

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Student Achievement Committee met in special session on Wednesday, November 5, 2025 at 4:00 p.m. in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School.

Committee members present: Mr. Moore, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Roraback, Mrs. Petrella and Dr. Darcy (remote)

Committee member absent: Mrs. Caramanello

Administration present: Dr. Leggett, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Siegel, Associate Director of Learning; Mrs. Murray, Principal of Brewster School

Mrs. Petrella called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of the Agenda

Mr. Moore made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Dahlheimer, to approve the agenda as presented.

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

Approval of Minutes – September 24, 2025

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, to approve the September 24, 2025 minutes as presented.

All in favor of approving the September 24, 2025 minutes as presented: Mr. Moore, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Roraback, Mrs. Petrella and Dr. Darcy. Motion passed.

Update on Play-Based Learning with Principal Murray

Mrs. Petrella introduced Mrs. Murray, Principal from Brewster School, to discuss the implementation strategies of play-based learning strategies at Brewster School.

Mrs. Murray emphasized that play is not simply unstructured activity but an intentional, educator-guided approach linked to academic standards and designed to foster collaboration, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking.

Play-based learning supports the upper levels of Bloom's Taxonomy—creating, evaluating, and analyzing—representing the highest levels of cognitive rigor. For example, during the *Grocery Store*

Scenario, kindergarten students demonstrated mastery of the “Make 10” math standard through hands-on, creative activities.

Mrs. Murray continued her presentation, establishing that playful learning connects directly to literacy, math, science, and social studies standards. Activities develop oral language, vocabulary, problem-solving, and real-world application. This year’s scenarios include a *Fair* project in the winter and a return of the *Grocery Store* scenario in the spring. First grade will launch its own learning scenario later in the year.

Twelve core strategies guide classroom play, each aimed at building executive functioning skills—self-regulation, working memory, and cognitive flexibility. Examples include:

Six Bricks: Students follow and give complex directions to strengthen working memory and language

Who Chooses First: Builds inhibitory control and turn-taking

Play Planning: Encourages goal-setting, literacy, and organization

Mrs. Murray explained that the strategies promote independence, patience, and problem-solving across all early grades.

Teachers collaborate with Karen Gray on executive function development and scenario design. The Brewster kindergarten team and literacy coach will present at the *University of Hartford Play Summit* in December—an important recognition of the district’s leadership in early childhood education.

Mrs. Murray thanked the board for their support and board members thanked Mrs. Murray and expressed pride in the implementation of this program, noting that other districts have visited Brewster School as the model of play-based learning.

Discussion of ML work

Dr. Leggett reported that the district has entered into a small contract with LEARN to review and strengthen systems for supporting multilingual learners (MLs). The goal is to ensure that the district’s approach is well-structured and tailored to local needs.

The district currently serves 23 multilingual learners across multiple schools. There is one ML teacher serving four schools, creating scheduling and travel challenges. The administration anticipates that a future budget request may include an assistant position to better support the program’s reach and efficiency. Board members also commended Connecticut’s Seal of Biliteracy, which recognizes graduating students proficient in two or more languages.

Course Approval – Cultural Cooking

The committee reviewed a proposal for a new elective course, *Cultural Cooking*, designed to introduce students to the foods, cultures, and languages of Spanish-speaking countries including Cuba, Colombia, Argentina, and regions across the Caribbean and Central America. The class would incorporate instruction in English and Spanish, including use of Spanish vocabulary and cultural terms.

The world language elective (that would count as a humanities credit) is intended to be accessible to students of all language levels, from beginners to advanced Spanish learners. The course aims to foster interest in world languages and cultures while promoting hands-on, project-based learning.

Members praised the course for its potential to increase student engagement and cultural understanding, noting opportunities to integrate math, reading, and cultural awareness through recipe scaling and real-world application. However, some members expressed concern about labeling the course as a *world language* elective, given its limited focus on language acquisition. Comparisons were made to the existing *World Health* elective, which also bridges world culture and language themes.

Committee members agreed the course concept holds strong value and supported allowing it to move forward for further development, with clarification on its classification and standards alignment to come. Dr. Darcy will meet with school personnel and review curriculum materials, including the Spanish 4 unit that inspired the course. The course will move forward to the next approval stages, with revisions and clarification expected in the interim.

Update on Beginning of Year Data and Accountability

Dr. Leggett presented that baseline data collection has been completed districtwide, establishing current performance levels for the new school year. Region 13's overall accountability score increased from 76 to 80, reflecting notable improvement across key performance indicators. Additionally, Memorial School was recognized as a School of Distinction under the state accountability system for growth in English Language Arts among high-needs learners—a significant achievement for both students and staff. This recognition will be formally celebrated at the next Board of Education meeting.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Adjournment

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, to adjourn the meeting.

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

Respectfully submitted by Meghan Shortell-Fratantonio