–48 emails had been received. According to Mr. Moore, the overwhelming majority of the messages were supportive of the budget and generally expressed appreciation for the board's work and encouragement to continue moving forward. Most responses from board leadership consisted of acknowledgements thanking residents for their feedback and indicating that their comments would be considered by the board.

One exception involved a resident who indicated an intention to vote against the budget due to concerns about transparency and communication. Mr. Moore explained that he had reached out and offered to meet with the individual to better understand those concerns and discuss them directly. However, he expressed some uncertainty about what specific actions would address the criticism, noting that broad statements about transparency can be difficult to respond to without concrete examples.

Several board members emphasized that constructive feedback is most useful when community members identify specific concerns and suggestions. Mrs. Cowan stated that the board genuinely wants to improve communication and welcomed detailed input about what information residents feel is missing or difficult to access. Examples were shared of outreach efforts already undertaken, including board member attendance at community meetings, direct conversations with residents, budget videos, FAQ documents, and other communication initiatives.

The discussion also touched on the challenge the board faced during the second budget cycle, when relatively few residents publicly articulated concerns before the vote. Dr. Darcy noted that without specific feedback, it becomes difficult to address misunderstandings or make targeted improvements.

Mrs. Cowan encouraged residents to continue engaging with the district on issues they care about and stressed that all feedback, whether supportive or critical, is valuable when it includes actionable suggestions.

Board members also discussed internal procedures for responding to public emails. Mrs. Petrella agreed that board members should be aware when responses are sent so that communication remains consistent and everyone understands what information has been shared. Mr. Moore explained that he typically responds to correspondence and copies relevant parties, while Dr. Leggett occasionally provides factual clarifications when needed.

The conversation concluded with additional ideas for strengthening communication efforts. Mr. Konstantino suggested including producing more short informational videos, creating easier-to-access web links and QR codes for district information, and continuing to use multiple communication channels to reach residents beyond the parent community. Members viewed the recent volume of public engagement around the budget as encouraging and expressed hope that those who voiced support would remain involved and participate in future district discussions and votes.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Anticipated Executive Session

Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Cowan, to move into Executive Session.

All in favor of accepting the approval to enter into Executive Session as presented: Mrs. Petrella, Mrs. Cowan, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Moore, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Darcy, and Mr. Konstantino. Motion passed.

Adjournment

Mrs. Cowan made a motion at 8:58 p.m., seconded by Dr. Darcy, to adjourn the meeting.

All in favor of adjourning the meeting: Mrs. Petrella, Mrs. Cowan, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Moore, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Darcy, and Mr. Konstantino. Motion passed and the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by Meghan Shortell-Fratantonio