

GATEWAY REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

The Gateway Regional School District will provide an exemplary education that challenges all students in an instructional setting appropriate to their needs.

All visitors attending the school committee meeting should sign in at the security booth.

REGULAR MEETING

Wednesday, February 25, 2026

Middle School Room 117/119

Zoom Meeting:

<https://zoom.us/j/98852022361?pwd=16hisxaW1s1zTHU17z5bphQog4Rne6.1>

Meeting ID: 988 5202 2361

Passcode: T6eNm7

7:04 PM I. OPENING OF MEETING & QUESTION TO SEE IF ANYONE IS RECORDING

Call to order: Mr. Forgue, Chairperson

BLANDFORD**CHESTER**

Jeana Briggs
Brian Forgue
Jason Forgue

HUNTINGTON

Pegg Dragon
Brianna Sloane

MIDDLEFIELD

Tasha Strong
Stephanie Simonowicz

MONTGOMERY

Peter DeGregorio

RUSSELL

Tara Balboni
Alicia Hansen
Lyndsey Papillon

SECRETARY

James Hayes

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

Dr. Melissa Matarazzo, Superintendent
Amy Mason, School Business Administrator

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Ana Holmes, Alternate

ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL

Martha Gendron, Littleville Asst. Principal
Joan Tuttle, Dir. of Accountability & Grants
Dr. Todd Gazda, Chester Principal
Melissa McCaul, Littleville Principal
Chris Parker, Technology Director
Dr. William Sullivan, GRS Principal
Val Zeh, GRS Assistant Principal

OTHERS: Lexie Jennings, Wendy Long_____

7:04 PM II. PUBLIC INPUT

n/a

7:05 PM III. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS

A. Chester Principal Appointment

- a. Dr. Todd Gazda selected to be the permanent Principal of Chester

B. FY2027 Budget Update

- Total Proposed FY '27 Budget: **\$20,190,087** (+\$1,935,418 / 11% from FY '26)
- Early-stage projection; adjustments expected before final adoption
- Working budget to be posted on **ClearGov**.

Major Expense Drivers

- **Insurance/Benefits:** +\$460K
- **Contractual Obligations/Staffing Needs:** +\$600K
- **Outgoing School Choice:** +\$845K
- Special Education (currently 25% of students)
- Technology and information systems updates
- Inflationary pressures on operational costs
- Facilities maintenance and safety
- Support for economically disadvantaged students (42% of MA students are low income)

Revenue Projections FY '27

- Chapter 70 Aid: **\$6,488,546** (+\$182,032 from FY '26)
- Total projected revenue: **\$7,849,926** (+\$109,814 from FY '26)
- Other key revenue sources: Medicaid, federal & state grants (~\$1.56M), bank interest (\$124K), transportation reimbursements
- Rural School Aid assumed level funded at \$12M (not guaranteed)

Funding Sources

- Required Local Contribution: 32%
- Additional Local Contribution: 22%
- Chapter 70 State Aid: 32%
- Capital & Transportation Assessment: 7%
- Transportation Reimbursement: 4%
- Other Revenue: 3% (E&D, Medicaid, interest, charter reimbursement)

School-Level Budget Changes

School / Program	FY '26	FY '27	% Change
Chester Elementary	\$1,494,787	\$1,553,284	+4%
Littleville Elementary	\$3,132,104	\$3,280,481	+5%
Gateway Regional School	\$5,132,480	\$5,656,908	+10%

District Special Education	\$552,903	\$570,460	+3%
District Overall	\$5,778,755	\$6,938,791	+20%
Non-Foundation	\$2,163,640	\$2,190,163	+1%

Town Assessment Impact (FY '27)

- Total statutory assessment increase: **\$1,825,604 / 17.36%**
- Largest increases by percentage: Blandford +22.82%, Russell +20.50%, Huntington +20.06%
- Middlefield sees a small decrease (-2.25%)

Enrollment Trends

- Total enrollment: 779.5 → 790 students (+10.5)
- Largest increases: Blandford +13, Huntington +7
- Largest decreases: Chester -10, Middlefield -6
- March 1 census will determine final assessments

Vocational School Projections

- 35 potential new vocational enrollees for FY '27
- Total vocational foundation students projected: 86
- Chapter 70 vocational offsets applied to reduce town contributions

Strategies for Offsetting Budget Increases

- School Choice funding covers technology staff, paraprofessionals, and transportation
- Grants (state & federal, ~\$1.5M) support programming
- Tuition from vision program (~\$430K) offsets costs
- District aiming to limit assessment increase to **2.44%** via other funding sources

Next Steps

- Final adjustments prior to March 4 Budget Hearing
 - March 1 census to finalize town assessments
 - Update ClearGov with proposed final budget
 - Continue analysis of staffing, enrollment, and special education costs
 - Work with School Committee and towns to address budget/revenue gaps
- C. District Organizational Chart ([enc](#))
- a. Have printed copies made.

7:54 PM IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

School-Based Health Center Access

- Topic to remain on the agenda for March for further discussion.

Appointment to Middlefield Capital Planning Commission

- The committee has the right to appoint a representative.
- Dr. Matarazzo volunteered for the position.
- **Motion:** Brian
- **Second:** Tara
- **Vote:** 10 yes, 0 no

7:56 PM V. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEM

Approval of Student Activity Account: SkillsUSA

- **Motion:** Lyndsey
- **Second:** Peter
- **Vote:** 10 yes, 0 no

1st Read of [CTE Admissions Policy](#)

Changes: Indicated in **bold and underlined**.

Request: Waive the two-meeting rule.

- **Motion:** Brian
- **Second:** Peter
- **Vote:** 10 yes, 0 no

Motion to Accept Policy

- **Motion:** Brian
- **Second:** Tara
- **Vote:** 10 yes, 0 no

8:05 PM VI. CONSENT ITEMS

A. Approval of [December Meeting Minutes](#)

- **Motion:** Briana
- **Second:** Lyndsey
- **Vote:** Yes (7): Jeana, Peter, Pegg, Brian, Jason, Lyndsey, Briana
No: 0
Abstain (4): Tara, Alicia, Stephanie, Tasha

B. Approval of [Donations & Grants](#)

New Donations/Grants:

- Supporting Students' Social Emotional Learning, Behavioral & Mental Health, and Wellness
- Project Bread School Breakfast Grant

Motion: Jason
Second: Alicia
Vote: 10 yes, 0 no

8:10 PM VII. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE UPDATE

- A. [Student Rep Update](#)
a. Ana Holmes reviewed link

8:17 PM Motion to approve executive session start time by 8:45pm

Motion: Jason
Second: Brian
Vote: 10 yes, 0 no

8:19 PM VIII. COMMUNICATIONS

- A. School Committee
a. n/a
B. Chairperson
a. n/a
C. Superintendent ([Enc.](#))
a. Reviewed attachment
D. School Business Administrator
a. Q2 transfers will be available next meeting
E. Administration ([Enc.](#))
a. [Admin Report](#)
F. Town Officials
a. n/a

8:25 PM IX. COMMITTEE REPORTING

- A. Superintendent's Evaluation
a. Met before this meeting and reviewed timelines and updates
B. Legislative Liaison
Good News: Senator Mark will attend the March 11 meeting.
Update: Representative Boldyga has not responded.

Governor's Budget – Rural School Aid:

- Proposes an increase to \$20 million.
- New eligibility language introduced for the funding.
Bill received a favorable committee review for the first time, but was edited from the original version.
- C. Negotiations
a. Meeting next week
- D. Building Liaisons
a. n/a
- E. CES Update
 - **CES Workers:** Emails sent out over the past couple of days regarding staffing.
 - **Dr. Gazda Replacement:** Difficulty in finding a sufficient replacement.
 - **Decision:** Dr. Bonner was selected as the replacement.
- F. Policy

- a. Set to meet next month

8:33 PM X. OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

- Senator Mark attending the next SC meeting

8:37 PM XI. INFORMATION

The warrant signing committee had reviewed the following warrants, found them to be in order, and approved them.

#1048 - \$294,888.58	#1055 - \$390,970.00 (Health Insurance)
#1051 - \$45.25	#1056 - \$12,405.14 (Dental Insurance)
#1052 - \$183,902.85	#1058 - \$69.87
PR#13 - \$496,770.57	#1057 - \$235,559.78
PR#14 - \$334,662.86	#1064 - \$125,715.66
PR#15 - \$503,354.61	#1062 - \$9602.16 (Dental Insurance)
PR#16 - \$378,360.87	#1065 - \$25,811.33
#1066 - \$39.07	

8:40 PM XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

- A. Executive session pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, s. 21(a)(3) To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares:
1. Instructional Assistant Union Contract
 2. Transportation Contract
 3. Potential Litigation

James Hayes
School Committee Secretary