Regional School District 13 Board of Education November 11, 2026

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, November 11, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in the library Coginchaug Regional High School.

Board of Education Members Present: Mrs. Cowan, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Moore, Dr. Darcy (attended virtually), Mr. Konstantino, and Mr. Viens.
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

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

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

Presentation and Recognition

A. CRHS Student Presentation

CRHS students presented school updates to the Board. Senior Juliana Casillo reported that fall teams had a mix of strong finishes and rebuilding seasons. Girls' soccer went 11–4–1, boys' cross country placed fifth at conference, and girls' cross-country placed fourth, while boys' soccer showed promise despite a 1–14 record. Several athletes earned all-conference honors, and cross-country runners also advanced to state-level competition. Football stood at 4–3 and was preparing for its Friday game, while girls' soccer was scheduled to play in Thomaston on Saturday.

Senior Riley Dorsey highlighted events that bring the school community together. The Veterans' Day assembly honored veterans with student poetry, chorus and band performances, and veteran's Army reflections. DECA and the Blue Devil Cafe helped organize the event and served food afterward. The Cafe also hosted teacher appreciation luncheons, while the National Honor Society supported the November 14 Cog Jog to benefit a local toy drive. Other activities included a November 7 craft fair, Coginchaug welcoming eighth graders and introducing them to school clubs and sports, and the following upcoming events: Homecoming on November 21, themed "A Night in New York," and Powder Puff with a school-wide pep rally. Riley also mentioned DECA's golf tournament and a student-organized school carnival.

Senior Taylor Kestenbaum presented the first-quarter academic update. Students in grades 9–11 took the PSAT on October 28, and 11 CRHAs and two MTA students earned OSHA industry-recognized credentials. Seniors were preparing for mock interviews with school and community leaders, with Board of Education members among the volunteers.

The school also partnered with Durham-Middlefield Youth and Family Services to bring monthly guest speakers to advisory lessons on health topics, including OCD awareness and eating disorders. The music department performed at the Shorelines Musical Festival, football games, and pep rallies, and families were invited to the annual Veterans' concert after the meeting.

B. Recognition of Board Member with 10 Years of Service

Lucy Petrella was recognized for 10 years of service on the Board of Education. She chaired the Student Achievement Committee for much of that time and served as board chair for about a year and a half. Dr. Leggett noted that her service likely included more than 250 meetings. Mrs. Petrella said her background in education drew her to the board, where she wanted to stay connected to the school and its students. She thanked the board for the recognition and reflected that serving on the board gives members a deeper understanding of how difficult decisions can be.

Public Comment

A. In-person public comment

Durham resident Phil Augur questioned the proposed waiver of the bidding process for a $70,000.00 tennis court resurfacing. He welcomed the district's attention to the courts but warned that previous resurfacing work deteriorated quickly. He asked the board to explain why the bid was compelling enough to justify waiving the process and, if possible, share examples of the contractor's work that had held up over several years.

Durham resident Ed Remillard urged the board to follow the building committee's recommendation to waive the bidding process and move ahead with tennis court repairs. He said the courts have been past their useful life and under repair since 2020, and described resurfacing as a short-term fix that could last about five years. He suggested consulting Wesleyan, which resurfaced 12 to 16 courts over the summer, and said acting in time for suitable weather could help a second senior class play at least half a season.

B. Remote public comment

There was no remote public comment.

Approval of Minutes

A. Board of Education - October 14, 2026

Mrs. Petrella made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Cowan, to approve the October 14, 2026 Meeting Minutes as presented.

All in favor of approving the October 14, 2026 Meeting Minutes as presented: Mrs. Cowan, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Moore, Mr. Konstantino, Dr. Darcy, and Mr. Viens. Motion passed.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Leggett highlighted professional development in literacy, executive-function programming, digital wellness, AI, and safety, as well as upcoming NEASC and global-exchange initiatives. The district is also developing a grades 3–5 makerspace at Three Oaks Memorial School and advancing Strong School accessibility and security improvements and tennis court work.

Three Oaks Memorial School Project Update

Ms. Liska, project manager from STV, presented an update, reporting that Three Oaks construction is about 34% complete and remains on budget. The classroom addition's structural steel and floor slabs are substantially complete and crews are framing and sheathing exterior walls and building three stair towers and the elevator shaft. Work on the gym addition's steel is nearly complete, with the slab pour expected the following week. Interior renovations include new column footings to reinforce areas of the cafeteria, kitchen, and gym. Underground plumbing and electrical work is substantially complete, while sidewalks, curbs, parking lot lighting bases, and the first asphalt layer are underway.

The project is two and a half weeks behind schedule and the team continues to recover time. The construction manager returned $425,000.00 from its contingency, and the owner contingency balance is ~$965,000.00. A beam signed by the community has been installed and is visible from the future gym.

Dr. Leggett shared that students are also being connected to the project through tours and class activities. Physics students will learn from building-related work, art students are collaborating with the design team on pieces for the new school, and construction and building-committee students are following the project. Additional classroom visits and virtual connections are planned for younger students in the spring.

Chairman Update

Mr. Moore noted that DECA held a Veterans' Day luncheon and small concert on Monday. Schools also marked Veterans' Day with activities: Brewster and Lyman held assemblies, while Strong held an assembly and took a class to the Durham Town Center ceremony. Mr. Moore said the schools' annual Veterans' Day activities are an important way to recognize veterans and welcome them into the schools. Mr. Moore also reported that a broken auditorium clock was replaced with a working one rebuilt by students, including Chloe Lonergan and Noah Trifilo. They made new gold numbers and installed the clock in the original fixture.

Staff Report

A. Director of Finance – Kim Neubig

Mrs. Neubig reported a financial update, noting that through October, the district had spent 28.5% of its general-fund budget, encumbered 95%, and received 30% of anticipated revenue. The Three Oaks project's last planned bonding in the fall of 2027 is expected to be smaller after the additional 15% reimbursement-rate the district received. However, it is dependent on how quickly the state processes progress payments, as any delay can result in a cash flow issue. The district is still awaiting its first state payment.

The 2026 financial audit is complete and will be presented to the full board in January or February. Dr. Leggett added the district is increasing substitute-nurse pay from $175 to $230 per day to attract more coverage and reduce reliance on costly agencies. The daily rate to get a nurse from the local pool is about $600, so this increase is still more cost effective.

New Business - Discussions and Possible Votes

A. Vote to Accept Proposed 2027 Board of Education and Committee Meeting Schedule

The board discussed the proposed 2027 Board of Education and committee meeting schedule, noting that the Wednesday meeting pattern has generally worked well. The Board raised a concern about the April 14 meeting falling during spring recess and considered moving it back a week

Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mr. Viens, to accept the Proposed 2027 Board of Education and Committee Meeting Schedule as presented.

All in favor of accepting the Proposed 2027 Board of Education and Committee Meeting Schedule as presented: Mrs. Cowan, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Moore, Mr. Konstantino, Dr. Darcy, and Mr. Viens. Motion passed.

B. Vote to Accept Community Committee Appointments

Mrs. Petrella made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Cowan, to approve the appointment of Madison Allen to the District Climate Committee.

All in favor of accepting the appointment of Madison Allen to the District Climate Committee: Mrs. Cowan, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Moore, Mr. Konstantino, Dr. Darcy, and Mr. Viens. Motion passed.

C. Vote to Approve Strong Field Trip - Camp Jewell

Mrs. Petrella made a motion, seconded by Mr. Viens, to approve the Strong field trip to Camp Jewell.

All in favor of approving the Strong field trip to Camp Jewell: Mrs. Cowan, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Moore, Mr. Konstantino, Dr. Darcy, and Mr. Viens. Motion passed.

D. Vote to Approve Possible Waiving of Bid Process for Tennis Court Repair

The district requested permission to waive formal bidding and contract with R&M Tennis Courts for a $70,000.00 resurfacing of five courts, expected to last five to seven years. After an RFI yielded four responses, this was the only resurfacing proposal. Mrs. Neubig said a USTA grant could cover $35,000.00, leaving $35,000.00 expenditure on the district, and described the work as a temporary alternative to ongoing repairs while saving for a much more expensive full replacement.

The board members viewed full tennis court replacement as the long-term solution, but estimated it would cost $500,000 to $1 million and likely require bonding in a few years. Given the 2% annual capital-reserve budget cap and competing priorities, members supported the $70,000.00 resurfacing as an interim fix that could let teams host matches for the next few years and avoid the $20,000.00 in annual repairs. They were also comfortable waiving the RFP process, citing the extensive review by the building committee, timing of the repairs and the number of quotes received from the RFI process.

Mr. Viens made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Cowan, to approve waiving the bid process for tennis court repair as presented.

All in favor of accepting to waive the bid process for tennis court repair as presented: Mrs. Cowan, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Moore, Mr. Konstantino, Dr. Darcy, and Mr. Viens. Motion passed.

E. Policy Review
1. First read on the below policies
    a. Health Assessments Screenings and Oral Health Assessments 5141 - Shipman
    b. Homeless Children and Youth 5118.1 - Shipman
    c. Immunizations 5141.1 - Shipman
    d. Student Discipline 5114 - Shipman
    e. Administration of Medications 5141.21

The Board reviewed the proposed policy changes. The Health Assessments policy adds language about athletic health assessments for students in grades 9 through 12. The policy on Homeless Children and Youth reflects an age change from 21 to 22. The immunization regulation clarifies that requirements will follow Connecticut's state-mandated list, replacing references to national and federal sources.

The board reviewed discipline and medication policy updates reflecting Connecticut legislation from 2024 through 2026. The Discipline policy changes require the district to continue providing an education to students after a second expulsion, with an exception described for a third expulsion. They also limit in-school suspensions to five consecutive days, retain the general 10-day limit for out-of-school suspensions subject to further procedures, and prohibit out-of-school suspensions for students in grades K–2 except in cases involving physical assault. Medication updates replace references to cartridge injectors with broader language that includes nasal products, define qualified school employees, and expand access to Narcan by

allowing it to be kept near AEDs. Parents may no longer opt out of opioid-antagonist administration, and employees who administer it in good faith receive legal protection.

All policies will proceed to a second read at the next meeting.

2. Second read and possible vote on the below policies
    a. Policy and Regulation Systems 9312
    b. Suicide Prevention and Intervention 5141.6-Shipman

The presented policy changes were described as straightforward. Policy and Regulations Systems 9312 was a cleanup to the Shipman policy, and the suicide prevention and intervention update was required. The required change means students do not have to verbally disclose their concerns. The optional portion was left out for now, pending further work.

Mrs. Petrella made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Cowan, to accept the Policy and Regulation Systems 9312 and the Suicide Prevention and Intervention 5141.6 policies as presented.

All in favor of approving Policy and Regulation Systems 9312 and the Suicide Prevention and Intervention 5141.6 policies as presented: Mrs. Cowan, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Moore, Mr. Konstantino, Dr. Darcy, and Mr. Viens. Motion passed.

Committee Reports

A. Building Committee Meeting - October 7, 2026

Mr. Moore reported that all updates for the Building Committee have been reviewed by Ms. Liska this evening.

B. School Naming Committee Meeting - October 14, 2026

Mrs. Cowan reported that the School Naming Committee said its immediate priority is choosing a mascot. Based on survey results, Mustangs, Owls, and Eagles will go to a student and staff vote, expected to run from the following week through Thanksgiving break. The committee hopes to announce the winner around December 2 so the building committee can move forward. Dr. Leggett is also researching the histories of Korn, Brewster, and Lyman as possible names for the school's main common spaces and no space names have been finalized.

C. Policy Committee Meeting - October 21, 2026

All policy committee updates have been reviewed by the Board this evening. There was nothing additional to review.

D. Building Committee Meeting - October 21, 2026
E. School District Climate Committee Meeting - October 28, 2026

Dr. Darcy reported that at its October 28 meeting, the District Climate Committee welcomed Madison Allen, who helped shape the committee's priorities for the year. The committee discussed holding focus groups with high school students and, if possible, having high school students lead conversations with younger students about school climate and belonging. The committee also began defining the goals of a district climate survey. District professionals will select questions that address those goals and can be tracked over time. Members reviewed early-year data, including incident reports, referrals, and attendance, while noting that it is only an initial snapshot. They are continuing to refine which data should be presented at future committee meetings.

F. Student Achievement Committee Meeting – November 4, 2026

Mrs. Petrella reported that the committee heard a presentation on the new Cultural Cooking elective introduced at the high school this year. Students are exploring Spanish-speaking cultures through their cuisines, preparing recipes, and sharing what they're learning. Committee members sampled plantains, a green salsa, and avocado, and students spoke positively about the class.

The committee also reviewed proposed high school courses for next year. These include Manufacturing Math, initially focused on machinists' math, with the possibility of expanding to other career and technical fields; Backstage II; Photography II; a football elective; and a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) course offered through a college. Students who complete the CNA course and pass the certification exam could earn certification. The committee supported moving the proposals forward for teachers to develop full syllabi and course materials.

Finally, the curriculum coordinator reviewed the district's curriculum cycles for the 2027–28, 2028–29, and 2029–30 school years, including which areas are being evaluated, revised, implemented, or monitored. The committee also received an update on student activities connected with construction at Three Oaks.

G. Building Committee Meeting – November 4, 2026
H. Finance Committee Meeting – November 11, 2026

Mr. Moore reported that the Finance Committee met that evening, with four representatives from Durham present and none from Middlefield. The committee discussed the budget challenge.

Board Communications and Professional Development
Mr. Moore noted receiving several letters in support of addressing the tennis courts as well as supporting the need for a fully accessible, safe playground. Mr. Moore responded to concerns about facility upkeep, saying the district's limited capital spending makes it difficult to address every need, while noting recent improvements to athletic fields and identifying the tennis courts as the remaining major athletic-facility project. The superintendent praised the overall condition of district facilities and the work being done,

while acknowledging that the district cannot afford everything given limitations on the ability to reserve capital funds based on the mandatory 2% state limit.

Public Comment

A. In-person public comment

Durham resident Phil Augur suggested considering a curtain drain separately from the resurfacing work. Mr. Moore said the building committee had just recently inspected the drainage and found it adequate.

B. Remote public comment

There was no remote public comment.

Adjournment

Mrs. Cowan made a motion, seconded by Dr. Darcy, to adjourn the meeting.

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

Respectfully submitted by Meghan Shortell-Fratantonio