

Seymour Board of Education



REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

May 5, 2025

Seymour Middle School

7:00 pm

Board Members Present:

- Chris Champagne, Chairperson
- Kristen Bruno, Vice Chairperson
- Jay Hatfield
- Lori Nespoli
- Pete Kubik
- Ed Strumello
- Stephan Behuniak, Secretary
- Jim Garofolo
- Kristen Harmeling

Others Present:

- Dr. Susan Compton, Superintendent
- Keith O'Rourke
- Mary Sue Feige
- Dr. Kris Boyle
- Lauren Reid
- Dave Willadsen
- Dave Olechna
- Paul Lucke
- Shannon Levey, Board Clerk

I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. Pledge of Allegiance – Mr. Champagne called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM with the pledge of allegiance.
- B. Moment of Silence – Arlene Brummer
- C. Introductions

II. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

- A. Bungay Building Committee Update – Mr. Kubik reported no new developments since the last meeting. The educational specifications previously approved by the board remain in place. The committee continues to meet in preparation for the referendum scheduled for October 9th. The state is expected to provide a 66% reimbursement based on the referendum amount.
- B. Seymour Champion Recognitions – “Noble”
 - 1. Bungay School
 - a. Mason Williams
 - b. Carrie Corcoran
 - 2. Chatfield-LoPresti School
 - a. Raymond Frisbie
 - b. Anthony Kevalis
 - 3. Seymour Middle School
 - a. Aiden Day
 - b. Mackenzie Browning
 - 4. Seymour High School
 - a. Ryan Sadick

C. Student Reports

Clubs and Activities:

National Honor Society: Hosted a successful blood drive, visited elementary classes to encourage students ahead of SBAC testing, and organized the annual Powder Puff game, which was won by the seniors.

Senior Activities: May 1st marked Decision Day for seniors.

Sports Updates: Spring sports are well underway, including baseball, softball, tennis, golf, and boys' and girls' track.

Athletic Recognition: Rob Carafiello and Lilliana Criscio received CIAC Athlete Awards.

Art Club: Currently working on a mural project.

Environmental Club: Celebrated Earth Day with a focus on outdoor initiatives.

Debate Club, Electracon Car Club, and Newspaper Club: Advisors are developing succession plans.

FBLA: Inquired about the CAFE policy on sponsorships. It was confirmed that the sponsorship policy passed in March, and the process for accepting sponsorships will be shared with the club.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Public Comment provides the opportunity for the public to make a comment. It is not a dialogue between the Board and the public. Based upon what is heard during Public Comment, the Board may choose to add a topic to the agenda. If questions are posed that the Chairperson is able to answer, those questions may be addressed under the Chairperson's Comments portion of the agenda. The Board will not discuss personnel matters. Comments should be respectful and no longer than 3 minutes in length so that all who wish to comment may have the opportunity to do so. All the public wanting to comment will need to state their name and address for the record prior to addressing the Board.

1. **Jodi Gerstenhaber**, 8 Emma Street: Addressed concerns regarding BOE Policy 6163.5 – Physical Education for grades 6-12. She expressed appreciation for the administration and policy committee for considering her feedback and bringing updates to the full board. Gerstenhaber outlined the current make-up process, noting that written assignments, which are not part of the regular PE curriculum, can feel punitive. The policy allows for either physical or written make-up work at the teacher's discretion. She suggested eliminating written assignments as a default requirement, reserving them only for extended absences, and urged the board to consider this when voting.
2. **Penelope Hansen, 6th grader**: Expressed disappointment over the budget passing with cuts, particularly affecting STEM, French, and music/chorus programs. She voiced frustration that many eligible voters did not participate, emphasizing the importance of these programs for students' futures. Hansen urged the community to come together to support the schools just as they do for other causes.

IV. REPORTS

A. Nutrition Services Report: March – Cindy Brooks

B. Special Education Report – Dr. Boyle

C. Financial Report – Salvatore Bucci

D. Enrollment Report

E. School Improvement Plan: Bungay Elementary School – Lauren Reid & David Willadsen

Ms. Reid outlined the overall goal of the School Improvement Plan: to ensure that students, families, and staff feel safe and valued within the school community.

Mr. Willadsen highlighted the focus on fostering stronger student-adult relationships, building on last year's efforts.

This year, the school embraced the mantra, "Our school is a family," emphasizing the importance of personal goal-setting with the statement, "*I know my goals, and I feel successful and important when I make progress toward them.*"

Academic Goals:

- **Reading:** Students will demonstrate improved reading comprehension and fluency, progressing toward grade-level proficiency.
- **Math:** Students will deepen their understanding of math concepts and problem-solving skills, working toward grade-level proficiency.
- The concept of "Wildly Important Goals" (WIGs) has become a student-led initiative across all disciplines, with students setting, tracking, and celebrating their progress. This will culminate in an end-of-year WIG celebration.

5th Grade Departmentalization:

- To better prepare students for middle school, the 5th grade has been departmentalized. This structure allows for closer monitoring of academic progress, increased focus on executive functioning skills, and the development of stronger student-teacher relationships. It also fosters teacher collaboration and data-driven conversations.

Data and Interventions:

- Academic data is trending positively, with notable growth in ELA. Math data is pending.
- The implementation of extended intervention blocks has provided additional support for students requiring more time to master key concepts.
- Staff has developed a robust understanding of the focus standards, enhancing instructional consistency.

Communication Goal:

- The goal is to increase parent and family awareness of student goals and progress.
- Teachers are actively sharing goals with families to foster continuity of support at home.
- The target is for 80% of parents to respond favorably to the following statement on the Spring 2025 BES Parent Survey: *“The Bungay School staff keeps me informed of the goals and strategies my child is working on to support their overall academic and social-emotional growth.”*

Board Questions and Responses:

- **Mr. Garofolo:** Asked about the 80% target and how it was determined. Ms. Reid explained that the target is based on historical data, baseline surveys, and SMART goal-setting practices. Mr/ Garofolo suggested considering outreach to families who do not respond to the survey, noting the importance of understanding non-response reasons. Ms. Reid clarified that while the surveys are anonymous, they do engage in multiple outreach efforts to gather additional data.
- **Ms. Harmeling:** Reiterated that the survey is anonymous, making targeted follow-up impossible.
- **Mr. Hatfield:** Commended the communication efforts but acknowledged that sometimes information can be missed by parents and families despite best efforts.
- **Mr. Strumello:** Inquired about inter-grade collaboration and observation opportunities. Ms. Reid noted that while some cross-grade observations have occurred, logistical challenges limit the frequency. Dr. Compton emphasized the importance of vertical articulation to align academic expectations and rigor.

RULER Program:

- Dr. Compton recognized the implementation of the RULER program at both Bungay and CLS, highlighting its role in supporting social-emotional learning.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes

1. Regular BOE Meeting – April 7, 2025
2. Special BOE Meeting – April 22, 2025
3. Special BOE Meeting – April 29, 2025
4. Finance Committee Meeting – April 7, 2025
5. Policy Committee Meeting – April 22, 2025

B. Seymour Public Schools School Calendar 2024-2025 (with updated last day of school)

C. Hiring – Certified

1. Jenna Bennett
 - a. Math Teacher
 - b. Seymour High School
 - c. Replacing Greg Spath
2. Migel Restrepo
 - a. World Language Teacher
 - b. Seymour High School
 - c. Replacing Glenda Lisko
3. Maia Valinsky
 - a. English Teacher
 - b. Seymour High School
 - c. Replacing Lisa Cheney
4. Anthony Lacerenza

- a. English Teacher
- b. Seymour High School
- c. Replacing Nicole Fearon

MOTION: (Kristen Harmeling / Ed Strumello) move to approve the consent agenda as presented

DISCUSSION: Mrs. Fearon is not leaving the district; she is transitioning from her role in ELA to serve as the Social Studies Department Chair. Dr. Compton clarified that no additional teaching positions are being added. New hires will be rookie teachers filling vacancies created by retirements, ensuring that graduation requirements and mandated courses are adequately staffed.

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Champagne, Mr. Behuniak, Ms. Bruno, Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Strumello, Ms. Nespoli, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Kubik

OPPOSED: –

ABSTAINED: Mr. Garofolo

PASSES: 8-0-1(JG abstain)

VI. ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA

VII. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

A. Policy 6163.5

- a. Dr. Compton thanked parent Jodi, we are listening to you, we've made some progress, I know the written assignment is still bothering you, but we're going to try this and if it doesn't work then we will come back to the policy committee.
- b. Discussion: students medically ineligible will be removed from the class and need to re register for the class, how does that work for middle school? Dr. Compton: It's written for high school. Mr. Hatfield: What if it's your last semester? Mr. O'Rourke: middle school classes aren't credit bearing for graduation. So if a student is in 8th and has to be withdrawn it would typically go to a 504 meeting, but it wouldn't prevent a student from being promoted. Mr. Hatfield: Why even put that in there? Mr. Champagne: can we check to see if written assignments would qualify for graduation requirements? PE is taken freshman and sophomore year, if it's a medical situation then it would be handled in a 504 plan. if you want to put it again on the next agenda. The policy committee did not have an issue. If you want to take it to the attorney you can. It is the teacher's discretion. Ms. Bruno: PE is a curriculum, they have standards they need to address because it may be where they are in the unit. It depends on what the child missed in the curriculum. Mr. Hatfield: read "only" rather than "may" so he apologised. Dr. Compton said teachers have specific

MOTION: (Ed Strumello / Jim Garofolo) to accept and adopt the revised policy 6163.5 as presented (ES/JG)

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Champagne, Mr. Behuniak, Ms. Bruno, Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Strumello, Ms. Nespoli, Mr. Garofolo, Mr. Kubik

OPPOSED: Ms. Harmeling

ABSTAINED: –

PASSES: 8-1-0 Harmeling against

B. Healthy Foods Certification

MOTION: (Kristen Harmeling / Jim Garofolo) The Seymour Public Schools Board of Education will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverages not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food and beverage items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An "event" is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The "regular school day" is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. "Location" means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the food and beverage sales

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Champagne, Mr. Behuniak, Ms. Bruno, Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Strumello, Ms. Nespoli, Mr. Garofolo, Mr. Kubik, Ms. Harmeling

PASSES: 9-0-0

VIII. INFORMATION

- A. Hiring - Transfers
 - 1. Danielle Anderson
 - a. Tutor to Special Education Substitute
 - b. Chatfield-LoPresti School
 - c. Effective immediately
 - 2. Cathy Smarz
 - a. Nutrition Services Manager
 - b. Seymour Middle School to Chatfield-LoPresti
 - c. Effective August 1, 2025
- B. Resignations
 - 1. David Willadsen
 - a. Boys Basketball Assistant Coach
 - b. Seymour High School
 - c. Effective immediately
- C. School Events
 - 1. Chatfield-LoPresti School
 - 2. Bungay Elementary School
 - 3. Seymour Middle School
 - 4. Seymour High School

IX. BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMENTS & SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

- A. Board of Education Comments
 - 1. Chairman's Comments

Mr. Champagne: expressed appreciation that the budget passed.
 - 2. Board Member Comments

Mr. Strumello: Pleased the budget passed but disappointed by the low voter turnout.

Mr. Behuniak: Disappointed that the budget failed in the first vote.

Ms. Harmeling: Plans to attend the next Charter Revision meeting, noting flaws in the budget process outlined in the charter. Ms. Harmeling referenced Penelope's letter. She too voiced disappointment in the town and the vote outcome. Concerned that in-person town meetings can be dismissed. Acknowledged higher voter turnout compared to past years but remains eager to discuss budget cuts with the superintendent. Emphasized that the Board did not vote on cuts; they were superintendent recommendations and is looking forward to further discussions and finalization.

Mr. Hatfield: Proposed changing the time of the June awards meeting to 6 PM and potentially scheduling a meeting to discuss the budget then or before that.

Ms. Bruno: Enjoyed meeting with high school students. Stressed that the budget is a year-long process that begins in January, offering citizens multiple opportunities to voice concerns at both BOE and BOF levels. Urged those who participated in the second vote to stay engaged throughout the budget process.
- B. Superintendent Report

Dr. Compton: extended a heartfelt thank you to parents, grandparents, and the school community for their ongoing support. Reported that the SCASA Luncheon held last Friday was a success, with students recognized for academic achievement and community service. Thanked the Strategic Planning Committee for initiating the process to establish new goal areas, last updated in 2017. Four goal areas were brainstormed, drawing from plans across Connecticut and nationwide. Announced the next Strategic Planning Committee meeting on Monday, May 19th, scheduled for later in the evening to ensure broader participation. Addressed the challenges of the budget process, emphasizing that every effort was made to minimize the impact on classrooms. Solutions were developed to avoid cuts to STEM programs. Acknowledged that proposed cuts impacting personnel and teaching staff are significant, each affecting budget areas of \$100,000 or more. Plans to schedule a meeting to finalize the superintendent's evaluation, aiming for completion in June.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM

YouTube Link (5/5/2025): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ENmxAVr29QU>

Note: The next Regular Board of Education meeting will be held on **Monday, June 2, 2025**, at **7:00 pm** at **Seymour Middle School**.

Prepared by Shannon Levey,
Board Clerk