

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Student Achievement Committee met in regular session on Wednesday, May 27, 2026 at 4:30 p.m. in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School.

Committee Members Present: Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Allen, Ms. Hamilton, Dr. Darcy (left at 6:25), Mr. Roraback (arrived at 4:34), and student representative Will Overton
Committee Members Absent: Mrs. Caramanello and Mr. Simmons
Faculty Present: Mr. Shoudy and Mrs. Germond (attending virtually)
Other Attendees: Rosaria Giannetti, Assistant Director of Professional Learning Services at ACES and Addie Buckley, student at Coginchaug Regional High School observing the meeting to fulfill a government class requirement
Administration Present: Dr. Leggett, Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Siegel, Associate Director of Learning, Innovation, and Accountability, and Mrs. Trainer, Assistant Principal CRHS

Mrs. Petrella called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Approval of Agenda

Dr. Leggett requested that the CRHS Course Approval (item 9) be moved after the approval of minutes on the agenda for the teachers present during the committee meeting.

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

All in favor of approving the proposed amended agenda as presented: Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Allen, Ms. Hamilton, and Dr. Darcy. Motion passed.

Approval of Minutes – February 25, 2026

Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, to approve the February 25, 2026 Meeting Minutes as presented.

All in favor of approving the February 25, 2026 meeting minutes as presented: Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Allen, Ms. Hamilton, and Dr. Darcy. Motion passed.

CRHS Course Approval

The committee reviewed a proposal for a new interdisciplinary course called Cultural Cooking, which combines Spanish language vocabulary with cooking activities focused on the cultures of Spanish-speaking nations. Both Spanish teachers, Mr. Shoudy and Mrs. Germond, participated in the discussion, with Mr. Shoudy expected to teach two sections next year if the course is approved. The course was included in the program of studies to gauge student interest, though Mrs. Trainer clarified that it would not count as a world language credit. Instead, the goal is to provide students with cultural exposure and additional opportunities to engage with the world language department.

Initial student interest has been strong, with enrollment currently projected at 12 students in one section and 14 in another, close to the 16-student maximum due to kitchen space limitations. Dr. Siegel reported that Mr. Shoudy has also applied for summer curriculum work to continue developing materials such as rubrics, resources, and other course details.

Mr. Shoudy explained that the proposed Cultural Cooking course is intended to help the school remain competitive while also supporting student engagement and retention. He described the class as an opportunity to highlight some of the most enjoyable aspects of a traditional Spanish classroom, including food, culture, and geography, while making those experiences accessible to all students, regardless of whether they study Spanish or French. He noted that there has already been strong interest and excitement surrounding the course, even without significant promotion. According to Mr. Shoudy, students have been approaching him with questions about it, creating a noticeable buzz. He hopes the course will increase enthusiasm for cultural learning and potentially encourage more students to enroll in Spanish courses in the future by introducing them to the language and culture in an engaging, hands-on way.

Mrs. Germond explained that the world language department has offered a Global Health elective for the past several years, which provided students with an international perspective and served as a valuable elective option. However, the outside program supporting the course recently underwent major structural changes, making the class no longer practical to continue until new partnerships or resources can be found. As the department explored replacement ideas, staff wanted a course that would still encourage students to develop a broader global perspective and become more interested in the world around them. Mrs. Germond noted that cooking-based activities have consistently been highly engaging for students. In particular, she described her Spanish IV unit in which students spend a day cooking in the foods classroom as part of a performance assessment. According to annual student feedback, that cooking experience is consistently students' favorite activity, and many students repeatedly ask whether they can take an entire class focused on similar experiences during their senior year.

That enthusiasm helped inspire the proposed Cultural Cooking elective. Staff envisioned it as a half-year course featuring eight different cultural units, though Mrs. Germond acknowledged that the current proposal only represents the foundational outline and that additional curriculum development will continue over the summer, pending course approval.

Committee members discussed how the new Cultural Cooking elective would fit into the program of studies. Dr. Leggett explained that although the course is listed under the world language department, it

clearly states that it does not fulfill a world language graduation requirement. Dr. Leggett acknowledged that creating a separate elective category for just one course would have been awkward, while also emphasizing that the class could spark greater interest in continuing language studies.

Mrs. Petrella then asked about the course structure, noting that the proposal included several cultural units. Mrs. Germond explained that the semester-long course would cover all of the units rather than requiring students to choose only one country or region. Each unit would likely last about two weeks and combine cultural learning, basic vocabulary instruction, and hands-on cooking activities. She described the class as highly collaborative, with students of varying Spanish experience levels working together. Advanced students could help beginners learn vocabulary, ingredients, and conversational phrases while exploring connections between cuisines, ingredients, and cooking traditions across different regions. The conversation among committee members also included discussion about favorite countries and cuisines, including Spain and Costa Rica, and Mrs. Germond noted how many foods and cooking traditions overlap across Latin American regions.

Mrs. Trainer confirmed that, if approved, the department would be prepared to launch the course in September. Mr. Shoudy plans to spend additional summer curriculum hours refining the details, and Mrs. Trainer expressed confidence that student interest is already strong.

Mr. Moore also asked about staffing and logistics. Mrs. Trainer responded that while Mr. Shoudy would primarily teach the course, planning would involve collaboration with other world language teachers and the school's culinary teacher. Members joked about wanting samples of the cooking at future committee meetings.

The discussion then shifted to practical concerns such as kitchen safety and ingredient costs. Mr. Roraback praised the effort to modernize and energize course offerings but stressed the importance of teaching proper kitchen safety procedures. He also suggested that the class could incorporate lessons about budgeting and sustainability, similar to culinary programs that offset ingredient costs through sales or events. Mr. Roraback highlighted the educational value of field trips to cultural markets in places like Meriden or Hartford, where students could experience unfamiliar environments and interact with different communities.

Mr. Moore asked how language instruction would be handled during cooking activities. Mr. Shoudy explained that instruction would be differentiated depending on the students enrolled. Recipes might be entirely in Spanish for advanced students, while beginners would use English alongside Spanish vocabulary and phrases. Mrs. Germond also noted that mixed-level classes could create strong peer collaboration opportunities, with advanced students helping less experienced classmates. Dr. Leggett added that the course could also naturally expose students to practical concepts like the metric system through cooking measurements.

Dr. Darcy acknowledged being initially skeptical about the proposed Cultural Cooking course, particularly because of her own background as a world language teacher. Dr. Darcy explained that her primary concern involved academic rigor and whether the course truly belonged within the world language department, arguing that it might fit more naturally as a culinary arts or social studies elective since it does not focus primarily on language instruction.

Despite those reservations, Dr. Darcy said she was willing to set that concern aside and instead focus on the broader educational value of the course. Dr. Darcy posed a reflective question to the teachers, asking what they hoped students would remember five or ten years after taking the class. Referring to the idea of “the forever” or enduring understandings, Dr. Darcy noted that students often forget specific details over time, but they retain certain lasting impressions or lessons. Dr. Darcy asked the teachers to consider what lasting impact they hoped the eight-unit course sequence would leave on students long after graduation, emphasizing that the answer did not need to be overly formal or elaborate.

In response to the question about what students should remember years after taking the course, Mr. Shoudy reflected on growing up in Durham and understanding how the community can sometimes feel isolated or sheltered. He said his hope is that students leave the class realizing that there is a much larger world beyond their immediate surroundings. Mr. Shoudy emphasized that exposure to different cultures, foods, and communities can help students become more open-minded and comfortable exploring unfamiliar places. Drawing on earlier comments about visiting cultural markets in nearby cities, he said he wants students to understand that they can connect with people simply by approaching them with respect and curiosity.

Mrs. Germond acknowledged that language instruction is not intended to be the primary focus of the Cultural Cooking course. Instead, she described language learning as a secondary component that supports the broader goal of cultural exploration. While students will still learn vocabulary and cultural concepts they would not encounter in a traditional culinary course, the larger objective is to help students understand the wider world and the connections between history, geography, culture, and food. Mrs. Germond emphasized that food provides a powerful way to explore how societies develop and interact. She highlighted how the cuisines of regions such as the Caribbean have been shaped by migration, colonization, and cultural exchange over time. The committee member responded positively to the idea that “food reflects the history, culture, and geography of a country,” describing that as a particularly strong enduring understanding for the course.

Mrs. Germond also discussed how teachers’ own travel experiences influence their teaching and help them bring authentic, cultural perspectives into the classroom. She explained that, in traditional language classes, there is often pressure to move quickly through grammar and vocabulary requirements in order to build language proficiency. This course, however, would allow more flexibility to spend time exploring topics students find especially interesting, such as pre-Hispanic foods that are still used today or specific cultural traditions like Spain’s culinary focus on cured ham.

Dr. Darcy raised a more technical concern regarding teacher certification, academic standards, and how the proposed Cultural Cooking course would formally fit within the school curriculum. Dr. Darcy explained that while she appreciated the concept of the class, she was concerned about whether a world language teacher could appropriately teach and assess a course that also incorporates culinary and cultural studies components. Dr. Darcy posed a hypothetical scenario in which the state Department of Education reviewed the course and questioned its classification. Since the teachers involved are certified in world language rather than culinary arts or social studies, Dr. Darcy asked what official standards would guide instruction and assessment.

Dr. Darcy also referenced concerns related to teacher certification regulations and workload calculations, noting that if a teacher instructs courses outside their certification area without a formal minor assignment, that portion of their teaching load may not count toward certain professional requirements. Beyond the technical employment implications, Dr. Darcy emphasized a broader philosophical concern about ensuring the course is grounded in the appropriate academic standards. Specifically, she questioned how assessments tied to cooking skills, such as knife skills or kitchen work, could be evaluated by teachers without culinary certification. Dr. Darcy asked the teachers to explain how they conceptualize the course as fitting under world language certification and which standards they believe justify having certified world language teachers lead and assess the class.

Mrs. Germond responded that the Cultural Cooking course was intentionally designed using existing world language curriculum frameworks rather than culinary or social studies standards. She explained that their planning was guided by the “Four Cs” of world language education, with particular emphasis on cultural comparisons and cultural understanding. Additionally, Dr. Leggett noted that food serves as the instructional “vehicle” through which those world language standards are taught and reinforced.

Mrs. Trainer clarified that the course is not intended to function as a culinary certification class, but rather as a culturally focused language elective where cooking activities are used to support broader learning goals tied to communication and cultural competence. Mrs. Trainer highlighted strong interdisciplinary support for the course, noting that the school’s culinary teacher has been actively interested in expanding collaboration across departments. Mrs. Trainer sees food as a natural connector between disciplines and a meaningful way to engage students in understanding culture, relationships, and everyday life beyond their local community. Finally, Mrs. Trainer placed the course within a broader district initiative toward more cross-curricular and interdisciplinary learning experiences. She acknowledged that a more detailed alignment with specific standards would still be needed, but emphasized that the overarching goal is to move toward more integrated, collaborative instructional models across departments, rather than keeping learning confined within traditional subject boundaries.

A committee member questioned if the class would include team teaching. Mrs. Trainer clarified that the course is not currently intended as formal team teaching, but that closer collaboration between staff could develop over time depending on the district’s strategic direction toward more interdisciplinary instruction. Mrs. Trainer emphasized that, even without formal co-teaching, significant collaboration would take place between the world language teachers and the culinary teacher. This would include joint planning time, shared curriculum development, and ongoing consultation to ensure both instructional quality and student safety.

A key focus of the discussion was safety in the kitchen environment. Mrs. Germond noted that she had already begun discussing expectations for teaching foundational culinary skills, such as knife safety, and how those might be introduced or supported by the culinary teacher. Ms. Hamilton proposed that students might need to demonstrate basic safety competencies before participating in more advanced cooking activities, similar to structured skill checkpoints in programs like scouting.

Dr. Darcy expressed concern that the “Four Cs” framework, while useful as a general guide, is too broad and vague to serve as the sole foundation for curriculum design. She encouraged the teachers to more explicitly align the course with specific world language standards, particularly those related to

interpersonal communication and other clearly defined competencies, in order to strengthen the academic rigor and clarity of the curriculum (ACTFL). While stating that she was not opposed to the course and recognized its potential appeal to students, Dr. Darcy emphasized that there are important technical considerations that still need to be addressed. She acknowledged the value of cross-curricular, interdisciplinary learning and agreed that it is an appropriate direction for instruction, but stressed that it must be implemented in a way that is both rigorous and compliant with state education expectations.

Mrs. Petrella established that the Student Achievement Committee is approving of the Cultural Cooking Course to proceed to be brought to the full Board of Education for approval at the next meeting. At this point, teachers were dismissed from the meeting.

Graduation Cohort Data (State Report)

Dr. Leggett presented the state report on four-year graduation rates for Regional School District 13, noting that the district's rate is 92.5% for the 2025 cohort. This figure represents 98 graduates out of a cohort of 106 students. Dr. Leggett also noted that the district is above the state average, which is 88.9%. Dr. Leggett emphasized that in a small district, percentage changes can be significantly affected by relatively small numbers of students, which can make trends appear larger than they may be in absolute terms. Mr. Moore questioned how the data reflects students who graduate in three years. It was clarified that students who do not graduate within four years are still capable of graduating later, and the report specifically tracks four-year cohort completion rather than total eventual graduation.

Mrs. Petrella and Mrs. Allen asked questions about how the data is compiled and whether it is reviewed annually by the committee. Dr. Leggett clarified that this is a yearly state-issued report, and that future years' data will continue to be added for comparison. The discussion also touched on special populations, including students receiving transitional or additional support services, confirming that they are included in cohort calculations if they graduate. Dr. Darcy observed a roughly 10-point difference in graduation rates between male and female students, prompting interest in whether this is a consistent trend over time.

The committee concluded that reviewing multiple years of data would be important to determine whether any patterns, such as gender gaps or other disparities, are persistent or simply anomalies, with a suggestion to track and graph the data longitudinally to better identify trends that may require further investigation.

ACES Audit Presentation

Rosaria Giannetti, Assistant Director of Professional Learning Services at ACES, thanked the district for the opportunity to conduct the curriculum audit and expressed appreciation for the collaboration with teachers throughout the process. Special recognition was given to Dr. Siegel for her leadership and support, noting that her involvement helped facilitate productive work with staff and contributed significantly to the success of the audit.

The purpose of the curriculum audit was to evaluate several key aspects of the district's curriculum program. The review focused on alignment with state standards, fidelity to the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework, assessment quality and rigor, collaboration and calibration among educators, and the

alignment between assessments and the written curriculum. The audit also examined vertical coherence across grade levels and the sustainability of curriculum structures and processes over time.

To conduct the audit, the team utilized several research-based frameworks. These included evaluating fidelity to the UbD model, measuring alignment to state standards and frameworks, and assessing cognitive rigor through Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) framework. The review also incorporated Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles and an equity lens to determine how well the curriculum provided multiple ways for students to engage with content, demonstrate learning, and access instruction. Additionally, the audit analyzed systems related to curriculum documentation, coherence, sustainability, accessibility, and version control to determine how effectively curriculum resources are organized and maintained.

As part of the review, auditors examined hundreds of curriculum-related documents and instructional materials. These included UbD unit plans, curriculum maps, pacing guides, assessments, performance tasks, rubrics, and grading descriptors. The team evaluated the logical sequencing of content, the alignment of transfer goals and essential questions, and the extent to which required standards were addressed across all content areas.

The audit also focused on the quality and rigor of assessments, particularly performance tasks. Reviewers analyzed the cognitive demands placed on students and the degree to which assessments encouraged real-world application of learning. Rubrics and grading practices were examined to determine how clearly expectations are communicated to students and how consistently student performance is evaluated.

The audit also examined grading practices and vertical alignment across grade levels. The presenter noted that inconsistent grading can become an equity issue when students are not evaluated using similar expectations and standards. As part of the review, the team analyzed whether skills and concepts progress appropriately from kindergarten through twelfth grade to ensure a coherent learning experience for students throughout their academic careers.

The audit process included several key components. First, the team conducted an inventory and review of all curriculum materials available for analysis. They examined standards alignment and reviewed each stage of the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework, with particular attention to Stage One, which focuses on conceptual understanding and long-term learning goals. Additional areas of analysis included assessment calibration, depth of knowledge (DOK) and rigor mapping, vertical alignment, and governance and sustainability practices related to curriculum management.

The audit identified several significant strengths within the district. One of the strongest findings was the district's solid foundation in the Understanding by Design framework. Ms. Giannetti credited Dr. Siegel's leadership in establishing a consistent structure across curriculum teams and ensuring that all content areas used the same framework. This has resulted in strong structural consistency throughout the K–12 curriculum. The review also found evidence of high-quality student work, particularly in the performance tasks that were examined. Many of these tasks demonstrated meaningful learning opportunities and authentic applications of knowledge. In addition, several content areas showed promising evidence of vertical alignment, and instructional practices observed through the curriculum materials suggested that effective teaching models are becoming firmly established across the district.

Alongside these strengths, the audit identified six primary areas of need. One area involves improving conceptual precision by strengthening Stage One understandings and transfer goals within units. The audit revealed that some curriculum documents focused more heavily on what students need to know rather than what they should understand and be able to apply beyond the classroom. Strengthening these transfer expectations would help students connect learning to real-world situations and long-term understanding.

Another need involves formalizing vertical alignment and ensuring that skill progressions that may exist in practice are clearly documented in the written curriculum. The audit also recommended reviewing curriculum revision cycles to determine whether existing processes remain practical, effective, and sustainable. Closely related to this is the issue of version control. The audit found that teachers may have access to multiple versions of the same curriculum materials and documents, which can create inconsistency in implementation. Establishing clear procedures for maintaining current materials and removing outdated versions would help ensure that students receive a more consistent educational experience.

The audit further emphasized the importance of improving curriculum documentation and usability across departments. While maintaining a shared student experience is important, curriculum resources must also be organized in ways that allow teachers to use them efficiently and effectively. Finally, the review highlighted the need for greater system coherence. The district has many examples of excellent teaching occurring in individual classrooms, but these practices are not always embedded within the curriculum itself. The goal moving forward is to create systems that ensure high-quality instruction is not dependent on individual teachers alone but is consistently supported through a reliable and sustainable curriculum framework across the district.

Ms. Giannetti emphasized that high-quality curriculum and instruction should be system-dependent rather than teacher-dependent. While the district has many excellent educators who create strong learning experiences, the goal is to ensure that all students receive a consistent educational experience regardless of which teacher they have. Student success should not rely solely on the chance of being assigned to a teacher who excels in curriculum design and implementation. Instead, the curriculum itself should provide the structures and expectations necessary to support consistent learning opportunities across classrooms.

One of the most significant areas identified for improvement was assessment calibration. The audit found a need to standardize definitions of proficiency, mastery, and rigor in order to reduce variations across classrooms and departments. This work is particularly important in the area of performance tasks and assessments, where differences in expectations can lead to inconsistent student experiences. Reviewers examined whether assessments were sufficiently rigorous, whether performance tasks required students to transfer and apply their knowledge, and whether students were being held to similar standards across the district. Ms. Giannetti identified assessment calibration as one of the district's highest-priority needs because it has the potential to produce the greatest impact on teaching and learning. When assessments are aligned and calibrated, teachers develop a deeper and more consistent understanding of academic standards. This process helps build shared efficacy among educators and creates a common vision of what mastery looks like for students. Through the development and refinement of performance tasks, teachers gain a clearer understanding of the depth of learning expected and the level of rigor required to demonstrate proficiency.

Assessment calibration also strengthens the alignment between curriculum, instruction, and assessment. By beginning with rigorous performance tasks, educators can work backward through the curriculum design process to ensure that students are learning the knowledge, skills, and understandings necessary to succeed. This alignment supports authentic, student-centered learning experiences and ensures that instructional activities are intentionally connected to desired outcomes.

During the current school year, the district began addressing these priorities by embedding professional learning focused on Understanding by Design principles and curriculum development. Teachers from multiple content areas participated in curriculum refinement and writing efforts. Rather than beginning with revisions to curriculum documents, teams focused first on developing and improving performance tasks. This approach allowed teachers to create meaningful products that could be used immediately while simultaneously deepening their understanding of effective curriculum design.

Ms. Giannetti noted that many teachers initially worried that curriculum work would simply involve rewriting documents without meaningful impact on classroom practice. To address this concern, the process centered on creating high-quality performance tasks and then using those tasks to guide revisions to other parts of the curriculum. As teachers developed assessments, they revisited foundational questions about what students should know, understand, and be able to do. This cyclical process connected professional learning directly to practical curriculum development and helped ensure that revisions were purposeful rather than merely administrative. The work also included calibrating teachers' ability to evaluate their own curriculum and identify areas for future improvement. As educators gained a stronger understanding of curriculum design principles, they became better equipped to analyze their programs, recognize strengths and gaps, and determine appropriate next steps. According to Ms. Giannetti, this increased capacity for self-assessment and continuous improvement was evident across many of the curriculum teams involved in the process.

Ms. Giannetti concluded by outlining several recommended next steps for the district as it continues to strengthen curriculum development and implementation. The most significant recommendation is to improve assessment calibration through the use of shared rubric language and common moderation protocols. Establishing consistent expectations for evaluating student work would help ensure that proficiency and mastery are defined similarly across classrooms and grade levels, creating a more equitable and reliable assessment system.

Another priority is strengthening Stage One of the Understanding by Design framework by developing clearer understandings, transfer goals, and progression standards. Ms. Giannetti noted the importance of helping students move beyond simply acquiring knowledge and toward independently applying their learning in new situations. To support this work, the audit recommends developing Depth of Knowledge (DOK) progression maps that clearly outline how cognitive rigor should increase across grade levels and learning experiences, ultimately leading students toward independent transfer of knowledge and skills.

Ms. Giannetti also emphasized the need for ongoing, embedded professional learning focused on curriculum design. Future professional development should continue to support alignment with Understanding by Design principles, the development of rigorous performance tasks, and coherence within Stage Three, which focuses on instructional planning and learning experiences. Sustained

professional learning would help ensure that curriculum development remains an ongoing process rather than a one-time initiative.

A second major category of recommendations centers on leadership support for curriculum management and implementation. As the district continues developing and refining its written curriculum, systems and structures must be established to support its long-term maintenance and accessibility. Recommended actions include refining publication protocols, reviewing revision cycles, and improving version control processes so that teachers have access to the most current and accurate curriculum materials.

The audit also recommends creating a centralized curriculum repository that would provide staff with easy access to curriculum documents and promote greater consistency across the district. In addition, district leaders are encouraged to revisit and clarify district-wide curriculum expectations to determine whether existing expectations remain effective and aligned with current goals.

Another important recommendation involves developing systems for monitoring curriculum implementation. Ms. Giannetti stressed the importance of ensuring that the written curriculum is also the curriculum that is being taught in classrooms. Establishing clear monitoring processes would help verify that curriculum expectations are being implemented consistently and would provide opportunities for ongoing feedback and improvement.

Finally, Ms. Giannetti emphasized the need to build sustainable structures that support a continuous cycle of curriculum review, revision, and refinement. Rather than treating curriculum development as a periodic project, the district should establish long-term systems that allow for regular evaluation and improvement, ensuring that curriculum remains current, coherent, and responsive to student needs over time.

The committee thanked Ms. Giannetti for her presentation and praised Dr. Siegel's report summary as a detailed and valuable analysis. Mrs. Petrella requested if the slides could be shared with the Board for future reference, which Dr. Leggett agreed they could.

Dr. Darcy asked when Region 13 might be prepared to take full ownership of curriculum development and implementation without relying heavily on outside consultants. Ms. Giannetti responded that continued support during the coming year would be beneficial, particularly to strengthen systems and structures already being developed. She emphasized the effectiveness of embedded professional learning, where teachers receive training in small, manageable segments and immediately apply what they have learned to curriculum work.

Ms. Giannetti noted that the district is still in the process of building a complete curriculum framework across all content areas. During the audit, reviewers found that some subjects, including physical education and music, had limited curriculum documentation available for review. As a result, one of the recommendations is to continue building curriculum resources and supporting structures over the next one to two years. This work would occur alongside efforts by district leadership to monitor curriculum implementation and ensure consistency across classrooms.

Mr. Moore reflected on a period several years earlier when curriculum development and professional learning activities had slowed significantly. He asked how much the district may have lost during that period and whether the effects were visible in the audit findings. Ms. Giannetti acknowledged that the

impact was evident in several ways. Most notably, much of the written curriculum was outdated. Through both the document review process and conversations with teachers, it became clear that in many cases the curriculum being taught in classrooms no longer matched the written curriculum documents. Dr. Leggett noted that this discrepancy is not inherently negative. In some cases, teachers have improved upon outdated curriculum documents by implementing stronger instructional practices than those reflected in the written materials. In other cases, however, the lack of alignment can create inconsistency in student experiences and expectations. Ms. Giannetti stressed that the goal is not to criticize teachers but rather to capture and preserve the expertise that already exists within classrooms. Many teachers are doing exceptional work, and the district's challenge is to document those successful practices within the curriculum so that all students benefit from them. By incorporating effective teaching strategies and instructional approaches into the written curriculum, the district can provide more consistent learning experiences across classrooms and grade levels.

Mr. Moore raised concerns about teachers relying on familiar instructional approaches for many years without regularly revisiting curriculum expectations. He questioned whether some educators might continue teaching the way they always have, regardless of changes to curriculum documents. In response, Ms. Giannetti iterated the importance of district leadership establishing systems to monitor curriculum implementation. She explained that ensuring the written curriculum becomes the taught curriculum requires ongoing oversight and accountability. Ms. Giannetti noted that monitoring can occur through multiple mechanisms, including classroom walkthroughs, observations, and other leadership practices designed to assess curriculum implementation. These processes help district leaders determine whether instructional practices align with curriculum expectations and identify areas where additional support or adjustments may be needed.

The conversation also highlighted the role that common performance-based assessments can play in promoting consistency while preserving teacher autonomy. Dr. Darcy suggested that teachers should have flexibility in how they teach content and engage students, but that all students should ultimately be expected to demonstrate mastery of common learning goals. Ms. Giannetti agreed, explaining that common performance assessments provide a shared target for student learning while still allowing teachers to tailor instruction to the needs and interests of their students.

Mr. Moore questioned the district's role in revising curriculum. In response to questions about curriculum revision, Ms. Giannetti emphasized that curriculum development should not be viewed as a process of periodically discarding existing work and starting over. Instead, curriculum should be continuously refined through established review cycles. Curriculum is never truly finished; it should be revisited regularly to determine whether it continues to meet students' needs, aligns with current standards, and reflects new state requirements. The consultant cited social studies as an example. Although the district's secondary social studies curriculum was identified as one of the stronger programs reviewed during the audit, the recent release of new state standards means that revisions will still be necessary to ensure continued alignment and comprehensive coverage of required content.

Mrs. Allen also questioned if vertical alignment would be a priority during curriculum review. Ms. Giannetti explained that curriculum revision and vertical alignment work should occur simultaneously. As curriculum teams revise units and assessments, they should also examine how skills and concepts progress across grade levels. During the current year's curriculum work, teachers participated in vertical

teams that included representatives from multiple grade levels. This structure allowed educators to consider how learning develops over time and helped strengthen coherence across the K–12 system.

Ms. Giannetti reported that many teachers were initially hesitant, particularly because they feared the process would simply involve rewriting documents without meaningful benefits. However, as teachers became engaged in the work and experienced the embedded professional learning opportunities built into each session, their attitudes became increasingly positive. Ms. Giannetti noted that teachers appreciated the practical nature of the work and recognized that the goal was not merely document revision but meaningful improvements in teaching and learning. She also credited Ms. Siegel’s leadership and support for helping the process run smoothly and maintaining teacher engagement throughout the initiative.

When asked whether teachers were ready to continue the work, Ms. Giannetti responded confidently that they were. She explained that teachers expressed a desire for meaningful change and repeatedly identified coherence and consistency as important needs. Ms. Giannetti also noted that the state is currently undertaking work related to assessments, creating an opportunity for the district to align its curriculum and assessment initiatives with broader state efforts.

Dr. Darcy asked about affordable solutions for the version-control challenges identified in the audit. This question reflected one of the audit's findings that multiple versions of curriculum documents and resources exist throughout the district, creating potential confusion about which materials should be used. The conversation shifted toward identifying practical and cost-effective ways to centralize curriculum resources, maintain current documents, and ensure that teachers have consistent access to the most up-to-date curriculum materials.

Mrs. Allen asked whether the district had utilized the model curriculum resources provided by the state Department of Education as part of its curriculum review and development process. Dr. Siegel indicated that these resources had been particularly useful in social studies. Curriculum teams compared the district's existing curriculum against the state's model curriculum and evaluated whether the state-developed materials aligned with the needs of Region 13 students. According to Dr. Siegel, the social studies teachers, particularly those in grades K–8, found the state resources valuable and ultimately determined that they provided a strong framework to guide curriculum development and revision.

The conversation also addressed upcoming state requirements related to curriculum transparency. Dr. Leggett noted that new legislation will require districts to publish Stage One curriculum materials online. As a result, part of the district's curriculum work is focused on preparing for these requirements. This priority is reflected in the district's strategic plan, which designates the coming year for completing Stage One curriculum development across all content areas. Dr. Leggett explained that while preliminary work on assessment development will continue, the more intensive focus on assessment calibration and alignment is planned for the following year.

Dr. Siegel also shared that significant work has already been completed to prepare for these requirements. In collaboration with additional staff members serving in stipend positions, she has been developing scope-and-sequence documents for every course offered by the district. This process has involved reviewing existing curriculum materials stored in district repositories, consulting with teachers, and distributing drafts for feedback and revision.

The discussion shifted to broader trends in curriculum and assessment, particularly the movement toward competency-based education. Mr. Roraback referenced previous district conversations about "reimagining" education and noted that there had been considerable discussion in recent years about competencies, proficiency scales, and defining desired learning outcomes. Mr. Roraback specifically mentioned the growing use of proficiency scales and observed that some school districts are moving away from traditional numerical grading systems in favor of competency-based reporting. Mr. Roraback clarified that he was not necessarily advocating for abandoning traditional grades but wondered whether competency-based approaches should be considered as part of the district's long-term curriculum and assessment planning.

In response, Dr. Leggett explained that her experience working with districts transitioning to competency-based systems had shown that the terminology itself is often less important than the underlying practices. Whether a district uses letter grades, numerical scores, proficiency scales, or competency labels, the critical factor is ensuring that those measures accurately represent student learning and mastery. She emphasized that grading systems only have value if there is a clear and consistent understanding of what each designation actually means. At the same time, Dr. Leggett acknowledged that terminology can play a role in driving cultural and instructional change. If a district believes that maintaining traditional grading systems might prevent educators, students, or families from embracing a competency-based mindset, then adopting different language could help reinforce the desired shift. However, if the district can successfully define and communicate mastery expectations within an existing grading structure, there may be no need to fundamentally change the reporting system.

Mrs. Allen questioned the accreditation of the preschool program. In response, Dr. Siegel shared that this year preschool educators were given dedicated release time during professional development days to work on accreditation with the support of an instructional coach, they have made significant progress and are close to completing the work.

Walkthrough Data

Dr. Siegel explained that this year's instructional visits were conducted as informal classroom visits rather than formal instructional rounds. The purpose was not evaluation but the collection of baseline observational data across the district. These visits were intentionally broad in focus rather than centered on a single instructional area, allowing the team to gather a wide range of information about classroom practice.

Between February and March, the team visited 35 classrooms across the district to collect observational evidence. The goal was to better understand what instruction currently looks like in practice and to use that information to inform professional learning, instructional coaching, curriculum development, and the district's broader vision of instruction. Dr. Siegel also created an informational guide for teachers explaining that the visits were non-evaluative and designed solely for data collection.

The visits included representation from both elementary and secondary levels, with a roughly even split between them. Classrooms were observed across multiple schools, including Brewster, Lyman, Strong, and CRHS, to ensure a broad and representative sample. Observations also covered a range of grade levels from kindergarten through high school.

During the visits, multiple subject areas were observed, with a particular emphasis on mathematics and English Language Arts. Dr. Siegel also documented different types of learning activities occurring in classrooms. The most frequently observed lesson types were practice and review, though instances of new learning and application were also recorded.

Mr. Moore questioned the difference between new learning and practice. Dr. Siegel noted that “new learning” was defined as instruction where students were being introduced to new concepts or skills, while “practice” referred to situations where students were applying previously introduced content. For example, instruction introducing addition strategies would be considered new learning, while students completing addition problems independently would be considered practice.

Some additional contextual notes were recorded during visits, such as transitions or classroom activities unrelated to direct instruction. Dr. Siegel also clarified that instructional coaches often observed the same classroom, and their notes were used to capture consistent descriptive data.

When asked about trends across grade levels or schools, Dr. Siegel indicated that no strong or consistent patterns emerged in terms of instructional type distribution. It was also noted that no formal assessments were observed during the visit window, as those classrooms were either not conducting assessments at the time or had already moved past them when visits occurred.

Dr. Siegel highlighted findings from the instructional visits related to classroom instructional formats. The data showed that whole-group instruction accounted for 47.2% of observed time, independent work accounted for 36%, and small-group instruction represented only 8.3%. A small portion of time was categorized as “multiple,” which referred to classrooms where instruction shifted between formats during the 5–7 minute observation window.

Dr. Darcy questioned what consisted of independent learning. Dr. Siegel reported that independent work varied in nature and was not limited to worksheets. While some instances included worksheet-based tasks, students were also observed working on computers, engaging in personalized learning programs, or using manipulatives. However, worksheet-based independent work was noted as a common occurrence across the district.

The relatively low percentage of small-group instruction was noted by Mrs. Allen as a surprising finding, especially given prior district emphasis and professional development focused on small-group learning strategies. Dr. Siegel acknowledged this as an “aha moment,” while also noting that the data represents brief 5–7 minute snapshots from 35 classroom visits rather than full instructional periods. There was also discussion about how curriculum programs, such as ELA curricula, are often designed with small-group instruction in mind, though implementation may vary in practice.

In terms of classroom culture, the visits showed strong evidence of respectful and inclusive interactions between students and teachers. There were clear examples of language supports that promoted belonging, student voice, and engagement in learning environments. This was identified as a positive strength across observed classrooms.

Regarding academic rigor, students were generally engaged with age- and grade-appropriate content across classrooms. However, the observations indicated that opportunities for deeper, more rigorous

cognitive demand were less consistently evident. While foundational understanding was present, higher levels of critical thinking and extended reasoning were not observed as frequently as desired.

In instructional design, classrooms demonstrated a variety of strategies to help students access content. Teachers used visuals, models, examples, and scaffolded materials to support student understanding. Examples included differentiated worksheets with varying levels of structure, such as guided lines or partially completed templates, as well as visual supports displayed in classrooms. However, fewer examples were observed of students being given multiple ways to demonstrate their learning, which was identified as an area for growth.

Dr. Siegel continued by discussing findings in the Instructional Purpose category of the classroom visits. Overall, there was clear evidence that tasks and activities were intentionally designed and not perceived as busy work. The instructional materials and assignments observed had a clear purpose, and teachers were generally purposeful in what students were asked to do. However, a key concern was that students often did not demonstrate a clear understanding of that purpose. When observers asked students what they were working on, what they were learning, or what their learning goals were, students frequently struggled to articulate their objectives or explain the purpose behind their work. This indicated a gap between task design and student understanding of learning intentions.

In the area of student engagement, Dr. Siegel clarified that while students were consistently on task and completing assigned work, the term “actively engaged” may not fully capture what was observed. Instead, much of the engagement reflected compliance; students were doing what they were asked to do, but not always demonstrating deeper cognitive engagement such as questioning, explaining their thinking, or showing evidence of higher-level processing.

Mr. Moore asked for further clarification of compliance. Dr. Siegel explained “compliance” as situations where students complete assigned tasks because they are directed to do so, rather than showing intrinsic engagement or deeper interaction with the learning. In contrast, deeper engagement would involve students actively thinking about the content, asking questions, making connections, or demonstrating ownership of their learning. Dr. Darcy referenced the distinction between “hands-on” and “minds-on” learning, emphasizing that physical task completion does not necessarily equate to cognitive engagement.

The instructional visits covered all grade levels from pre-K through grade 12, although they did not include the district’s alternative program due to its different structure. The observations were conducted by the district instructional coach and Dr. Siegel, who conducted the walkthroughs together.

Mrs. Petrella questioned whether findings were broken down by grade level, particularly in relation to student understanding of learning goals. The implication was that younger students may have more difficulty articulating their learning purpose, and that developmental differences could influence how students respond when asked about their learning objectives. Dr. Siegel reported that there was no significant trend based on grade level. Instead, the variations observed were more closely related to the specific lesson being taught rather than student age or grade span.

Mr. Roraback asked whether the observers introduced themselves when entering classrooms or remained anonymous. Dr. Siegel clarified that the visits were brief, informal, and not evaluative in nature. Each

classroom was typically observed for about five minutes, and there was no significant evidence that the presence of observers noticeably changed student behavior during that time.

The conversation then returned to instructional practices, particularly assessment and feedback. Dr. Siegel noted that while there was some evidence of formative assessment practices, such as teachers checking for understanding, this was an area where additional growth was needed. Similarly, there was limited clear evidence that students were consistently receiving and using feedback to improve their learning.

Based on the findings, several key areas for future focus were identified. These included cognitive rigor and student thinking, with an emphasis on ensuring that students are doing more of the intellectual work, engaging in deeper thinking, and participating in more meaningful learning experiences. Another area was access, agency, and clarity of learning, ensuring that all students can access content, understand learning goals, and take ownership of their progress. A third focus area was responsive teaching and feedback, with attention to strengthening feedback loops and ensuring that instruction is adjusted based on student understanding.

Dr. Siegel emphasized that the instructional visits were intentionally informal and designed to gather baseline data that could later inform the district's vision of instruction and strategic planning. This information will be used to identify "problems of practice" and guide more targeted improvement efforts moving forward.

Mr. Moore asked the student guests how they perceived their educational experience. Mr. Roraback shared a personal reflection on his experience in the district, emphasizing the desire for all students to have similar positive educational experiences. Addie, a current student at Coginchaug, relayed that while she is not currently reflecting on her educational experience, she believes once she graduates, she will process her experience in the district.

Ms. Hamilton questioned whether teachers might be involved in future instructional walks using the same observation tools. Dr. Siegel noted that involving teachers in this type of collaborative observation process can be powerful for professional growth, as it allows educators to see instructional practices in action and reflect on their own teaching. Dr. Leggett agreed that this is a valuable approach and indicated that it could be part of future, more formalized instructional rounds. However, Dr. Leggett also noted practical limitations, including a lack of substitute coverage and staffing constraints, which currently make it difficult to implement a fully expanded teacher-led walkthrough system. Ms. Hamilton suggested that teachers could benefit from access to the same observation tools and documentation used during the instructional visits, even if they are not participating in formal instructional rounds. Mr. Roraback agreed that this type of peer observation experience could be valuable for teachers. He noted that in past experiences, teachers had participated in instructional rounds during designated time, sometimes using prep time or receiving compensation when their prep time was impacted.

Graduation Policy Update

Dr. Leggett discussed the Graduation Policy, in which the policy revision has already gone through the Policy Committee and the board once, and is now being sent back for further review before returning again for a final board decision. The main issue centers on high school English and math graduation

requirements, specifically a recent change in state guidelines that reduced the minimum English requirement from four years to three.

Dr. Leggett explained that the district has already adjusted to align with the state requirement of three years as the minimum, and noted that there has been limited community concern so far, with feedback coming from only a small number of individuals. The primary concern raised by community members is whether reducing the requirement could negatively impact students' college applications, with fears that colleges might view the district as less rigorous if fewer years of English are required.

In response, it was clarified that college admissions processes typically evaluate a student's full program of study rather than simply counting required credits. Colleges generally look at whether students have taken the most rigorous coursework available to them, including whether they chose to take a fourth year of English when offered. The district continues to recommend four years of English for students planning to pursue college, even if the state minimum is three.

The conversation also highlighted the broader goal of aligning graduation requirements with state expectations while expanding flexibility for students. This includes supporting alternative pathways for students who are not college-bound, as well as allowing more flexibility for students who may want to accelerate in certain subject areas, such as completing advanced English coursework early and pursuing additional electives in their senior year.

A compromise discussed at the policy level involved requiring families to sign a waiver if a student opts to take only three years of math or English. However, concerns were raised that such a requirement could create equity issues by placing additional administrative burden on families. There was support for simplifying the approach by clearly stating that four years of English and math are recommended for college-bound students, while three years remains the state-required minimum, without additional waiver requirements.

Another suggestion included ensuring that families are informed early, potentially through communication from school counselors, about the importance of the fourth year for college readiness, without requiring formal signatures or additional procedural steps.

Dr. Darcy also inquired about timing and student decision-making, with the idea that students should not be allowed to opt out of English requirements early in high school, but rather consider such flexibility later in their academic pathway, such as in their senior year.

Mrs. Petrella discussed an idea raised in a community email regarding expanding English offerings for students pursuing non-college pathways. The suggestion proposed creating applied or career-focused English courses, such as business communication or "English for the trades", where students could develop practical skills like writing estimates, creating business plans, and communicating effectively with clients and employers.

In response, Dr. Leggett noted that there is currently not a dedicated course specifically designed around that model, but it could be a strong addition as the district continues developing its career pathways. The idea was acknowledged positively as a meaningful direction for future programming. It was also clarified that, within the current structure, senior-level English courses are already elective-based. This means

students have flexibility in choosing among available English options in their senior year, regardless of whether the district requires three or four total years of English for graduation. Because of this structure, the proposed applied English courses could be added as electives without directly affecting the discussion around graduation requirements.

Ms. Hamilton noted that most district requirements align with state expectations or exceed them by only one credit, with the exception of world language, which requires three years. Ms. Hamilton expressed concern that higher local requirements may limit students' ability to take electives, drawing on past experience that students sometimes struggled to fit all required courses into their schedules.

Clarification was provided that the formatting in the document distinguishes between state minimum requirements and district recommendations for college-bound students. The numbers in parentheses represent state minimum requirements, while the higher numbers reflect recommended coursework for students planning to attend college.

The conversation also touched on variability in college admissions expectations, particularly regarding world language requirements. Ms. Hamilton shared that, based on personal experience, college requirements can differ significantly by institution. Some universities may require fewer years of foreign language than students are sometimes advised to complete at the high school level. Mrs. Trainer noted that school counselors play an important role in guiding students through these differences during junior and senior year meetings, helping them understand the specific expectations of the colleges they are considering.

Dr. Darcy also emphasized that college expectations are not uniform across institutions. More specialized schools, such as engineering-focused programs, may have different or reduced language requirements compared to more comprehensive or liberal arts institutions. This reinforces the importance of individualized advising rather than assuming a single standard applies to all colleges.

The discussion continued with renewed interest in expanding applied course options, particularly the idea of "business English" or "trade English." Mrs. Petrella expressed strong support for developing more practical, career-oriented English courses that would better serve students pursuing non-college pathways while also broadening elective opportunities within the English curriculum. Mrs. Petrella strongly advocated for making these types of practical writing and communication skills available as soon as possible and suggested they could even become required, given their importance in real-world settings such as business and the trades.

Mr. Roraback emphasized that students often question the relevance of traditional coursework in later high school years and argued that instruction should clearly connect to real-world applications. Mrs. Petrella highlighted the importance of skills such as writing professional letters and communicating effectively in workplace settings to support writing tasks. The underlying concern was ensuring that students see clear relevance and purpose in their learning.

Dr. Darcy noted that the most effective approach may be to embed these practical skills across multiple subjects rather than isolating them within a single "business English" course. Committee members discussed that writing and technical literacy can be integrated into science, math, and other content areas,

while also recognizing that different disciplines require different forms of reading and communication. For example, reading technical materials in engineering is a distinct skill from analyzing literature, and both are valuable in different contexts.

The conversation then shifted to broader curriculum development efforts, particularly the creation of career and technical education (CTE) pathways. Dr. Leggett shared that recent strategic planning discussions with high school teams identified gaps in preparation, especially in math skills needed for students entering CTE programs. This has prompted increased collaboration between departments to better align curriculum and make learning more relevant to students' future pathways.

Mr. Roraback noted that similar collaboration is beginning to emerge in English where he teaches, with ongoing efforts to connect instruction more directly to applied contexts. Monthly meetings between subject-area teachers are being used to explore how curriculum can better reflect real-world applications and improve relevance for students pursuing technical and career-focused pathways.

Mr. Moore questioned Dr. Leggett for her policy recommendations, in which Dr. Leggett recommended removing the waiver requirement for reduced English or math credit pathways due to concerns about equity and administrative burden.

Ms. Hamilton raised a separate concern about physical education requirements, particularly for students with special needs. Ms. Hamilton suggested that if students are frequently receiving waivers for PE, it may indicate a need to review whether current physical education courses are sufficiently accessible and inclusive. Mrs. Trainer clarified that physical education waivers are very rare in the district. In most cases where students cannot participate in standard PE activities due to medical or safety concerns, such as risk of impact, the district does not simply excuse them from the requirement. Instead, students are still expected to earn credit through alternative means, such as completing exercise logs or engaging in approved physical activities that can be done safely at home over an extended period of time. Dr. Leggett referenced experience from another district with a strong adaptive physical education program that served students across grade levels. This prompted a brief acknowledgement that there may be opportunities to further explore or strengthen adaptive PE offerings, particularly in the lower grades, to ensure continued accessibility and support for all students.

Mrs. Petrella reflected on earlier years when middle schools included more hands-on technical and practical courses such as shop, home economics, and related family and consumer sciences programs. She noted that these experiences had been reduced or reorganized over time and questioned whether current efforts to expand career pathways at the high school level are also being supported at the middle school level.

In response, Dr. Leggett confirmed that middle school offerings in areas such as Family and Consumer Sciences and technology education ("shop") are still in place. Programs such as "Young Chefs" were highlighted as popular examples of current applied learning opportunities. These courses were described as an important "farm team" that helps introduce students to practical, hands-on skills before they reach high school.

The conversation included reflections on the lasting impact of these types of courses, with committee members sharing personal anecdotes about students and family members who still remember projects they created in middle school shop classes. The discussion emphasized that tangible, hands-on learning experiences tend to be memorable and meaningful for students over time.

Mrs. Allen had concerns about whether students might miss key academic standards if they do not continue in certain elective sequences. In response, Dr. Leggett noted that curriculum planning ensures standards are appropriately addressed and that students are not left without essential learning outcomes. The conversation also briefly touched on broader academic readiness, including examples such as grammar skills needed for standardized testing. This was used to emphasize the importance of ensuring foundational skills are taught consistently throughout students' academic careers.

Finally, the discussion returned to policy action. It was confirmed that the item under consideration would be sent back to the board with the recommendation to remove the waiver requirement. This decision would be accompanied by clear communication to families, supported by school counselors who regularly assist students with course planning, graduation requirements, and postsecondary planning options.

Data Review – SAT Data 2026

Dr. Siegel reviewed SAT performance data, noting that scores have remained relatively stable over the past several years, with a small decline in 2023 followed by improvement. Dr. Siegel emphasized that year-to-year comparisons are imperfect because each year's scores represent different student cohorts and different versions of the test. Overall, the district continues to perform above the state average.

A discussion emerged about the lingering academic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Darcy shared a personal theory that reading skills recovered more quickly because parents could support reading at home, while math achievement has been slower to rebound because many parents were less equipped to help with evolving math instruction methods. Administration noted that national trends show SAT scores have generally not returned to pre-pandemic levels, and the district's experience aligns with those broader patterns.

There was also discussion about the relationship between PSAT and SAT performance. Dr. Siegel explained that counselors actively help students analyze PSAT results, identify areas for improvement, and access practice resources, which may contribute to student growth between the two assessments.

Mrs. Petrella suggested the district has the potential to become a model school system and achieve even higher levels of student performance, especially under the guidance of the new superintendent and the work being done to define the Vision of a Graduate, Vision of Instruction, and instructional improvements. However, other members cautioned against focusing solely on rankings, arguing that student happiness and well-being should remain a priority.

The conversation broadened into how the district defines success. While acknowledging that academic achievement is important, Dr. Leggett argued that SAT scores alone should not be the primary measure of student success. A community perception that fewer students are attending highly prestigious colleges was also discussed. Dr. Leggett noted that this may not necessarily be negative, as students may be

choosing more affordable options and avoiding significant college debt while still attending strong institutions.

Ms. Hamilton highlighted a positive data point: in the most recent year, the district's combined SAT average exceeded the state average by 89 points, the largest gap shown in the five-year data set. However, Mrs. Trainer also noted that SAT participation, changing college admissions requirements, and the transition from paper-based to digital testing can all influence score trends and should be considered when interpreting results.

Strategic Plan, Vision of a Graduate & Vision of Instruction Update

Dr. Leggett introduced the district's long-awaited framework for the future, expressing excitement about presenting the first draft of three interconnected initiatives that have been in development for approximately a year. She reflected on discussing the concept with the leadership team on her first day in the district and noted that the work has now reached a significant milestone.

Dr. Leggett cautioned board members that they would be receiving a substantial amount of information and that it might initially feel overwhelming. However, she emphasized that all of the pieces are intentionally connected, forming a cohesive vision and plan for the district's future. Dr. Leggett also stressed that these documents are drafts and are expected to evolve through community feedback.

Board members were informed that they were the first group to see the materials before they are distributed more broadly. Following the presentation, the documents would be shared with staff, families, and the wider community to gather input. The board is expected to begin a more detailed discussion of the materials at its June 10 meeting.

The superintendent outlined three key components:

1. **Vision of a Graduate:** A statement of the district's promise to students and families, defining the knowledge, skills, attributes, and dispositions that every student should develop from pre-kindergarten through graduation.
2. **Vision of Instruction:** A commitment from educators describing the consistent, high-quality instructional practices and learning experiences that will be provided to help students achieve the Vision of a Graduate.
3. **Five-Year Strategic Plan:** The long-term roadmap that will guide the district's priorities, actions, and implementation efforts.

Dr. Leggett explained that the district's strategic planning process is grounded in the work of education researcher and author Elizabeth City. The framework adopted by the district centers on the principle of "Think big, act small, and learn fast." Dr. Leggett noted that this philosophy comes from City's work on strategic planning and aligns with her contributions to the concept of instructional rounds. The approach emphasizes establishing ambitious long-term goals while implementing manageable, incremental actions and continuously learning from results along the way. According to the superintendent, this mindset will guide the district's efforts to create meaningful and sustainable improvement, allowing the district to adapt and refine its work as it progresses rather than attempting large-scale change all at once.

1. Vision of a Graduate

The superintendent described the extensive community engagement process used to develop the district's Vision of a Graduate. The process included 381 survey responses, a review of previous versions of the graduate vision to preserve valuable prior work, 21 focus groups with approximately a dozen participants each, and follow-up meetings at every school to gather clarification and feedback. Participants included students, parents, guardians, community members, and representatives from the local Chamber of Commerce. The leadership team then worked together to finalize the draft.

The resulting framework is represented by an oak tree model. The roots of the tree symbolize the district's Core Ethical Values (Respect, Honesty, Responsibility, Kindness, and Courage), which emerged as a strong and consistent theme throughout surveys and focus groups. The superintendent noted that these values remain deeply embedded in the district culture and are widely recognized and embraced by the district and community members. The model combines two key elements: Essential Attributes (who students are and how they show up as individuals) and Durable Skills (what students know and are able to do). Together, these elements form five Core Competencies that define the district's vision for all learners.

Dr. Leggett emphasized that these competencies are not intended as outcomes students achieve only by graduation. Instead, they are qualities that should be evident throughout a student's educational journey, from pre-kindergarten through graduation and beyond. To make the competencies meaningful and accessible at all grade levels, the district developed both elementary and secondary versions of the accompanying descriptions.

Five Core Competencies

Students will be:

1. Growth-Oriented Learners
2. Innovative Solution Seekers
3. Responsive and Self-Directed Navigators
4. Conscientious Community Champions
5. Purposeful Communicators and Collaborators

Of these, two themes emerged most strongly from stakeholder feedback: Growth-Oriented Learner and Responsive and Self-Directed Navigator. When discussing the Growth-Oriented Learner, Dr. Leggett reported that community members strongly emphasized the importance of productive struggle, resilience, and learning through safe failure. Additionally, when discussing the Responsive and Self-Directed Navigator, Dr. Leggett highlighted the need for students to be adaptable and self-directed in a rapidly changing world shaped by evolving careers, technology, and artificial intelligence.

Dr. Leggett expressed enthusiasm for the framework, describing it as a reflection of the district's identity and values. She characterized the Vision of a Graduate as a promise to students and families regarding the knowledge, skills, attributes, and dispositions the district is committed to developing at every educational level.

2. Vision of Instruction

Dr. Leggett explained that the Vision of Instruction was developed independently from the Vision of a Graduate to ensure that both processes authentically reflected stakeholder input. Despite working separately, the two frameworks ultimately aligned closely, reinforcing the district's belief that they form a cohesive educational vision.

Dr. Siegel presented the Vision of Instruction. The Vision of Instruction was informed by extensive stakeholder engagement, including 18 staff focus groups, 106 staff survey responses, 35 classroom observations, 244 student survey responses from grades 9–12, and Reviews of educational research and examples from other districts. Several recurring themes emerged throughout the process: Building resilience through supported failure and productive struggle; Real-world relevance and application of learning; Greater instructional consistency across the district; Balancing technology readiness with concerns about excessive screen time ("the digital paradox"); and Strengthening partnerships between schools, families, and the broader community.

Dr. Siegel presented the Vision Statement: To cultivate an equitable and inclusive learning community where rigorous, authentic instruction empowers every student to achieve real-world mastery. Dr. Siegel acknowledged that this statement is broad, but explained that it is brought to life through five core instructional elements.

Five Core Elements of the Vision of Instruction

1. **Rigorous:** Maintaining high expectations for all students while providing the support necessary for success. Key focus areas are as follows: Culture of productive struggle, Equitable access to grade-level content, and Scaffolded independence. This element emphasizes challenging students appropriately while helping them build resilience and confidence.
2. **Authentic:** Connecting learning to meaningful, real-world experiences. Key focus areas are as follows: Experiential and hands-on learning, Real-world application, and Purposeful technology integration. The goal is to ensure students understand the relevance of what they are learning and can apply knowledge beyond the classroom.
3. **Responsive:** Using data, feedback, and reflection to continuously adapt instruction. Key focus areas include Real-time instructional adjustments, Actionable feedback systems, and Adaptive and continuous growth. This element focuses on meeting student needs as they emerge and fostering a culture of continuous improvement.
4. **Inclusive:** Creating a learning environment where every student feels they belong. Key focus areas include Foundation of belonging, Proactive home-school partnerships, and Student collaboration. Leaders emphasized that belonging, strong family relationships, and peer collaboration are critical components of student success.
5. **Coherent:** Establishing consistency and alignment across the district. Key focus areas are Systemic alignment, Structured professional collaboration, and Unified instructional expectations. This element addresses a theme raised repeatedly throughout district discussions: the importance of consistency across schools, classrooms, and grade levels.

Dr. Leggett noted that the Vision of Instruction aligns with the Vision of a Graduate. While the graduate vision defines the qualities and competencies students should develop, the instructional vision outlines the teaching practices and learning experiences necessary to achieve those outcomes. Leaders also connected these frameworks to other district initiatives, including classroom learning walks, instructional reviews, and professional learning efforts. They explained that the strategic plan emerged as a natural convergence of all this work, translating the district's vision into specific goals and actions.

3. Five Year Strategic Plan

Dr. Leggett provided an overview of the district's proposed Five-Year Strategic Plan, explaining that the document is extensive and designed to serve as a practical roadmap for implementation rather than simply a statement of aspirations.

The plan is built around four permanent strategic priorities that Dr. Leggett expects will remain in place even when the plan is revised in 2031:

1. Climate and Culture
2. Community Connections
3. Student Achievement
4. Resources

These four pillars are intended to be enduring priorities that continue from one strategic planning cycle to the next. In addition, the plan includes rotating goals that reflect the district's most pressing needs during a specific five-year period. For the current plan, the rotating goals are Pathways (expanding and refining student pathways at the high school level) and Three Oaks/Memorial Transition (supporting the district's school reconfiguration efforts). Dr. Leggett expects these rotating priorities to change in future strategic plans as new challenges and opportunities emerge.

For each strategic priority, the district developed Specific goals, supporting objectives, and Potential action steps generated through focus groups and stakeholder discussions. The administration intentionally organized the work to be both strategic and manageable. Action items were prioritized based on urgency and importance ("triage") and logical sequencing, ensuring foundational work occurs before more advanced initiatives. Each objective was also assigned to responsible personnel, including Lead Administrators, Teachers, Support Staff, and Specialized departments such as Technology services and Food Services. This process was designed to balance workloads across years and personnel while increasing accountability and feasibility.

The strategic plan is organized by year, allowing stakeholders to view: Goals scheduled for 2027, Goals scheduled for 2028, and Goals scheduled for 2029 and beyond. Users can also sort the plan by strategic priority area, making it easier to track initiatives within Climate and Culture, Community Connections, Student Achievement, Resources, Pathways, or the Transition effort.

Dr. Leggett emphasized that some objectives are designated as annual priorities, reflecting the district's "Think Big, Act Small, Learn Fast" philosophy. These annual goals focus on making one meaningful

improvement each year within a particular objective area, reinforcing the belief that consistent incremental progress can lead to significant long-term change.

To ensure transparency and adaptability, the district plans to provide public progress reports twice each year in January and July. These updates will be presented to both the board and the community and will include Progress made toward goals, Adjustments needed based on results, and Planning for the next phase of implementation.

Board members and administrators expressed strong enthusiasm for the newly developed strategic framework, highlighting the way the Vision of a Graduate, Vision of Instruction, and Five-Year Strategic Plan align and reinforce one another. Dr. Leggett emphasized that one of the greatest strengths of the work is its coherence. Every element of the strategic plan can be connected directly to one or both vision documents, and every component of the visions can be traced to specific goals and actions within the plan. While acknowledging that the framework is still a draft and not yet perfect, she noted that the next several weeks will be dedicated to gathering feedback from staff, the board, and the broader community before making revisions and aiming for a formal launch in July.

Dr. Darcy praised the work, noting that previous district vision statements often lacked the supporting structures needed for implementation. In contrast, this effort includes both a vision and a detailed roadmap for achieving it, making it significantly more actionable.

One feature that drew particular attention was the inclusion of a comprehensive 20-year capital plan within the resources section of the strategic plan. The capital plan tracks facility and infrastructure projects by Priority level, School location, Service history, Expected lifespan, Completion timelines, Estimated costs, Funding sources, Project bundling opportunities, Bonding and bidding considerations. Board members expressed appreciation for having a long-term facilities roadmap and praised the level of planning and organization it provides.

The superintendent explained that once the board approves the final framework, the leadership team will take additional steps to ensure alignment by explicitly connecting strategic goals to the Vision of a Graduate competencies and Vision of Instruction elements. The district also plans a broader public rollout, potentially including videos and community engagement efforts to help stakeholders understand the new framework.

Implementation will begin with the development of annual SMART goals. The leadership team plans to focus first on the priorities identified for 2027 and then repeat the process for each subsequent year, ensuring that the strategic plan translates into measurable actions and outcomes.

The presentation concluded with appreciation for the many stakeholders who contributed feedback throughout the process. Dr. Leggett noted that the work reflects extensive community input and collaboration, and several participants expressed pride in the district's progress and optimism about its future direction.

Mr. Moore questioned how the district will present and communicate its new strategic framework to the public once it is finalized. Dr. Leggett explained that the current tree graphic used in the Vision of a Graduate is AI-generated and therefore cannot serve as the district's final branded image. Once the board

approves the framework, the district plans to either hire a graphic designer or utilize internal talent to create original artwork that can be officially used and copyrighted. The goal is to combine the oak tree imagery from the Vision of a Graduate with the sun imagery from the Vision of Instruction into a unified visual identity.

Board members and administrators emphasized the importance of making the vision and strategic plan highly visible throughout the district. Dr. Leggett added that while the detailed spreadsheet and implementation documents will remain available for those who want deeper information, the most important goals and themes should be presented in accessible, public-facing formats such as posters, displays, and digital resources. Dr. Leggett stressed that transparency and accountability will be important components of implementation. She described a simple reporting system using Green for completed objectives, Yellow for objectives in progress, and Red for objectives not yet started. These updates would accompany the district's planned six-month progress reports and allow community members to easily track implementation. Dr. Leggett invited board members to carefully review the documents and contribute additional ideas, noting that many of the proposed action steps originated from stakeholder suggestions during the planning process.

Assessment Inventory Process and Update (CSDE Requirement)

Dr. Siegel reviewed a state-mandated assessment audit that examined local, school-required assessments while excluding state tests such as SBAC, NGSS, and SAT. After submitting data, administrators discovered the state's report was based on information about a year old, so they updated and corrected inaccuracies before analyzing results. Through a structured reflection process involving principals, instructional coaches, and counselors, the district examined testing time, assessment usefulness, and potential overlap across assessments. They found that while each assessment generally provided distinct information, overall testing time is still significant, about 5 hours in kindergarten and up to 15 hours in middle school, not including state or classroom assessments. The district is now focused on reducing unnecessary testing while preserving meaningful data, including expanding interview-based assessments in early grades, evaluating tools like i-Ready Inform, and considering the use of state interim assessments to streamline efforts. They are also reviewing assessment timing across the year to avoid overload and ensure data is used effectively for instruction. In high school, analysis centered mainly on the PSAT due to state constraints, with recognition that departmental assessments vary widely.

Dr. Leggett questioned if the data evaluated only testing time, or if it analyzed the quality and utilization of assessments. Dr. Siegel clarified that the state assessment inventory was primarily focused on measuring testing time and assessment load, rather than evaluating the quality or instructional value of individual assessments. It did not assess whether specific tests were strong or weak, nor did it analyze how effectively data from assessments was being used. Instead, it provided a breakdown of how much time students spend testing across subjects and grade levels, with the main intent of identifying potential over-testing.

Ms. Hamilton questioned if the report produced meaningful or productive data. Dr. Siegel reflected that while the process required significant effort to compile and verify data, it was still productive because it prompted meaningful conversations about assessment practices. Dr. Leggett iterated the guiding principle that assessments should only be given if the resulting data is actually used to inform instruction. Mrs.

Petrella noted that the exercise also aligned with ongoing district work to review and refine assessment choices, and it came at a useful time as leaders were already discussing which assessments to continue or revise.

There was also brief discussion about broader state initiatives related to assessment systems, though there was some uncertainty about specific programs being referenced.

Before concluding the meeting, Mrs. Petrella opened conversation to the student attendees. Addie appreciated the visuals and presentations, and the committee's commitment to student achievement. Will also expressed appreciation for the work the committee does, and was surprised by the use of classroom observations and data collection, noting that he had observed administrators visiting classrooms but was unclear on how that information is used or what it is intended to evaluate. Addie reflected that her observation is part of an AP Government project and that she enjoyed the experience attending the meeting. The students were wished a successful end of the school year before the meeting adjourned.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Adjournment

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

All in favor of adjourning the meeting: Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Allen, Ms. Hamilton, and Mr. Roraback. Motion passed and the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by Meghan Shortell-Fratantonio