

Suffield, Connecticut

Approved by Bd. of Ed. 07/14/2025

Board of Education Regular Meeting
Suffield High School Library Media Center
and via Zoom Webinar
June 2, 2025

Call to Order

Board Chair Sattan called the meeting to order at 6:35 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, Greg Sparzo, and Sam Toskin; and Superintendent Matt Dunbar, Assistant Superintendent Michelle Zawawi, and Business Manager Eric Remington

Absent: None

Recognition

Superintendent Dunbar and the Board recognized Keila Silva, Suffield High School Class of 2025 Board of Education Student Representative. Board Chair Sattan thanked Student Representative Silva for her work with the Board of Education and wished her all the best in her future.

Superintendent Dunbar and the Board recognized staff members who are retiring at the end of the 2024-2025 school year. Superintendent Dunbar spoke of Assistant Superintendent Michelle Zawawi. Director of Special Services Dr. Diana Kelley spoke of Denise Rigby, A. Ward Spaulding School Speech and Language Pathologist. Suffield Middle School Principal Ken Smith spoke of Shannon Picard, Suffield Middle School English Language Arts Teacher. Director of Facilities Larry Plano spoke of Joe MacArdle, District Maintenance. Secondary Special Services Supervisor Dr. Sharon Goulet spoke of Doreen Tapper, Suffield Middle School Paraeducator. Elementary Special Services Supervisor Jana Volpe spoke of Kathleen Matchett, McAlister Intermediate School Paraeducator.

Superintendent Dunbar and the Board recognized the 2026 Paraeducator of the Year, Meg Goodstein and the 2026 Suffield Teacher of the Year, Heather Goldstein as presented by Jana Volpe, and Teacher of the Year Committee Chair, Samantha Schrager, respectively.

Board members expressed their heartfelt congratulations to all and thanked them for their important work and service within the district.

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 the secondary schools have many celebrations and activities taking place.

Olivia Mishtal, Class of 2026, shared the news and events at McAlister Intermediate School and A. Ward Spaulding School. Student Representative Mishtal said Spaulding School second grade students had a visit to The Story Barn and all students participated in ACES Day (All Children

Exercise Simultaneously). The McAlister Unified Sports team participated in Unified Sports Day at Concord High School. She congratulated all of the retirees, awardees, and Keila Silva.

Public Comment

None

Board Member Comment

- Board member Finnigan thanked Michelle Zawawi for her dedication and hard work and said she will be missed greatly.
- Board member Dudack said the district's end of the year activities are plentiful and thanked everyone involved. She enjoyed the District Art Show and Choral Festival, and congratulated student conductor Julia Toskin. She recognized that June is Pride Month. She is a proud supporter and wished all who identify as LGBTQ, family members, friends and allies a happy Pride Month. She congratulated all honorees and gave a special shout out to Keila Silva for her work with the Board. She wished all the best to Michelle Zawawi.
- Board member Fry thanked Michelle Zawawi for her work. He thanked Keila Silva for her efforts and commended her resilience. He congratulated all student athletes and their families for a successful year. He thanked Board member Dudack for writing a letter of advocacy that CABE recognized as model activity for boards of education. He acknowledged June is Pride Month and is a supporter of community members who identify as LGBTQ+.
- Board member Mol thanked and congratulated the retirees and honorees. He thanked Keila Silva and Olivia Mishtal for their service to the Board of Education and wished Keila the best in her future. He wished Michelle Zawawi the best, thanked her for her devotion to the district, and said he hopes her voice continues to be part of the school and community.
- Board member Rossi congratulated all honorees and said Michelle Zawawi should be proud of the impact she has made in the district and in the community.
- Board member Sepko thanked Keila Silva for her work on the Board. He thanked Michelle Zawawi and said he enjoyed his time working with her.
- Board member Sparzo wished Michelle Zawawi an enjoyable retirement.
- Board member Toskin acknowledged Memorial Day and those who protect our way of life. He congratulated Keila Silva on her upcoming graduation and wished her well in her future. He thanked Olivia Mishtal for her work and congratulated her on her undergraduate awards. He thanked Board member Dudack for the letter of advocacy. He wished Michelle Zawawi well and congratulated her on her retirement.
- Board Chair Sattan said Michelle Zawawi found many ways to make improvements and progress during her tenure. Assistant Superintendent Zawawi took the lead when and where needed and should embark on this new chapter with a sense of pride in all she has accomplished. Board Chair Sattan wished her a retirement filled with joy and relaxation after a career dedicated to service.

Keila Silva and Olivia Mishtal exited the meeting at 7:41 p.m.

Reports to the Board

● Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Dunbar shared additional information from the Climate Survey that was requested by Board members. He said there is a 0.2 FTE staffing shortage in the World Language department related to Spanish and schedules are being reviewed to look into ways to address the shortfall. Superintendent Dunbar visited Farmington Public Schools for a site visit of their place-based learning model and he looks forward to more attention and planning to make this part of the

Suffield school community. The Choral Festival and District Art Show were fantastic and the Scholar's Breakfast was well attended. Student athletics are achieving great things with many teams moving up in tournament rankings. Superintendent Dunbar is looking forward to graduation.

- Board Chair's Report

Board Chair Sattan said the FY26 budget passed. Interviews for the Assistant Superintendent position took place last week and the Board will interview final candidates on Wednesday. There was a large candidate pool for both the Assistant Superintendent position and the Junior Class Student Board of Education Representative position. Board Chair Sattan, Superintendent Dunbar, and Eric Remington met with Kevin Goff, Glenn Neilson, and First Selectman Colin Moll to discuss the middle school building project. Updated financials and educational benefits related to the build will be put together this summer and a referendum is anticipated in the fall. A second meeting has been scheduled to discuss Board of Education goals. She reminded Board members of Michelle Zawawi's retirement party being held on Wednesday. Board Chair Sattan presented Michelle Zawawi with a gift on behalf of the Board.

- Business Manager's Report

Business Manager Eric Remington said the exit conference with the state regarding the food service administrative review took place and there were no findings of financial consequence. The procurement review is not final. Carrier has indicated that the great majority of the roof top units for Suffield High School will arrive for installation during the summer. A contingency plan will be made for possible delays. Larry Plano, Director of Facilities, is moving forward with updates to the modulars at Spaulding over the summer. The McAlister Intermediate School boiler will be replaced over the summer.

- Board of Selectmen Liaison's Report

None

- Board of Finance Liaison's Report

None

Approval of Minutes

MOTION #25-60: Mol moved, Rossi seconded to approve the Board of Education meeting minutes of May 5 and May 19, 2025. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **9-0-0**.

Consent Agenda

MOTION #25-61: Dudack moved to approve the following on the consent agenda:

- A. Policy #0100 Code of Ethics
- B. Policy #5131.911 School Climate

Mol seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of approving the consent agenda. The motion passed **9-0-0**.

Michelle Zawawi left at 8:06 p.m., returned at 8:09 p.m.

Discussion/Action Items

- A. Ward Spaulding School Year End Review

Principal Gina Olearczyk said one of the most successful achievements this year was classroom drop-ins. She said MTSS (Multi-tiered Systems of Supports) continues to develop. There was a substantial reduction in intensive ELA support needs. Implementation of CKLA has been successful. DIBLES testing is showing strong results. Place-based activities have been incorporated into many units. Math programming continues to improve with the successful implementation of Number Corner in all classrooms. The teacher evaluation process was more collaborative and well received by staff. Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) showed limited progress due to staffing challenges. Community partnerships and engagement have been notable. Principal Olearczyk said the school is facing challenges in staffing gaps related to support services. The increasing complexity of student needs is one of the biggest challenges. CKLA, place-based experiences, SEL work, and MTSS will be top priorities next year. Principal Olearczyk would like continued funding for curriculum resources and materials, professional development with consultants, and academic support personnel.

- **McAlister Intermediate School Year End Review**

Principal Kris Pryce said the most significant achievement of the year was the successful implementation of Bridges Mathematics. Professional development played a key role as well as the support from Heather Goldstein, K-5 Math Instructional Coach. Targeting Tier 3 students for intervention made a huge impact. The pilot of CKLA Literacy is going well. The expansion of a second reading specialist has allowed for servicing of more Tier 2 and 3 students. MTSS refinement is occurring through a district process. Community engagement and collaboration is strong. The Connections program is offering many exciting opportunities for students. Principal Pryce said McAlister is in year two of the SEL curriculum implementation. She said some challenges that have been identified include rising academic, SEL, and behavioral needs which continue to put a strain on time and staffing. The priorities for next year will include full implementation of CKLA, year two of Bridges Mathematics, refinement of the MTSS process, and an expansion of place-based learning opportunities. Principal Pryce said the building's aging bathrooms are a top concern and future renovations will likely be needed.

Board members thanked Principal Olearczyk and Principal Pryce for their updates.

- **Kindergarten Enrollment Update**

Superintendent Dunbar said there are 118 kindergarten students registered to date for the 2025-26 school year. There are two outstanding waiver requests, nine pending registrations, and six Open Choice slots that the district is reserving. The projected kindergarten enrollment number was 153. Superintendent Dunbar anticipates 140 students with eight classroom sections for the start of the school year.

Board members discussed staffing, enrollment, and Open Choice seats.

- **April Financial Report**

Business Manager Eric Remington reported on the general operating budget, state and federal grants, and food service income. The projected year-end Financial Statement shows a net surplus of approximately \$93,267. He and Superintendent Dunbar shared that the Suffield Middle School Library Media Specialist position will be posted. Posting the position does not obligate a hire but will ensure a robust candidate pool. A plan is in place for coverage of the Library Media Center if it should be needed. The Finance and Facilities subcommittee unanimously supported posting the position with the understanding that it falls within administrative authority and, while the Board

asks to be appraised of the status of the position, it does not require a separate Board vote. Food Service year-to-date income statements and negative lunch balances were reviewed.

Board members discussed various ways to handle the negative lunch balances. They discussed updated retirement numbers and the financial impact.

Board members and Superintendent Dunbar discussed the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) membership which was not included in the approved FY 2025-2026 budget. Any reconsideration of the CABE membership would begin after additional FY 2024-2025 budget updates, with discussions likely beginning in the Finance and Facilities subcommittee.

Sam Toskin exited at 9:09 p.m.

Subcommittee Reports

- May 9, 2025 – Community Engagement and Public Relations Subcommittee Meeting – Subcommittee Chair Dudack said the meeting focused on the Board’s advocacy letter and thanked members for collaborating in the effort. The subcommittee also discussed the Suffield Middle School Building Project. The next subcommittee meeting is Friday, June 6.
- May 16, 2025 – Policy Subcommittee Meeting – Subcommittee Chair Brian Fry said Policy #5131.911 School Climate was discussed. The policy is mandated by the state and a School Climate Committee will need to be formed.
- May 29, 2025 – Finance and Facilities Subcommittee Meeting – Board Chair Sattan said all topics covered were discussed at tonight’s meeting.

Board Liaison Reports

- Capital Region Education Council (CREC) – No report.
- Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) – No report. Board member Finnigan said a further conversation is needed regarding CABE membership.
- Agriscience – Board member Mol said FFA Awards and the state convention took place. An update on agriscience enrollment numbers will be given in the fall.

Future Business

Board member Finnigan would like an update on the facility needs of the Suffield Middle School.

Board member Toskin would like an update on the district band, choral, and theater programs.

Board member Dudack would like the Board to make a recommendation for the type of middle school project to pursue, as several options have been under consideration. She also requested a review of the district health insurance fund.

Public Comment

None

Board Member Comment

- Board member Dudack thanked Superintendent Dunbar for the climate survey information and for posting the library media position.
- Board member Fry said the report from the elementary administrators was encouraging. He thanked Superintendent Dunbar for prioritizing the library media specialist position.

- Board member Mol thanked Superintendent Dunbar for prioritizing the library media specialist position.

Adjournment

Mol moved, Fry seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:31 p.m. All members voted in favor. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Click here to view the meeting: [02JUN2025 BOE Regular Meeting](#)

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of July 14, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Dudack
Secretary