

The Regional District 13 Board of Education met in special session on Wednesday, January 28, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School.

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

Board of Education Members Absent: Mrs. Caramanello, Mr. DelVecchio, and Mr. Stone.

Administration Present: Dr. Leggett, Superintendent of Schools

Guests: Dr. Broderick and Dr. Reynolds

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

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda

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

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

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

CABE Board of Education Training

Mary Broderick, Ed.D. and John Reynolds, Ed.D. led the Board members on governance and working as an effective Board of Education.

Their training began with board members establishing their tenure on the board, why they decided to run, and what connections they have to schools in the district. Several members described being encouraged to run to bring diverse perspectives, support students, and help guide the district through change. Many highlighted personal ties to the schools as parents, alumni, educators, or long-time community members, while newer members spoke about choosing the district for its schools and wanting to contribute positively amid challenges. Overall, the introductions reflected a shared commitment to improving the district, supporting students, and working collaboratively toward a stronger future.

The first goal for Board members was to establish what they would like to see progress for students, staff, facilities, community, resources, and governance in five years.

Board members shared their five-year aspirations for Regional School District 13, identifying strong common themes. These included creating a positive, inclusive, and safe school climate where every student feels valued and able to learn; supporting and retaining high-quality staff through professional development and stability; maintaining safe, welcoming, and well-planned facilities; strengthening academic excellence while meeting diverse student needs, including special education and enrichment as well as providing school lunches and a prekindergarten program; and rebuilding trust, engagement, and support from families and the broader community. Members also emphasized the importance of a cohesive, respectful Board of Education that is committed to moving forward with productive meetings, establishing a clear district identity, and positioning Regional School District 13 as a destination district and a model for others.

The next task for the Board members was to work together to make a list of characteristics of a high-performing governance team.

The Board members identified core characteristics of a high-performing Board of Education and leadership team. Foundational elements include personal knowledge of one another by understanding each member's background, motivations, strengths, and goals, as well as responsiveness, meaning a team that communicates openly, acts visibly, and does not work in isolation. Members emphasized knowing and respecting the rules of public governance, maintaining transparency, and ensuring everyone feels represented through clear and consistent communication. Members agreed that healthy, respectful disagreement ("good conflict") leads to better decision-making when all perspectives are heard. Members also identified empathy and maintaining a parent and community perspective while always acting in the best interest of all students. Overall, the focus was on building trust, teamwork, and cohesion to move the district forward effectively.

The discussion then broadened to what research and experience say about effective teams: a clear, shared vision and purpose ("North Star"); common values and norms; political awareness; high expectations; inspiring leadership; and a sense of joy, curiosity, and creativity that can only exist when people feel safe and respected. Presenters stressed that leadership should focus not only on operational details, but also on articulating an aspirational vision of excellence and bringing educators along as partners. Free-flowing communication, rapid response capability, and proactive thinking were emphasized as signs of strong organizational culture, with transparency and preparedness enabling progress rather than reactive decision-making.

Ms. Broderick and Mr. Reynolds focused on clarifying and reinforcing the distinct but overlapping roles of Boards of Education and superintendents. Ms. Broderick noted that, historically, conflicts often arose due to confusion over responsibilities, which led Connecticut's school leadership organizations (CABE and CAPSS) to jointly develop a formal document, first issued around 2002 and periodically updated, defining these roles. Board members discussed the importance of "staying in your lane," while recognizing that governance includes unavoidable gray areas that must be explicitly discussed and resolved to avoid micromanagement.

The Board members reviewed the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent and board of education. Boards should focus on vision, values, culture, mission, and alignment, rather than day-to-day operations. The superintendent, as chief executive and educational leader, is responsible for implementing board

policy, managing daily operations, hiring and supervising staff (within policy and statute), and keeping the board well-informed.

The members reviewed shared responsibilities showing the reciprocal nature of board and superintendent roles, such as evaluation, budgeting, policy development, communication, data-driven decision-making, leadership development, agenda setting, and professional growth. Ms. Broderick emphasized a strong adherence to the chain of command, particularly in handling community concerns, noting that board members should listen to community members but not attempt to resolve operational issues themselves.

Discussion continued to reflect the experiences of Board Members once elected, particularly in responding to parent complaints. Members noted that while parents often approach board members about individual student or classroom issues, board members must exercise restraint, listen without intervening, notify the superintendent, and consistently enforce the chain of command. Attempting to resolve issues personally, or gathering privileged information, can compromise due process and may require board members to recuse themselves from disciplinary decisions such as expulsions or staff terminations.

The conversation concluded by reinforcing that boards should focus on vision, values, strategic direction, and accountability, not operational control. While interim leadership situations may force boards into deeper involvement, rebuilding trust with a superintendent allows boards to step back into proper governance roles. Clear communication, mutual accountability, timely conversations, and shared understanding of roles were identified as essential to becoming a high-performing board and effectively moving the district forward.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Adjournment

Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mr. Konstantino, to adjourn the meeting.

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

Respectfully submitted by Meghan Shortell-Fratantonio