Suffield, Connecticut Approved by Bd. of Ed.

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

Call to Order
Board Chair Sattan called the meeting to order at 6:32 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 Sam Toskin; and Superintendent Matt Dunbar, Assistant Superintendent Laura Norbut, Ed.D., and Business Manager Eric Remington

Absent: Greg Sparzo

Recognition
Superintendent Dunbar, Director of Special Services Diana Kelley, Ed.D., and the Board recognized the A. Ward Spaulding School Preschool Team for achieving National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation. Dr. Kelley thanked Principal Gina Olearczyk, Elementary Special Education Supervisor Jana Volpe, preschool teachers Aimee Boehm, Meghan Donoghue, and Anita Bage, long-term substitute Gosia Baker, Speech and Language Pathologist Brittaney Galarneau, and paraeducators Tania Chandra, Bridget Corliss, and Suzanne Kanavaros. Board Chair Sattan thanked everyone involved in the process on behalf of the entire Board of Education.

Suffield High School Student Representatives
Board Chair Sattan welcomed Board of Education Student Representatives Lucy McCoy, Class of 2027, and Olivia Mishtal, Class of 2026. Board Chair Sattan introduced Lucy McCoy who is new to the role this year, and encouraged both students to contribute to agenda item discussions, as the Board is interested in hearing student voice at their meetings. Student Representative McCoy thanked the Board and expressed excitement at serving on the Board.

Olivia Mishtal, Class of 2026, shared the news and events at Suffield High School and Suffield Middle School. Student Representative Mishtal said Suffield High School held student orientation and fall sports nights. Several new courses are being offered this year, AP Music Theory and UConn ECE Sociology. Suffield Middle School has joined the composting initiative.

Lucy McCoy, Class of 2027, shared the news and events at McAlister Intermediate School and A. Ward Spaulding School. Student Representative McCoy said the start of school is going smoothly. The elementary schools held a Welcome Back Bash offering students and families a great way to connect. A Welcome Back assembly was held for students at Spaulding. A Kindness assembly will be held on September 5th for McAlister students. The McAlister Intermediate School Open House is

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scheduled for September 11th and the Spaulding School Open House is scheduled for September 18th. The playscape groundwork is almost complete.

Public Comment
None

Board Member Comment
- Board member Finnigan said New Teacher Orientation and Convocation were a success. She thanked Olivia Mishtal for playing the piano during Convocation breakfast. She thanked Teacher of the Year Heather Goldstein for her speech and Superintendent Dunbar and Board Chair Sattan for their opening remarks to staff.
- Board member Dudack welcomed Lucy McCoy and Olivia Mishtal. She congratulated the preschool team on the NAEYC accreditation. She noted that September 15th marks the start of National Hispanic Heritage month.
- Board member Fry welcomed Lucy McCoy and Dr. Laura Norbut. He congratulated the preschool team on the NAEYC accreditation and would like to see the district provide preschool education for all Suffield preschoolers. He is excited to hear about the proposal for an alternative special education program site and is interested in learning about the new scoreboards.
- Board member Mol wished all a happy start to the school year. He welcomed Dr. Norbut and Lucy McCoy and congratulated the preschool team on the NAEYC accreditation. He appreciated the communications sent from Superintendent Dunbar to start the school year.
- Board member Rossi welcomed Lucy McCoy and congratulated the preschool team.
- Board member Sepko welcomed Lucy McCoy and reminded Board members to align decisions with the Board of Education Goals.
- Board member Toskin congratulated the preschool team.

Reports to the Board
- Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Dunbar is pleased with the start to the school year and is excited about where the year is headed. Convocation was a great celebration highlighted by the district's Teacher of the Year, Heather Goldstein. The elementary Back to School Bash shifted to an ice cream social and was a great event. Staffing of positions went remarkably well, and many thanks go to administration and Human Resources Director Kathy Carney. The library media specialist position at Suffield Middle School has been filled and the position of athletic trainer is currently vacant. Kindergarten enrollment is currently at 137 students, which is a bit under NESDEC's projected count. Kindness Matters is now a core tenet of the district. Dr. Norbut began work on July 1st and has already made great progress.

- Board Chair's Report

Board Chair Sattan said New Teacher Orientation was inspiring. Board members Finnigan, Sparzo and Sattan represented the Board of Education at Convocation. Teacher of the Year Heather Goldstein did a wonderful job on her speech, and it was a great day full of optimism and energy. A review of the summer school program will be sent via email by Superintendent Dunbar. Thank you to Melissa Bielonko for creating the Board of Education Member Site.

- Business Manager's Report

Business Manager Eric Remington said transportation is running smoothly. The district has 1,800 students riding buses with M&J Transportation providing 56 daily bus runs. A special thank you

goes to M&J Transportation Manager Jackie Mcdunnah Lemay for all of her work on routing. Food Service is running well and is fully staffed. The Suffield High School HVAC project has run into a delay due to the absence of curb adapters for 10 of the units. Carrier has installed 8 of the 18 units and it was decided to wait until next summer to install the remaining 10 units. An extension on the HVAC grant was filed and granted allowing the HVAC project to be completed by December 2027.

- Board of Selectmen Liaison's Report

None

- Board of Finance Liaison's Report

None

Approval of Minutes

MOTION #26-08: Dudack moved, Toskin seconded to approve the Board of Education meeting minutes of July 14, 2025 and August 11, 2025. Dudack, Finnigan, Fry, Mol, Sattan, Rossi, and Toskin voted in favor. Fry abstained. The motion passed **7-0-1.**

Consent Agenda

None

Discussion/Action Items

- Student Activities Update

Superintendent Dunbar introduced Director of Athletics and Student Activities Amy Muska and said the district is fortunate to have her in this role. Mrs. Muska said fall sports have started and coaches and players are exhibiting a lot of positivity and enthusiasm during practices. On August 26th, the Athlete-Parent/Guardian Information Night was held. Enrollment in sports programs has remained consistent. Coaching staff and student clubs were reviewed and discussed. Mrs. Muska discussed the resignation of the athletic trainer and the process for a replacement. She provided an update on scoreboards and said she will go before the Board of Finance for funding approval. The cost is $108,000 and includes installation. Suffield Athletics has launched a new app, *Suffield Wildcats,* where individuals can follow their favorite Suffield teams.

Board members discussed the cutoff date for sports tryouts and thanked Mrs. Muska for the work being done with the program. Board Student Representatives discussed how conflicts between music and sport events could be avoided.

Sam Toskin left at 7:41 p.m., returned at 7:45 p.m.
Olivia Mishtal and Lucy McCoy exited the meeting at 7:48 p.m.

- Professional Development Update

Assistant Superintendent Laura Norbut, Ed.D., presented an overview of district professional development, focused on two key areas foundational to student success: expanding the Tier 1 instructional toolbox and deepening the integration of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). Dr. Norbut reviewed the August 26, 2025 day of professional learning as well as the professional learning plan for the 2025-2026 school year. Dr. Norbut said there is an intentional focus on providing the elementary schools with professional learning in both the new reading and mathematics programs. Professional learning at the secondary schools will focus on Tier 1 learning and the first phase of RULER. She explained that sessions are facilitated by a combination of district personnel and consultants. The district has partnerships with Amplify CKLA, Bridges in

Mathematics, Ed Advance, and Antioch University. Professional learning can also take place off-site and this summer many staff participated in a book club where they read *Building Thinking Classrooms* by Peter Lillidahl. Dr. Norbut thanked the Board for the offerings that the district is able to provide through professional development.

Board members discussed Responsive Classroom. They discussed the screening tool used to identify gifted and talented students. Board members discussed the district school calendar and the professional development schedule including the current number of professional development days offered.

- Fiscal Year 2025 Final Report

Superintendent Dunbar explained that the final report is not complete. Mr. Remington said the surplus is currently at $78,000. He said the non-lapsing account is expected to have approximately $132,000 once the surplus is transferred. The Board will have to vote on final budget transfers at an upcoming meeting in order to finalize the Fiscal Year 2025 financials.

Maureen Sattan left at 8:14 p.m., returned at 8:17 p.m.

- In-house Special Education Program

Superintendent Dunbar said discussions about developing an in-house special education program for outplaced students began last year with East Granby, Windsor Locks, and Granby as possible partners. First Selectman Mol would like to present the proposal to the Board of Selectmen at its September 3rd meeting. Superintendent Dunbar knows what the program can provide, and the amount of work involved. Dr. Kelley shared with the Board the proposal for an alternative program due to the increase in student needs, out-of-district placement challenges, and legal mandates. The program is looking to have specialized classrooms with calming spaces with certified special education teachers, paraeducators, and related service providers. Mr. Remington discussed the costs associated with outplaced students and said the renovation costs may be eligible for state reimbursement. Mr. Remington said educational expenses and transportation costs for outplaced students would be significantly reduced if there was an in-house program.

Board members discussed the challenges of hiring for special education positions. They discussed the use of the building and whether it will meet the needs of the children. Board members discussed the potential impact it could have on the middle school building project and available grant opportunities to reduce costs. Board members requested additional information about the costs involved in the project.

Sam Toskin exited the meeting at 9:05 p.m.

<u>Subcommittee Reports</u>

- July 25, 2025; August 29, 2025 – Community Engagement and Public Relations Subcommittee Meeting – Subcommittee Chair Debra Dudack said subcommittee members discussed the middle school building project, potential new signage for school buildings, Suffield Observer communications, upcoming presentations, and the subcommittee schedule for the year. She thanked Board member Rossi for the article submitted to the Suffield Observer on behalf of the Board of Education for the September issue and noted that Rossi has volunteered to coordinate future article submissions going forward.

<u>Board Liaison Reports</u>

- Capital Region Education Council (CREC) – No report
- Agriscience – Board member Mol reviewed Agriscience enrollment trends, the five main pathways of the program, summer visits of supervised agricultural experience (SAE) projects, and FFA Leadership Development.

Future Business
None

Public Comment
None

Board Member Comment
- Board member Finnigan is excited about the potential special education program.
- Board member Dudack thanked the Board of Education Student Representatives for their voice. She thanked those involved for their work on the local special education program.
- Board member Fry is thankful the Suffield Middle School Library Media Specialist position was filled. He is happy to learn about the new scoreboards and supports the idea of an alternative program for special education.
- Board member Mol is thankful the Suffield Middle School Library Media Specialist position was filled.
- Board member Sepko thanked Board member Rossi for the Suffield Observer article. He is happy about the special education proposal.

Adjournment
Mol moved, Sepko seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:21 p.m. All members voted in favor. The motion passed 7-0-0.

Click here to view the meeting: 02SEP2025 Board of Education Regular Meeting

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of October 6, 2025

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Dudack
Secretary

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