

Revised

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, August 13, 2025, at 6:00 PM in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School.

Board Members Present: Mrs. Caramanello (arrived at 6:03), Mrs. Cowan, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. DelVecchio (arrived at 6:03, left at 7:30), Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback

Board Members Absent: Mr. Stone

Administration Present: Mr. Brough, Human Resources Specialist; Mrs. Neubig, Director of Finance; Dr. Leggett, Superintendent of Schools; Mrs. Stone, Principal of Coginchaug High School

Dr. Leggett called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda

Dr. Leggett requested to move the item “Update on Strong/Memorial Projects” to directly after the first public comment.

Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, to approve the revised agenda, as presented.

In favor of approving the revised agenda, as presented: Mrs. Cowan, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, and Mr. Roraback. Motion carried.

Mrs. Cowan suggested Dr. Leggett clarify to the public the reasoning behind the Executive Session stated on the agenda. Dr. Leggett explained that the law states that anything that has to do with the potential investigation of any employee or officer of the school district is slated to be in Executive Session.

Election of Officers

Mr. Moore made a motion, seconded by Dr. Darcy, to accept the resignation of Lindsay Dahlheimer as Chairman of the Board of Education.

In favor of accepting the resignation of Lindsay Dahlheimer as Chairman of the Board of Education: Mrs. Cowan, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, and Mr. Roraback. Motion carried.

Mrs. Petrella made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Dahlheimer, to nominate Robert Moore as the new Chairman of the Board of Education.

Mrs. Cowan expressed interest in the role of Chairman of the Board of Education.

Roll Call Vote:

- *Mrs. Caramanello – Nay*
- *Mrs. Cowan – Abstain*
- *Mrs. Dahlheimer – Aye*
- *Dr. Darcy – Aye*
- *Mr. DelVecchio – Nay*
- *Mr. Mennone – Aye*
- *Mr. Moore – Aye*
- *Mrs. Petrella – Aye*
- *Mr. Roraback – Aye*
- *Mr. Stone – Absent*

Result: Motion carries. (6 Ayes, 2 Nays, 1 Abstain, 1 Absent)

Mr. Mennone made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Dahlheimer, to nominate Dr. Linda Darcy as the new Vice Chairman of the Board of Education.

In favor of nominating Dr. Linda Darcy as the new Vice Chairman of the Board of Education: Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Cowan, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. DelVecchio, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, and Mr. Roraback. Motion carries.

Student Presentation – Senior Class President

Addie Buckheit, an upcoming senior at Coginchaug High School, presented information to the Board regarding receiving the Girl Scout Gold Award, the highest and most prestigious award in Girl Scouting. Ms. Buckheit explained that she met with members of the community to gain information on what challenges they were facing and to explore ways in which she could address them. This led to the campaign recently launched by Durham/Middlefield Youth and Family Services (DMYFS) in collaboration with Paper House Productions. Ms. Buckheit presented the Nice or Nothing Campaign. The campaign focuses on creating a kindness coalition, teaching three healthy and effective communication skills for the community to use both online and in person. The three skills include: “I” Statements, Meta Moments, and Active Listening. Ms. Buckheit explained that when someone joins the coalition, they will take a pre-survey and watch three short videos about the skills. After two months, they will take a post-survey and compare the results. There is more information on the DMYFS website and their Facebook and Instagram pages.

Ms. Buckheit noted that there was a soft launch of the campaign last week. There are multiple ideas as to how to integrate the campaign into RSD13. Ms. Buckheit suggested forming a team of “kindness ambassadors,” which she and Claudia White, the director of DMYFS, would join to lead in-person trainings on effective communication skills and to recruit more members to the campaign. These trainings would be available for students, coaches, and other community members. Ms. Buckheit finished her presentation by noting that she would love to hear any ideas or suggestions from the Board.

Dr. Leggett expressed her gratitude to Addie and DMYFS for this positive campaign, stating that she would love to help in any way.

Public Comment

Mrs. Petrella explained new requirements for public comment, based on Policy 9327:

The Board strongly believes in hearing from the public. We offer two public sessions at each meeting for this very purpose. It's critical that public input is a time for people to speak and for the Board to listen. Therefore, we want to reiterate the following protocols. As a reminder, this is to ensure there's always an avenue for the Board to hear your concerns. Everyone will listen respectfully during the time someone is speaking. As a reminder, each person speaking has three minutes. This is one, three-minute time speaking, not a repeated three minutes among other speakers. When someone is speaking there will be no interruptions by anyone else present at the meeting, either in person or online. Interruptions include words spoken, other noises, expressions, side conversations, and/or commotion. The Board member may interrupt if the content is violating any policies. There will be no profanity or inappropriate language. There will be no discussion of specific children or employees during public input. The Board will not engage in debate or respond to statements. The Board may ask clarifying questions or provide clarifying information. Board responses to public comments usually occur at future meetings or through other appropriate channels.

When issues arise:

1. If disruptions occur, the Board Chair or presiding officer at the time will issue a verbal warning.
2. If disruptions continue, the Board Chair or presiding officer reserves the right to recommend the removal of the individual(s) from the meeting. Anyone asked to leave the meeting may not return until the next meeting. Repeated meeting offenses may result in being banned from future meetings.
3. Anyone refusing to leave when requested will be subjected to trespassing charges.
4. Any harassment or threatening behavior in the hallways or parking lot before or after the meeting will be reported to local law enforcement.
5. If there are significant disruptions that prohibit the Board from doing their work, any Board member can ask the Chairs or presiding officer to clear the room. If this happens, people may or may not be invited to return at the discretion of the Chair. Media personnel, if not part of the disruption, are not required to leave the meeting.

Mrs. Cowan clarified that there are two public comment sessions per regular meeting, but this does not apply to special or emergency meetings. Dr. Leggett will amend the statement.

Dr. Darcy noted that there was a conversation held regarding whether or not community members could send an email to Board members to be read aloud during public comment. This situation will be discussed at the next Policy Committee meeting.

A. In-Person Public Comment

None.

B. Remote Public Comment

Amanda Betty, from Durham, expressed concern regarding a ParentSquare statement. Mrs. Betty also stated she believed that the investigation into the former Chair should be public and not occur in an Executive Session.

Update on Strong/Memorial Projects

Dan Hetzler, the construction project manager for O&G, updated the Board on the Strong and Memorial School projects. Mr. Hetzler stated that the work is nearly complete at Strong School. The punch list for Strong School was reviewed and completed by Mr. Hetzler and Carson Collier from QA+M. There are still structured cable face plates that need installation. Mr. Hetzler noted that Siemens will work on the HVAC thermostat installation next week. Furniture is being loaded into the spaces.

The parking lot at Lyman has been paved and embankments on the sidewalk are complete. In regard to the portables, Mr. Hetzler stated that there was further work to be completed, including structural issues with the flooring. This process will be finished within the next few days. The furniture is estimated to be moved back into the portables on August 27, 2025. The two new portables are currently being worked on, including the sanitary and electrical services. Mr. Hetzler noted that other spaces should be available in case issues arise with the portables before the start of the school year.

Mrs. Caramanello asked Mr. Hetzler to further explain the flooring issues, inquiring whether or not mold was an issue. Mr. Hetzler answered that there was no mold, but that the wood was rotted from water damage. Mrs. Cowan suggested confirming whether or not the students would need to use the swing space instead of the portables on a specific date. Dr. Leggett stated that the plan is one week, and the back-up swing space is in a classroom. In the worst-case scenario, it would be two half-days and three full school days before students could move into the portables. Mrs. Cowan asked for photographic updates on Lyman School and the portables. Mrs. Neubig noted that there is a section on the website that contains updates of the construction project, including photographs. Mr. Hetzler added that within the week there will be photographic updates distributed.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if there was plumbing in the fifth-grade rooms that were divided at Strong School, specifically sinks. Mr. Hetzler answered that there are no sinks.

Approval of Minutes**A. Board of Education Regular Meeting – July 9, 2025**

Amendments

Mrs. Petrella noted that the names of the Board members who make the motions are not included in the full “in favor” section of the approval. This will be corrected going forward.

Mrs. Petrella requested the addition of a remark under the Athletic Injury Report/Survey regarding HIPAA.

Dr. Darcy suggested labeling when a Board member specifically arrived instead of stating they “arrived late.”

Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mennone, to approve the minutes of the Board of Education Regular Meeting of July 9, 2025, as amended.

In favor of approving the minutes of the Board of Education Regular Meeting of July 9, 2025, as amended: Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Cowan, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. DelVecchio, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback. Motion carried.

B. Board of Education Special Meeting – July 16, 2025**Amendments**

Mrs. Petrella requested that under “Discussion and Possible Action on Request for Indemnification” she would like to review the language “whether **or not** the actions in question were carried out with malice” and update.

Mrs. Caramanello noted there was possible language missing regarding Craig Bradanini’s public comment as to how he introduced himself and will be reviewed and updated if necessary.

Mrs. Cowan noted that the timing for the Executive Session needs to be reviewed as to when Attorney Mooney left the session. This will be reviewed and updated if necessary.

Mrs. Cowan made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mennone, to approve the minutes of the Board of Education Special Meeting of July 16, 2025, as amended.

In favor of approving the minutes of the Board of Education Special Meeting of July 16, 2025, as amended: Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Cowan, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. DelVecchio, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback. Motion carried.

Superintendent’s Report

Dr. Leggett shared an updated report containing visuals with the Board. She explained there has been work done in preparation for the strategic planning process. The first year will be Culture and Climate

Planning. Additionally, restorative practices will be prominent. Dr. Leggett noted that she wants to emphasize proactive behavior and having high expectations across the board as a school community. Dr. Leggett explained that the second part of restorative practices is what happens during challenging behavior. There will be a consistent data system created across K-12 for reporting office referrals and behavior referrals, emphasizing the core ethical values. There will be additional bullying and harassment training, including antidiscrimination work. Dr. Leggett noted that equity will be at the forefront of the curriculum development and review process. There was a successful meeting with ACES. Three major themes have been highlighted under community that Dr. Leggett would like to work towards this year. These themes include making sure core ethical values of Regional School District 13 move forward in absolutely everything that is done. Dr. Leggett stated that it's important to remember joy and the positive aspects of learning.

Chairman's Update

Mr. Moore stated that he attended a CAFE conference last week, at which Mrs. Dahlheimer led a panel on advocacy for legislators. He stated that she did a really good job.

The Board retreat scheduling was discussed. September 6 or 7, 2025, was preferred by the majority of the Board, preferably the morning of September 6. Mr. Moore noted that the subjects will include committee structure and membership, goals and objectives/policies, and restorative practices.

Mr. Moore shared that a newsletter was distributed digitally via ParentSquare and will hopefully be mailed to all residents. He thanked the teachers and staff for their help.

Staff Reports

A. Director of Finance – Kim Neubig

Mrs. Neubig stated that the 2024/2025 school year finished with 99.51 percent of the budget expended. 99.9 percent of revenue has been received. Out of an estimated surplus of \$250,000 to balance the 2025/2026 budget, \$244,800 was available at the end of the year.

Audit field work began on July 28, 2025. They will be returning in October to complete the audit. The audit report will be received in December.

Regarding the month of July, there has been 4.33 percent expended, and 54.75 percent encumbered of the budget.

The budget for the concession stand is \$25,000. Mr. Proia has met with the health inspector who has completed the inspection. There is a list of equipment that must be ordered, equaling approximately \$10,000 to \$12,000. The list of requirements includes an air conditioning unit, a commercial microwave, a commercial freezer, coffee machine, portable hand wash sink, a commercial pretzel warmer, and a commercial refrigerator. Mrs. Neubig noted that the goal is to have all of that completed by the beginning

of the season. Grilling is allowed, but only outside. The concession stand will be reserved and there will be no fee.

Board Communications and Professional Development

Mr. Moore shared a list of people who the Board has communicated with.

Mr. Moore noted that there are CABA conferences taking place in November and extended the invitation to attend to the members of the Board. Mrs. Dahlheimer stated that signing up can be done up to one week prior to the conference.

Committee Reports

A. Building Committee Special Meeting – July 29, 2025

Mr. Moore shared an update regarding the Building Committee Special Meeting. There were discussions on design and site development at Memorial. The parking lot was discussed as well. The pickleball and tennis courts were discussed. A hazmat contractor was selected for the Memorial demolition. Several invoices were approved. There was also discussion regarding the owner's project manager. Mr. Moore stated that the track is completed, and he has received positive reviews from students. The high school tennis courts were also a topic of conversation, specifically investigation of drainage issues. Mr. Roraback asked if there is still a good dialogue with the neighbors who own property near Memorial School. Mr. Moore answered that they've been working closely with them, and they have had several meetings. Lastly, Mr. Moore noted that there is a pick-up and drop-off location plan for Strong School that will be completed shortly.

New Business and Possible Votes

A. NEASC Final Transmittal Letter and Collaborative Conference Report

Mrs. Stone presented the CRHS NEASC report to the Board. Coginchau is currently at the "Growth Plan" stage. The committee uses five standards: learning culture, student learning, professional practices, learning support, and learning resources. The collaborative conference was conducted in March. The report has shown there are strong student-adult relationships, ample opportunities with clubs and athletics, authentic inquiry-based experiences, flexible PD days, and safe tech-equipped services. In regard to what needs improvement, the report listed four areas: vision of the graduate, written curriculum, growth plan, and common planning time. Mrs. Stone noted that the common planning time exists but lacks defined structures and expectations. Moving forward, there is a plan in place for each area that needs improvement.

Mr. Moore asked Mrs. Stone how she defines a growth plan. She stated that first there needs to be goals. The growth plan is for the faculty, the students, and the community. The growth plan ties in with Dr. Leggett's strategic planning. Dr. Leggett also explained that there will be a person who has worked with the Connecticut Superintendent's Association and Harvard performing cohorts on the vision of a graduate

area. That person will perform training with the leadership team and staff. Mrs. Stone added that this is not just focused on the high school but are ideas that can benefit K-12 students as well.

Mr. Roraback stated that approximately a year and a half ago there was a representative from NEASC who visited and was encouraging the entire district to become accredited. He asked Mrs. Stone if she sees any value in this idea. Mrs. Stone explained that not including the entire district has been a positive choice currently, though she believes there is value in it for the future.

Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Dahlheimer, to accept the NEASC report.

In favor of accepting the NEASC report: Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Cowan, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. DelVecchio, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback. Motion carried.

B. Discussion of School District Resolution Procedure

Dr. Leggett presented the school district resolution procedure to the Board. The procedure includes two principles:

1. Problems are most effectively resolved through direct, respectful communication at the most immediate level. Escalation should only occur when initial attempts at resolution have been unsuccessful or when concerns persist.
2. When resolving issues, we expect everyone to adhere to the core ethical values of Regional School District 13.

Dr. Leggett explained that this outlines a procedure of how people work toward having direct conversations to perform problem solving, how they start at the most direct level, and what the specific steps up are from that direct level. For example, if there is a problem with a student in school, Level 1 would be speaking to the teacher, Level 2 would be the principal, Level 3 would be the superintendent, and Level 4 would be the Board. Dr. Leggett noted that this is a high need in the district.

Dr. Leggett noted there are general guidelines for immediate escalation. Dr. Leggett shared the following statement directly from the procedure: We understand that special circumstances may warrant a different approach. In the following circumstances please contact the building's principal or superintendent immediately: An imminent safety concern, any suspected abuse or neglect, legal violations, or emergency situations. The procedure also states that law enforcement can be contacted directly, and any threats of violence, criminal activity, or child abuse can be reported to DCF.

Dr. Leggett stated that this procedure is specific to parents, guardians, and community members. The procedure will be revised for employees and staff.

Mrs. Petrella asked if this procedure would be distributed to the community. Dr. Leggett answered that yes, it would be included in all the handbooks, sent out in newsletters, and posted on the district website.

Dr. Leggett also noted that for athletics, the procedure would require that they go to their coach first and then the athletic director second.

Dr. Darcy asked for clarification as to whether or not the procedure states not to email the Board. Dr. Leggett answered no and that the Board can always redirect any issue to the superintendent.

Mrs. Caramanello pointed out a typographic error in the procedure. Mr. Moore added that the procedure can be amended easily.

Mrs. Caramanello expressed concerns about whether or not the procedure was necessary. Dr. Leggett stated that it is not uncommon for a district to have a resolution procedure. Mrs. Cowan noted that with the climate RSD13 is currently in as a Board, this may be an affront to the community. Dr. Darcy stated that the procedure codifies what is already known and provides the teachers and the administrators with a guideline. Mrs. Petrella added that she feels it more clearly defines roles, especially for the members of the Board. Mr. Moore noted that if a parent is not satisfied with the result of an issue, the procedure is a helpful guideline as well. Mrs. Caramanello explained she feels the timing is not right to send out this procedure to the community. Mr. Roraback noted that he trusts Dr. Leggett and her judgement in this matter.

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to approve the school district resolution procedure as amended.

Roll Call Vote:

- *Mrs. Caramanello – Nay*
- *Mrs. Cowan – Nay*
- *Mrs. Dahlheimer – Aye*
- *Dr. Darcy – Aye*
- *Mr. Mennone – Aye*
- *Mr. Moore – Aye*
- *Mrs. Petrella – Aye*
- *Mr. Roraback – Aye*

Result: Motion carries. (6 Ayes, 2 Nays)

C. Proposal for Long-Term Substitute Rates

Dr. Leggett shared a memo from Mr. Brough, Human Resources Specialist. Dr. Leggett noted there have been issues hiring long-term substitutes in the past. This proposal outlines that long-term substitutes would receive \$150 per day for the first 40 days, with the rate increasing to \$320.38 per day beginning on the 41st day. The substitute would also receive a lump sum check on day 41 for the first 40 days. This will help with commitment and will improve the applicant pool. The only exception applies to former RSD13 teachers, who will be exempt from the initial 40-day period. There are no healthcare benefits or retirement involved. These rates are competitive compared with the area. Mr. Brough added that RSD13 is looking for the best teachers possible for the classroom and this will move that process forward.

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to approve the proposal for long-term substitute rates.

In favor of approving the proposal for long-term substitute rates: Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Cowan, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback. Motion carried.

D. Discussion of Investigation of Board Member (Executive Session)

Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Cowan, to move into Executive Session for the Discussion of the Investigation of a Board Member.

In favor of moving into Executive Session for the Discussion of the Investigation of a Board Member: Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Cowan, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback. Motion carried.

The Board of Education then moved into Executive Session at 7:36 PM.

Lindsey Dahlheimer left Executive Session at 8:29 PM.

The Board of Education returned from Executive Session at 8:47 PM.

Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mennone, for the Board of Education of Regional School District 13 to conduct an investigation into the behavior of former Board Chair Lindsay Dahlheimer.

Mr. Moore stated that the Board has carefully and thoughtfully discussed the pros and cons of an investigation. A formal statement from the Board, including an outline of the reasoning behind this decision, will be distributed by the end of the week. The topics under consideration are the cost of the investigation, Mrs. Dahlheimer's resignation as Chair, and the district's need to move forward with a focus on students.

Roll Call Vote:

- *Mrs. Caramanello – Nay*
- *Mrs. Cowan – Nay*
- *Mrs. Dahlheimer – Abstain*
- *Dr. Darcy – Nay*
- *Mr. Mennone – Nay*
- *Mr. Moore – Nay*
- *Mrs. Petrella – Nay*
- *Mr. Roraback – Nay*

Result: Motion denied. (7 Nays, 1 Abstain)

Public Comment

A. In-Person Public Comment

Craig Bradanini, a Durham resident, parent of past and present students in Regional School District 13, teacher at Coginchaug High School, and president of Regional School District 13 Education Association made a comment. On behalf of the Regional School District 13 teachers, Mr. Bradanini stated that the district has incredible students, dedicated educators, and a community that is deeply committed to the success of the schools. Every day the teachers and staff bring their expertise, passion, and care to their work. Mr. Bradanini expressed the importance of standing together, supporting one another, and focusing on what matters most, which is creating a district where students thrive, staff feel valued, and the entire community can celebrate the excellence that is achieved together.

Julie Sass, a Rockfall resident, expressed her adoration for the school district and community. Mrs. Sass suggested the district think of the best way to move forward and build new trust with the community. She also suggested rewriting the bylaws regarding removing a board member. Dr. Leggett clarified that the Board cannot change their bylaws in that regard, that is something that can only be changed by the State.

Christine Gerardi, a Durham resident, requested that the letter from the Board regarding information on the investigation contain how it was known that certain things were happening on Board of Education time.

B. Remote Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Dahlheimer, to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board of Education.

In favor of adjourning the regular meeting of the Board of Education: Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Cowan, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Scarrozzo

Public Statement from Lindsay Dahlheimer

Board of Education Chairman, RSD13

August 11, 2025

As we begin a new school year, our district stands at a pivotal moment; one that calls for both determination and unity. The year ahead will bring immense work: launching a vital strategic plan process, advancing through the next phases of the Memorial School construction project, and continuing to strengthen our schools for every student. Over the past two years, this Board has achieved extraordinary milestones together; successfully amending our district plan and securing bonding referendum approval, aligning our grade levels for the first time in the district's history, obtaining state grant funding for Memorial School's renovation, completing the long-awaited Wally Camp Complex where our athletes now compete in a state-of-the-art facility, collaboratively worked with the towns and state department of education to pass a MOU to help our towns with a 5 year rolling average contribution so they can better anticipate their contribution each year, passing consecutive annual budgets, and perhaps most significantly, unanimously hiring Dr. Sydney Leggett as our new superintendent. Dr. Leggett's strength, empathy, and forward-thinking vision will guide the district through the comprehensive strategic plan process, driving continued growth in both student achievement and community belonging which is pivotal to the long term success of District 13.

With that important work ahead and solid leadership at the helm, I have made the decision to remain on the Board but step down as Chair of the Board of Education at this time. Given the immense work the Board has to do, I do not want my serving as Chair to distract the Board from the work that we must do together. While I will no longer serve as Chair, I remain fully committed to fulfilling the rest of my term and will continue to be actively engaged in the Board's work until December. I look forward to supporting the Board and Dr. Leggett, who I have full confidence will work tirelessly to address the serious issues ahead with full steam.

On a personal note, it is important for the community to understand the full reasoning behind this decision. As a mother, my first responsibility is to protect, defend, and care for my family, and right now that requires my full attention. Since September 2024, my children have endured documented relentless bullying, harassment, and retaliation from both peers and adults in our school community which led to the administration's decision to outplace them to another local district. This was not a choice; it was a decision made for their safety when the very systems meant to protect them failed them.

It is also deeply troubling that some individuals in this community have continued since September to retaliate and harass my children and my family publicly, even weaponizing cut

up years-old personal text messages from a former friend in an attempt to discredit my own growth and distract from the real challenges facing children in District 13. I have never hidden from the past; I have taken responsibility, shared my growth openly with my fellow Board members over the years, and committed myself to becoming a leader rooted in progress. Over the past two years, I have completed nearly every professional development opportunity offered working with nearly every district in Connecticut during that time while strongly advocating for District 13.

Yet, rather than engage in meaningful dialogue some have chosen to dwell in cruelty and revenge for entertainment. For years, certain social media groups have fueled toxic behavior in our community controlling the conversation, silencing voices while amplifying others. Years ago, I was an active participant to the inner workings of those spaces. In 2023 I cut ties from the toxicity and committed myself to doing better than being a social media keyboard warrior. Since then, my focus has been on building a Board centered on progress, process, and safety and I am proud of our collective efforts.

Despite this the gossip and harassment have continued for nearly a year and my own children have remained relentless public targets. My children have been publicly named, speculated about, threatened, harassed and bullied on these platforms by both adults and children even to the point of having their bus route posted online to identify when and where they could be found and suggesting that my children's heads be put into a toilet and flushed. Many of the adults participating are the very parents of the documented bullies. These actions are not only inappropriate; they are dangerous and harmful. They set a devastating example for every child in this community to feel an ounce of comfort in speaking up when something is wrong, and it is shameful.

So with that I ask every resident to look in the mirror and ask yourselves: What kind of community are you building publicly? One fueled by empathy, truth, and growth or one driven by revenge, misinformation, and division?

Let me also be clear: my children are proud of their voice, their courage, and their mother not because I have been perfect, but because we have fought for what is right, even when it is difficult. Their strength comes not just from what they have endured, but from knowing they have never endured it alone. And as I step back from the role of Chair, that same commitment to the truth and progress will remain at the center of everything I do.

Sincerely,

Lindsay Dahlheimer