

Suffield, Connecticut

Approved by Bd. of Ed.

Board of Education Regular Meeting
Suffield High School Library Media Center
and via Zoom Webinar
May 5, 2025

Call to Order

Board Chair Sattan called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Board members Debra Dudack, Melissa Finnigan, Brian Fry, James Mol, Gianna Rossi, Maureen Sattan, Michael Sepko, and Gregory Sparzo; and Superintendent Matthew Dunbar, Assistant Superintendent Michelle Zawawi, and Business Manager Eric Remington

Absent: Sam Toskin

Recognition

- Connecticut Association of Boards of Education Student Leadership Awards

This year's Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) Student Leadership Award recipients are Suffield Middle School students Nora Pixton and Oliver McCool and Suffield High School students Keila Silva and Tryell Khouri. Ken Smith, Suffield Middle School Principal, and Anthony Hibbert, Suffield High School Principal, spoke about the leadership attributes of these students.

- Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents Student Recognition Awards

This year's Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) Student Recognition Award recipients are Suffield Middle School student Natalie Audet and Suffield High School student Samantha Ruggieri. Principal Smith and Principal Hibbert spoke about the outstanding character traits of these students.

- Suffield High School Salutatorian and Valedictorian

The Suffield High School Class of 2025 Salutatorian is Heidi Storey and the Valedictorian is Natalie Ho. Principal Hibbert spoke of the students' academic excellence, exceptional character, and their many extracurricular activities.

Suffield High School Student Representatives

Keila Silva, Class of 2025, shared the news and events at Suffield High School and Suffield Middle School. Student Representative Silva said Advanced Placement (AP) testing is currently taking place at Suffield High School. The month of May includes many events such as prom, senior awards, senior outings, and the senior banquet. Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) testing is taking place at Suffield Middle School.

Eighth grade students enrolled in the Home Builders Institute class went on a field trip to learn what it means to be in the construction field. Step-up days for incoming sixth graders took place last month.

Olivia Mishtal, Class of 2026, shared the news and events at McAlister Intermediate School and A. Ward Spaulding School. Student Representative Mishtal said A. Ward Spaulding School celebrated Arbor Day by planting a sugar maple tree. Students participated in a book tournament and chose *Flat Cat* by Tara Lazar as the 2025 Spaulding Book of the Year. McAlister Intermediate School hosted its first Math Night and Family Fun Night. Fourth grade students received a dogwood tree from the Suffield Garden Club in celebration of Arbor Day. The Hartford Symphony Brass Quintet performed and taught students about different brass instruments.

Public Comment

None

Board Member Comment

- Board member Finnigan congratulated the student award recipients.
- Board member Dudack congratulated the honorees. She said the town budget vote is Wednesday evening and encouraged residents to vote in support. She thanked all those who were involved in budget work.
- Board member Fry congratulated the honorees. He thanked the Suffield Garden Club for gifting each fourth grade student a tree in honor of Arbor Day. He said it is National Military Appreciation Month and Connecticut Mental Health Awareness Month. He extended his appreciation to the Permanent Building Commission for their recent recommendations that they are presenting to the Board of Selectmen. He thanked Assistant Superintendent Zawawi and said the district would not be the same without her dedication and hard work.
- Board member Mol congratulated the honorees. He thanked the organizers of the McAlister Intermediate School Variety Show that took place in April and had over 30 acts.
- Board member Rossi congratulated the honorees and Assistant Superintendent Zawawi.
- Board member Sepko congratulated the honorees.
- Board member Sparzo congratulated Assistant Superintendent Zawawi on her retirement and thanked her for her work.

Keila Silva and Olivia Mishtal exited the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

Reports to the Board

A. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Dunbar congratulated Keila Silva on her recognition and thanked both of the Board of Education Student Representatives for attending meetings and representing their fellow students. Earth Week, with special guest Dan Kinzer, was an exciting time for students. Students applied to be Earth Week Ambassadors and showcased different areas of Suffield. He thanked Justin Kaput, K-12 Science Coach, for organizing this incredible event. He also thanked the Suffield Garden Club for the Arbor Day event. He shared how A. Ward Spaulding School and McAlister Intermediate School had successful Family Math Nights. It is Teacher Appreciation Week and Nurses Day is May 7. Superintendent Dunbar is grateful for all of the district's teachers and nurses. He stated that the Knights of Columbus generously donated \$2,000 to the Special Services Department and the funds will be used to purchase instructional materials for the speech and language pathologists. The National Association for the Education for Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation visit for the district's preschool program will be taking place this month and the findings will be shared three

months later. He thanked Dr. Diana Kelley, Director of Special Services, and everyone involved with the NAEYC accreditation process for making the visit possible.

B. Board Chair's Report

Board Chair Sattan said budget season is near closure and she hopes to see all Board members at the town vote on Wednesday. She attended a graduation planning meeting and will give the Board of Education graduation speech on Saturday, June 14. She shared that Board of Education members will be seated on the stage for the graduation ceremony and take part in distributing diplomas. She noted that the Permanent Building Commission is presenting its final findings on the town facilities to the Board of Selectmen on May 6 at 7:00 p.m. at the Town Hall.

C. Business Manager's Report

Business Manager Eric Remington said Food Services is still running with an interim director. The state administrative review of the food service program took place last week and he noted that the findings will be forthcoming. The procurement review is ongoing. He said transportation is operating smoothly, including athletics. There are no deviations from the budget that was presented.

D. Board of Selectmen Liaison's Report

None

E. Board of Finance Liaison's Report

None

Approval of Minutes

MOTION #25-53: Dudack moved, Rossi seconded to approve the Board of Education special meeting minutes of April 8, 2025 and the Board of Education regular meeting minutes of April 21, 2025. Dudack, Finnigan, Fry, Mol, Rossi, Sattan, and Sparzo voted in favor. Sepko abstained. The motion passed **7-0-1**.

Consent Agenda

MOTION #25-54: Mol moved to approve the following on the consent agenda:

- A. Suffield High School Agriscience Field Trip Request – Indianapolis, IN – October 28-November 1, 2025

Dudack seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of approving the consent agenda. The motion passed **8-0-0**.

Discussion/Action Items

A. Preliminary SAT Results

Assistant Superintendent Zawawi said the Connecticut School Day SAT test was taken by Grade 11 students on March 12, 2025. Of the 143 eligible Grade 11 students, 136 students participated in the test. This is the third year using the mandatory adaptive digital test. She introduced Samantha Schrager, 6-12 ELA Instructional Coach, and Domenico Casolari, 6-12 Math Instructional Coach, who presented the Evidence Based Reading and Writing (EBRW) scores and math scores. Assistant Superintendent Zawawi reviewed the last five years of Connecticut School Day SAT scores. Ms. Schrager reviewed EBRW Grade 11 cohort PSAT (fall) scores compared to SAT (spring) scores and Mr. Casolari reviewed the math cohort scores. Ms. Schrager gave an analysis of the EBRW data and said there was growth with struggling readers. Mr. Casolari gave an analysis of the math data

and said slight improvements were made. He said the introduction of an Algebra I Lab will help incoming Grade 9 students.

Results from other districts in our District Reference Group (DRG) are not yet available for comparison, but will be presented in the fall. Board members discussed the adaptive scoring and comparability between PSAT and SAT scores. They discussed the high percentage of students who are behind in math. Board members discussed how the district's scores are above state and national averages. Board members discussed benchmark bands and the approaches used toward teaching content.

Melissa Finnigan left at 7:39 p.m., returned at 7:42 p.m.

B. Suffield High School Year End Review

Principal Hibbert said it is important to build a culture of competence and trust, both personally and professionally. Trust is cultivated through consistent engagement, open communication, and demonstrating accountability in decision-making and action. Monthly parent meetings, faculty surveys, and an open-door policy are key in creating transparent dialogue with stakeholders. He uses data as a value-neutral tool to inform instruction and support staff. Principal Hibbert conducted a comprehensive data review over the summer and examined AP and SAT scores, NGSS results, and discipline trends. He identified five priorities to form the school's advancement plan and stressed the importance of enhancing school culture. Priorities for the upcoming school year will focus on instruction, assessment, and school culture. He would like to deepen teachers' understanding of effective instructional practices. He will continue working to improve student supports, engagement, and attendance. Principal Hibbert asks for trust and support in his professional judgment and recommendations. He requests openness to professional development opportunities, and noted that funding for this is lower than high schools in other districts. His long-term goal is to continue building school culture to reduce chronic absenteeism.

Board members questioned the climate at Suffield High School and discussed the professional development needs and associated costs.

C. Suffield Middle School Year End Review

Principal Smith said achievements made in academics are in part due to Tier 1 instruction. Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) meetings have been restructured by Assistant Principal Dianna Kolodziey to benefit staff. The social emotional learning program RULER will be integrated for next year. Unified Arts courses were realigned to connect with high school programming including Home Builders Institute (HBI). He said the middle school continues to address differentiation, executive functioning, and class size disparities. The focus for next year includes schedule revisions, staff training, expanded interventions, and maintaining staffing to preserve programming. Principal Smith said the middle school campus planning remains a concern and looks forward to a decision on the school building project.

Board members discussed the effectiveness of the hybrid model.

D. Assistant Superintendent Search Update

Superintendent Dunbar said the assistant superintendent position has been posted and will close on May 14, 2025. He is actively recruiting and plans to bring forth only the strongest candidates. An

interview committee will be put together and a final candidate(s) will be brought to the Board of Education for approval.

Board members discussed the interview process and the anticipated plan for hiring.

E. March Financial Report

Business Manager Eric Remington reviewed the March Financial Report. The anticipated excess cost reimbursement was slightly overestimated and came in at \$64,000. He said there were a number of changes in the salary line items due to substitute coverage. There was deterioration in the special services transportation line item. The year-end projected surplus is currently \$30,000.

Board members discussed the year-end balance and where the funds will be placed.

Subcommittee Reports

- A. April 25, 2025 – Policy Subcommittee Meeting – Policy Subcommittee Chair Brian Fry said the Connecticut School Climate Policy was discussed and reviewed briefly. The subcommittee and administration will review the policy further. Policy #0000 Mission and Functions was reviewed and will be left unchanged. Policy #0100 Code of Ethics is redundant and will be stricken. Policy #0200 Goals and Objectives will be reviewed again at the next subcommittee meeting.
- B. April 29, 2025 – Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee Meeting – Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee Chair Melissa Finnigan said the Algebra I Lab was discussed. The high school intends to have five sections available for this semester-based course. It will be a highly recommended course for students but will not be mandatory. The Algebra I Lab will fulfill a STEM elective credit and will be a pass/fail course. The subcommittee also reviewed an audit of course credits in the Program of Studies and expressed support for proposed changes. The Program of Studies will be shared with the Board for approval at a future meeting.
- C. May 1, 2025 – Finance and Facilities Subcommittee Meeting – Board Chair Sattan said the Finance and Facilities Subcommittee discussed the March Financial Report and year-end projections. The subcommittee is planning a time to discuss the takeaways from this current budget season. Recontracting for bus transportation was discussed.

Board Liaison Reports

- A. Capital Region Education Council (CREC) – No report.
- B. Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) – Board member Finnigan said educational cost share is fluctuating.
- C. Agriscience – Board member Mol presented on the Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE), State Agriscience Fair, and State FFA Degree recipients. The Agriscience Mechanics Team placed 1st in the state. SAE Info Night is May 6, Agriscience Awards Ceremony is May 14, and the May Market plant sale is May 17. Agriscience students will be planting geraniums with the VFW on May 22.

Future Business

None

Public Comment

None

Board Member Comment

- Board member Dudack said the Community Engagement and Public Relations Subcommittee meeting is scheduled for Friday. She thanked Principal Hibbert for the course credit audit. She wished district teachers and nurses a happy Teacher Appreciation Week and National Nurses Week.
- Board member Fry thanked the Knights of Columbus for the generous donation. He extended best wishes to the participants in the upcoming NAEYC accreditation process. He looks forward to seeing the results of the gifted and talented screener and said voter registration was done at Suffield High School for eligible students.
- Board member Mol wished teachers a happy Teacher Appreciation Week and mothers a happy Mother's Day.
- Board member Sepko would like a career road map for all students and families to help plan for students' futures.
- Board member Sattan recognized and appreciated Kelly Blais, Suffield High School Social Studies Teacher, for the successful educational field trip to Washington, D.C. She thanked the Permanent Building Commission for the presentation of the master facilities plan. She believes they will identify significant needs in district buildings and is supporting of substantial town investment in future building projects.

Adjournment

Fry moved, Mol seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:56 p.m. All members voted in favor.

Click here to view the meeting: [05MAY2025 BOE Regular Meeting](#)

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of June 2, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Dudack
Secretary