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Suffield, Connecticut

Approved by Bd. of Ed.

Board of Education Regular Meeting
Suffield High School Media Center
and via Zoom Webinar
February 19, 2026

Call to Order

Board Chair Sattan called the meeting to order at 6:39 p.m. The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Board members Debra Dudack, Melissa Finnigan, Brian Fry (via Zoom), James Mol, Dustin Rose, Gianna Rossi, Maureen Sattan, Greg Sparzo, and Sam Toskin; and Superintendent Matt Dunbar, Assistant Superintendent Laura Norbut, Ed.D., and Business Manager Eric Remington

Absent: None

Discussion/Action Items

A. Discussion and Possible Acceptance of Revised Board of Education Policy #6142.101 Wellness Policy

Assistant Superintendent Laura Norbut, Ed.D., reviewed revisions to the district's Wellness Policy, mandated by the triennial review of the federal and state-funded food service program. This compliance process ensures that district practices regarding nutrition and physical education align with current regulatory frameworks. She reported that the revised policy now explicitly codifies student access to free drinking water in every cafeteria during mealtimes. Although this has been a standard practice within Suffield Public Schools, its formal inclusion in the policy is a specific requirement of the triennial review.

MOTION #26-43: Dudack moved, Rossi seconded to accept the revised Board of Education Policy #6142.101 Wellness Policy. Board members engaged in a discussion regarding the proposed wellness policy.. Dudack, Finnigan, Fry, Mol, Rose, Rossi, Sattan and Toskin voted in favor. Sparzo abstained. The motion passed **8-0-1**.

B. Discussion and Possible Acceptance of Board of Education Policy #5131.93 Restorative Practices Response Policy

Superintendent Dunbar said this policy is state mandated. Dr. Norbut said the adoption of Policy #5131.93 establishes a framework for using relationship-based interventions to address non-violent, non-criminal student behaviors that impact school climate. The policy aims to balance traditional student accountability with a focus on repairing relationships and reintegrating students into the school community following challenging behaviors.

MOTION #26-44: Dudack moved, Mol seconded to accept the Board of Education Policy #5131.93 Restorative Practices Response Policy. Board members engaged in a comprehensive discussion regarding the implementation and scope of restorative practices. Dudack, Finnigan, Fry, Mol, Rose, Rossi, and Sparzo voted in favor. Sattan and Toskin voted against. The motion passed 7-2-0.

C. Next Generation Accountability Report

Dr. Norbut presented the 2024-2025 Next Generation Accountability Report that utilizes 12 indicators to measure how well a district prepares students for postsecondary success. Unlike systems that rely solely on static test scores, this model prioritizes student growth over time and encompasses factors such as arts access and physical fitness.

Suffield demonstrated significant progress, moving from 15th to 8th in the District Reference Group (DRG) C. The district saw improvement in 14 of 22 sub-indicators, with notable gains in ELA and math performance indices. Additionally, three indicators remained at 100% (highest score). The district successfully reduced absenteeism through rigorous month-by-month monitoring and targeted family interventions.

To sustain this upward trajectory, the administration plans to:

- Continue to implement Bridges in Mathematics and Amplify CKLA (Grades K-5) with fidelity and coaching support
- Align district-wide MTSS processes, including chronic absenteeism interventions
- Continue Illustrative Mathematics and acceleration-model intervention work in Grades 6-8
- Provide ongoing Tier 1 curricular professional learning for special educators
- Collaborate with the Physical Education department to enhance physical fitness scores through pilot assessments

Board members discussed areas falling short, the complexity of state generated reports and the district's index rate. Board members discussed future reports including year-over-year data.

D. Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Discussion

Superintendent Dunbar and Business Manager Eric Remington reviewed the primary drivers of the Fiscal Year 2027 budget, emphasizing mandatory contractual obligations and the need for updated instructional resources.

Mr. Remington said a 21% increase in the stipend line item was analyzed. He clarified that because actual prior-year spending reached \$254,000 against a \$236,000 budget, a 7.5% increase is required simply to maintain the status quo before accounting for the new contractual increases and longevity pay. The M&J contract extension resulted in a 14% (\$200,000) increase, as the district moves closer to current market rates for student transportation. The budget assumes an 11.5% premium increase based on recent high-claim trends despite a slight decrease in overall enrollment.

Instructional resources were reviewed. Dr. Norbut reviewed textbook and library collection ages across the district. The administration is implementing a five-year replacement cycle to prevent fiscal peaks and valleys while shifting toward digital subscriptions that offer more frequent updates and expanded repositories.

Facility and operational concerns were addressed. The increase in athletic transportation cost is attributed to the broader market-rate adjustments in the district's busing contracts.

Executive Session

MOTION #26-45: Mol moved, Sparzo seconded to enter into executive session for the purpose of discussing the Superintendent's midyear review inviting Superintendent Dunbar to join the meeting. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **9-0-0**.

The Board entered executive session at 8:05 p.m. The Board came out of executive session at 8:45 p.m.

Adjournment

James Mol moved, Greg Sparzo seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:46 p.m. All members voted in favor.

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of March 2, 2026.

Respectfully submitted,

Gianna Rossi
Secretary

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