The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, September 9, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in the library Coginchaug Regional High School.

Board of Education Members Present: Mrs. Petrella (attending virtually), Mr. Simmons, Mr. Moore, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Viens, and Mr. Konstantino.
Board of Education Members Absent: Mrs. Cowan, 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 Mr. Konstantino, to approve the agenda as presented.

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

Recognition and Presentation

A. 2026-2027 Teacher of the Year – Jessica Biancardi

The Board recognized Ms. Biancardi as the 2026-2027 Teacher of the Year. Ms. Biancardi was described as a strong, magnetic presence in the classroom who naturally draws students in and makes each person feel individually seen and engaged. Her contagious energy creates a genuine sense of joy in the room and positively influences both her students and colleagues. After nearly 20 years in the district, Ms. Biancardi reflected on her strong connection to Memorial School and its students, emphasizing her philosophy of "own your weirdness," acceptance, and lifelong relationships with her students.

B. Honoring of Music Director

The Board recognized the passing of Bruce Schmottlach, the district's first band director beginning in 1970, and his lasting legacy in establishing and strengthening the district's music program, including jazz bands, pep bands, and band trips. In his memory, his family has donated his baby grand piano to the district, which the Board expressed appreciation for and plans to formally acknowledge.

C. Restorative Practices Art Work in Local Businesses

The district highlighted a community art initiative that combines student artwork with the core ethical values, beginning with kindness, empathy, and restorative practices. Local businesses are displaying selected student artwork, while a student-created traveling quilt is on display at the Durham Public Library and will later move to the Levi Coe Library. The initiative may expand to additional businesses and may include future ethical values such as courage.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Approval of Minutes-Board of Education Meeting - August 12, 2026

Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mr. Konstantino, to approve the August 12, 2026 Meeting Minutes as presented.

All in favor of approving the August 12, 2026 Meeting Minutes as presented: Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Moore, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Viens, and Mr. Konstantino. Motion passed.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Leggett reported a positive start to the school year, including a successful convocation, improved bus operations, and a student-designed ninth-grade orientation. She also highlighted new initiatives and staff, including a tobacco and vaping cessation program, a new middle school assistant principal and SRO, efforts to strengthen Wesleyan partnerships including a unified basketball tournament, and the district's student exchange program.

Dr. Leggett also provided updates on the Three Oaks Memorial School Project. Dr. Leggett reported that the permit fee issue has been resolved, allowing approximately $340,000.00 to be returned to the construction project. The Building Committee is awaiting firm cost estimates before deciding whether to reduce the court area by 50%, with potential savings targeted toward poured rubber playground surfacing. Additionally, the outdoor classroom remains in the project, and furniture and technology selections are being finalized. Dr. Leggett thanked the Class of 2025 for donating a new sign at the high school entrance, which also recognizes the Class of 1998's original contribution, with additional support from Torrison Stone and Garden. The Board was also reminded of the Bench Warmers' 60th anniversary celebration on September 20 and a 9/11 remembrance ceremony on the Durham Green.

Three Oaks Memorial School Project Update

Angela Cahill, project executive from STV, reported that the project team is working collaboratively and proactively, with the addition foundations nearing completion and structural steel work beginning soon. Ms. Cahill discussed considering a beam-signing ceremony once the final structural steel beam is erected. The event would provide an opportunity for selected Board, Building Committee, community members, and students to sign the beam and celebrate a major construction milestone, promote the project, and potentially highlight other community initiatives before the eventual ribbon-cutting ceremony. Lastly, Ms. Cahill reported that the project remains on budget, although the schedule is currently about one month behind and O&G is working overtime to recover time. Mrs. Neubig clarified that time is being

made up by trades working on Saturdays. FF&E and move-management planning are also underway, with continued efforts to control costs and potentially restore the rubber playground surfacing.
Board members clarified that the overall project cannot exceed its approved budget because the district is limited to the amount of state funding that has been granted.

Chairman Update

Mr. Moore thanked Dr. Leggett and staff for their work resolving the permit fee issue. Board members also emphasized the importance of tracking how the funds were spent and ensuring the costs are properly audited and accounted for. Mr. Moore also highlighted upcoming professional development, community and athletic events, potential future international student exchange opportunities, the success of the annual school carnival, and plans to appoint two students, Jack Quinn and Siya Patel, to participate on the Building Committee.

Staff Report

A. Director of Finance – Kim Neubig

Mrs. Neubig presented the financial report. Mrs. Neubig reported the district has expended 11% of the budget, with 93% encumbered and 12% of revenue received. The auditors completed their second week of on-site fieldwork, and the district is awaiting the draft financial statements, with the presentation from the auditors to the Board in February.

New Business - Discussions and Possible Votes

A. Vote to Set June 11, 2027 Graduation Date

The Board discussed June 11, 2027 as the graduation date, establishing a firm date regardless of snow days or other weather-related disruptions. The Board also revisited the student-requested graduation adornments, noting that students are already working with high school administration on the issue and that a process will determine whether the matter ultimately comes before the Board for discussion.

Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mr. Konstantino, to approve June 11, 2027 as the graduation date.

All in favor of accepting June 11, 2027 as the graduation date: Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Moore, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Viens, and Mr. Konstantino. Motion passed.

B. Request to Suspend Policy 3260 During Three Oaks Memorial Move

The Board discussed temporarily modifying the surplus-property disposal policy to accommodate the district's significant upcoming move. The district will continue to follow the established process of attempting to sell items first, then donating them according to the designated order, and disposing of anything that cannot be sold or donated, but will have flexibility regarding the policy's normal timelines.

The change will initially remain in effect through December 31, 2027, with the Board able to revisit it if needed.

Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mr. Konstantino, to rescind Policy 3260 during Three Oaks Memorial Move until December 31, 2027 as presented.

All in favor of rescinding Policy 3260 during Three Oaks Memorial Move until December 31, 2027 as presented: Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Moore, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Viens, and Mr. Konstantino. Motion passed.

C. Policy Review

1. Second read and possible vote on the below policies

a. Admission to Public Schools At or Before Age Five 5112 (repeal)

Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mr. Konstantino, to repeal Policy 5112 for the Admission to Public Schools at or before Age Five.

All in favor of repealing Policy 5112 for the Admission to Public Schools at or before Age Five as presented: Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Moore, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Viens, and Mr. Konstantino. Motion passed.

b. Recording Meetings Without Consent 1118.61

Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mr. Konstantino, to approve Policy 1118.61 Recording Meetings Without Consent.

All in favor of accepting Policy 1118.61 Recording Meetings Without Consent as presented: Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Moore, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Viens, and Mr. Konstantino. Motion passed.

2. First read and discussion on the below policies

a. Field Trips 6153

The Board reviewed revisions to the field trip policy, which were developed through the Policy Committee. The policy addresses requirements for adequate aides and chaperones, medical support, and appropriate information for participating students. The revised policy will be brought forward for further consideration at the next month's meeting.

b. Meal Charging 5542

The Board reviewed updates to the meal-charging policy following an administrative review of the district's nutrition program. Revisions clarify that students must receive the same meal offered to other students if they do not have any funds on their account. Additionally, adults may charge only when sufficient funds are available and accounts cannot go into a deficit. Breakfast is free for all students for the current school year, while students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch all receive free lunch, but must still submit the application. The policy will move to a second reading.

c. Budget Procedures and Line-Item Transfers 3160

The Board reviewed revisions to the budget procedures and line-item transfer policy, incorporating language required by recent legislation that largely formalizes practices the district already follows. The primary addition requires the district to notify the applicable professional unions, including teachers and administrators, of available capital or non-lapsing funds, their balances, and the district's intended use of those funds. The revisions will move to a second reading next month.

Committee Reports

A. Building Committee Meeting - July 29, 2026
B. Policy Committee Meeting - August 19, 2026
C. Building Committee Meeting - August 19, 2026
D. Building Committee Meeting – September 2, 2026

The Building Committee met in July and August, with recent work focused on resolving the permit-fee issue and finalizing the design of the outdoor classroom in the courtyard, with the final design still underway. The committee also continued debating whether to restore tennis/pickleball courts or prioritize poured-rubber playground surfacing, with members weighing the prior investment in the courts against the greater daily use and accessibility benefits of the playground for students. Final cost estimates will be brought forward to help inform the decision. Mrs. Neubig noted that sinks were added to all classrooms after the project was approved by the state as that was important to the community. As such, the budget had to absorb that additional cost making other items an add-alternate for bidding purposes.

There was no additional reporting from the Policy Committee due to the discussions that took place regarding the policy reviews.

Board Communications and Professional Development

The Board discussed a vacant Middlefield seat, noting that the Middlefield First Selectman was expected to fill the vacancy by appointment or election by August 1. The Board had encouraged an appointment to ensure Middlefield continued to have full representation, while also noting concerns about attendance among two Durham representatives and the importance of having a fully represented Board. The Board Chair wrote to both First Selectmen to encourage full participation.

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. Petrella, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Moore, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Viens, and Mr. Konstantino. Motion passed and the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by Meghan Shortell-Fratantonio