

GROTON BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 4, 2025 @ 6:00 P.M.
CENTRAL OFFICE, ROOM 11/HYBRID

MEMBERS PRESENT: Beverly Washington-Chairperson, Adrian Johnson-Vice Chairperson, Andrea Ackerman, Dean Antipas, Matthew Shulman, Ian Thomas, Jay Weitlauf (arrived @ 6:40 p.m.), Jennifer White, Michael Whitney

ALSO PRESENT: Susan Austin

- I. CALL TO ORDER – Chairperson Washington called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m. She stated that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the superintendent’s evaluation.
- II. DISCUSSION RE: THE SUPERINTENDENT’S EVALUATION – Superintendent Austin shared her self-reflections for the 2024-25 school year with the Board (see attachment).

MOTION: Ackerman, Whitney; to go into executive session at 6:38 p.m. to discuss the superintendent’s evaluation and to invite Jay Weitlauf to join executive session when he arrives at the meeting.

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

The Board returned to public session at 9:25 p.m. No action was taken at this time.

III. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Ackerman, Whitney; to adjourn at 9:31 p.m.
MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Superintendent Highlights on 2024-2025:

As Superintendent of Groton Public Schools, I remain steadfast in my belief that every child deserves access to high-quality education from the very start. From early childhood through graduation and beyond, our mission is to support, empower, and inspire students to become resilient, capable, and compassionate individuals. I believe in nurturing the whole child—academically, socially, and emotionally—while preparing each student not only for college and career readiness, but for a lifetime of learning.

Looking ahead, I envision the future of Groton Public Schools and the needs of the district. With the potential of increased student enrollment due to the building of the Columbia Class Submarines at Electric Boat, and the building and availability of apartments, condominiums, and housing, the community needs to be planning for our schools in the future

- Repurposing of Mary Morrisson Elementary School into Groton Public Schools' Early Childhood Center.
- Building a new Charles Barnum School (1964), with the largest military connected student population and the potential building of a new school similar to Mystic River Magnet and Thames River Magnet.
- Renovating the vintage wing at Fitch including fields and outdoor buildings, starting with the auto shop and wood shop becoming a manufacturing center at FHS in collaboration with our partners at EB, upgrading the culinary arts classrooms, library and auditorium, and CTE spaces.
- Preparing for more classrooms, a new wing at GMS

In Groton, our schools serve as launchpads of possibility—places where students are encouraged to explore, to lead, and to soar. We are preparing our students not only to graduate, but to RISE as Resilient Individuals, Innovative Learners, Socially Aware Citizens, and Engaged Communicators who are ready for lifelong learning, civic responsibility, and meaningful careers. Through strategic partnerships—especially with Electric Boat, which sponsors The Boat Program across elementary, middle, and high school, we are connecting students directly to the workforce of tomorrow.

Falcons Rise!

PERFORMANCE GOAL #1 - Student Achievement: The Superintendent will provide leadership designed to increase student performance and promote academic improvement of the schools within the district. The core mission of Groton Public Schools is teaching and learning, ensuring a culture and climate that fosters growth in achievement for all students.

Based on Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and CSDE, CT's Next Generation Accountability System has a goal for every district of 85 for the total accountability index by 2030 (GPS Accountability Index 2024 was 69.9).

In addition, the District Performance Index (DPI) for ELA, Math, Science goal is 75 for 2030 (GPS DPI 2024 was at 65.2 for ELA, 59.4 for Math, and 61.9 for science).

Year 2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2030
61.9/85 AI	73/85	76/85	79/85	82/85 – 85+/85
65.2/75 DPI ELA	68/75	71/75	74/75	75+/75
59.4/75 DPI Math	63/75	66/75	69/75	72/75 – 75+/75
61.9/75 DPI Sci	65/75	68/75	71/75	74/75 – 75+/75
18%/5% ABS	16%/5%	12%/5%	8%/5%	5%/5%

While the administration has seen some results with state testing in 2025, and I've shared some good news regarding improvements in SAT, NGSS, AP, IB, and ECE at the high school, official results should come out in late summer/early fall and we will share more in-depth analysis with the Board as it becomes available.

GPS focus on accelerated learning and social emotional growth:

- K-8 Literacy focus and shifts based on science of reading
- K-8 Math focus with research, professional development and potential changes
- K-12 STEM focus, and science research around Op-Sci-ed
- IAB's and SBAC in ELA, Math, and Science/NGSS (grades 3-8)
- PSAT, SAT in ELA and Math (grades 9-11) and NGSS (grade 11)
- Reduce chronic absenteeism
- Use data to support school improvement planning, aligned to district improvement planning and the new GPS strategic plan

PERFORMANCE GOAL #2 - Educational Leadership: Educational leadership is grounded in relationships, such as working with the faculty and staff, students and families, as well as the Board of Education and community. In collaboration, they establish vision, beliefs, and performance expectations, while capitalizing on the talents and skills of the community.

- GPS Committee created and shared strategic plan 2025-2030 with BOE based on comprehensive research and development, using many models including the CT state plan through 2028; *Every Student Prepared for Learning, Life, and Work Beyond School*
- Groton Strategic Plan 2025-2030: In collaboration with the Assistant Superintendent, we assembled a district team to develop and build a new Groton Strategic Plan 2025-2030 that includes a District Strategic Plan/Improvement Plan and [School Improvement Plan](#).

The Five Plan Pillars:

- Accelerate Academic Achievement
- Cultivate a Rich and Vibrant Learning Community
- Strengthen Pathways that Develop Secondary Readiness
- Attract and Grow a Skilled supported Workforce
- Improve Operational Efforts and Increase Fiscal Responsibility

PERFORMANCE GOAL #3 - Organizational Management: The Superintendent will nurture high- quality teams and increase organizational capacity using data-driven decision-making to enhance the day-to-day operations of the school district for all members. The Superintendent will provide leadership training for the Board of Education, the Administrative Team, faculty and staff centered on the goals outlined in this document and based on data.

- In collaboration with the Assistant Superintendent, the administration, faculty, and staff from each school, we are able to evaluate and support educators through a new [comprehensive Groton Public Schools' Educator Evaluation plan](#), which includes at least four mini lesson observations; supports timely feedback, and incorporates initial, mid-year, and end-year meetings with self-evaluations for educators and feedback from the evaluator. This plan not only offers timely support and personalized professional learning, but most importantly, it builds relationships and improves the culture and climate in the building.
- Under my leadership, with the CO Directors and our Administrative team, we have persevered and shepherded budgets in an effort to support high quality teaching and learning, even with an imposed Town Review which added additional stress to our finance department. With the Board, we worked diligently to provide the detailed financial picture of the needs of the district for FY26, but both TC and RTM cut the GPS FY 26 budget by \$2.3 M. The use of a [budget tracker tool](#) supported the work of the Board and administration as we deliberated the reductions and additions necessary for producing the \$92,004,575.00.
- With our new Finance Director Rita Parciak and many new staff members in the Finance office, we look forward to working together on all things budget related.

PERFORMANCE GOAL #4 - Community Relations: Strong community relations are critical to the success of the superintendent and the school system. The Superintendent will continue to build strong community relations by continuously communicates and collaborates with families and community, regional, and state stakeholders to support student learning:

- Family engagement is most important at both the school and district level.
- Family events at the schools, arts celebration, and recognition with the Board
- *School Matters* newsletter sent several times per year, along with Superintendent letters and greetings. ([School Matters June 2025](#))
- ParentSquare has been well received per survey data, as well as *School Matters* and the [Groton Public Schools Facebook page](#).
- Focus groups for strategic planning and budget will take place this year
- [Weekly Update](#) is used to share information with the Board and the community
- GPS newsletter called [School Matters](#), for families and the community with the most recent issue featuring a reflective [year-end video](#), which is posted on our [grotonschools.org](#) website.
- By launching and updating a new and improved website as well as our *ParentSquare* Communication tool, we have received positive feedback about timely communications.

This year, there have been times where challenging and heartbreaking news as well as good news needed to be shared accurately with families and the Board as it became available.

PERFORMANCE GOAL #5 - Board of Education: A strong relationship with the Board is critical to the success of the superintendent and the school system. The Superintendent will continue to build a strong relationship with the Board of Education; promoting mutual respect and trust with individual members and the Board as a whole.

- Provides professional advice and keeps the BOE informed and updated on educational issues and the needs and operations of the school system.
- Keeps BOE members informed about significant operational issues in a timely manner.
- Communications ongoing with BOE for emergency concerns as well as responding to Board's questions. This is done in person, on the phone, in emails, and in weekly comprehensive Board Notes, as well as weekly meetings with the Board Chair.
- [FAQ's](#), emails, weekly Board notes ex. [June 13, 2025 Board Notes](#), weekly updates, COWs, Reg BOE meetings, committee meetings, and budget meetings are some of the essentials to our two-way communication. I try to brief the Board on all things pertinent to policy, personnel, budget, operations, and teaching and learning. Sometimes I may over communicate or miss a communication, I do my best to keep the Board and community well informed.
- The best way to take care of parent and student concerns is directly with the person(s) closest to the situation that can resolve the matter in a timely fashion. By encouraging our families to seek support in our schools by going to the teacher first, the administration or counselor, then to the central office as needed, we will avoid some of the challenging communications at the Board level.
- I always find meeting face to face and being a good listener is the best way to have two-way communication. I am very approachable and this lends itself to two-way communications.

PERFORMANCE GOAL #6 - Personal and Professional Qualities/Relationships: The Superintendent will make ethical and sound decisions and will interact with others in a manner that best represents the interests of the school district, while maintaining a healthy balance between professional obligations and personal life.

- Maintains a belief that every student can achieve at high levels PK-12.
- Involve BOE, schools and larger community in the Vision of the Graduate and what that means at every level with the goal to have students prepared for College/Careers. (RISE).
- Maintains high standards of ethics, honesty, and integrity in all professional matters.
- Maintains poise and exhibits diplomacy in the full range of her professional activities.
- Advocates strongly for public education and demonstrates the courage to support her convictions.
- National and state organization affiliations include NCTM, NCTE, NSF, CAPSS, CABE, NAFSIS, MISA, CCSU STEM board, URI/UCONN Anchor board, SFLMA board, SubVets, and UCONN Executive Leadership Program mentor.