

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, March 11, 2026

Middle School Room 117/119

7:00 P.M.

7:01 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
Lisa Goding
Brianna Sloane

MIDDLEFIELD

Stephanie Simonowicz

MONTGOMERY

Peter DeGregorio

RUSSELL

Alicia Hansen
Lyndsey Papillon

SECRETARY

James Hayes

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

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

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Theodore DeAngelis-Page

ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL

Kurt Garivaltis, Pupil Services Director
Martha Gendron, Littleville Asst. Principal
Joan Tuttle, Dir. of Accountability & Grants
Dr. Todd Gazda, Chester Principal
Melissa McCaul, Littleville Principal

Dr. William Sullivan, GRS Principal
Chris Tamburrino, Asst. Pupil Services Dir.
Val Zeh, GRS Assistant Principal
Stacy Stewart, Human Resources Director

OTHERS: Stephanie Conway, Lexie Jennings, Sue Rhoads, Casey Grant, Jen Pappas, Wendy Long, Kellye Dowd, Andrew Alward (Chester town admin)

7:02 PM II. PUBLIC INPUT

Guests attending the meeting may address the committee on topics not on the agenda. (There is a three minute time limit per guest).

Susan Rhoads – Pre-K Teacher: Expressed concerns regarding the proposed reduction of the Assistant Director of Pupil Services position. Stated that this cut could negatively impact the progress and growth that has been made within the district's pupil services department.

Jeanna Briggs – Community Member: Shared that she attended the welding class presentation last Thursday where students showcased their current projects. Asked why more communication and promotion of these types of student activities is not being shared more broadly with the community.

7:05 PM III. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS

- A. **Paul Mark:** Senator Mark was invited to attend and speak at the meeting. Due to unforeseen circumstances, he was unable to attend. Brian Forgue has been in communication with the Senator's office. Senator Mark and Representative Boldyga submitted a joint letter, which will be shared with the committee. [Letter from Senator](#)
- B. **Massachusetts Association of Special Education Directors Recognitions:** Dr. Matarazzo shared that at the organization's recent winter conference, district staff members **Kurt, Chris, and Amy** were recognized for their contributions and work in the field of special education.
- C. **Barr Foundation Convening:** Dr. Matarazzo noted that the most recent Barr convening recently took place. Key takeaways and core components from that meeting will be shared with the committee during next month's meeting.

7:10 PM IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

- A. Discussion took place regarding expanded access to the School-Based Health Center (SBHC).
 - a. A question was raised about whether a student who leaves the district would still be able to receive certain services through the health center. These students are not currently seen in the School-Based Health Center
 - b. A question was also raised regarding **homeschooled students** and their eligibility for services. Currently homeschooled students are not seen in the Health Center.
- B. Approval of [Proposed 2026-2027 School Calendar](#)
 - a. **Dr. Matarazzo** provided an overview of the proposed 2026–2027 school calendar and reviewed key dates with the committee.
 - b. **Lisa Goding** asked whether Pre-K programs conduct home visits. **Sue Rhoads** noted that home visits were conducted prior to COVID-19 and that virtual options are now available to support families.
 - c. **Kurt Garivaltis** mentioned that the district also holds **transition planning conferences for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)**.

- d. **Jen Pappas** asked why the district observes **Good Friday**? **Jason Forgue** explained that the short and long answer is that it has historically been common practice and is also referenced within **union contracts**. **Dr. Matarazzo** stated that the district plans to **send a survey next year** to gather feedback on the school calendar.
 - e. **Brian Forgue** made a motion to **waive the two-meeting rule**.
 - i. **Seconded by Pegg Dragon**.
 - ii. **Vote: Approved 10–0**.
 - f. **Brian Forgue** made a motion to **approve the proposed 2026–2027 School Calendar**.
 - i. **Seconded by Pegg Dragon**.
 - ii. **Vote: Approved 10–0**.
- C. FY2027 Budget: **Dr. Matarazzo** presented [detailed slides](#) regarding the [proposed budget](#).
- a. Discussion included the proposed **Education Team Leader position**. Would require eliminating other positions to create the new role. Position would operate full-time, assist with IEPs, and perform similar tasks to current administrative roles without the administrative title. **Lyndsey Papillon** asked about qualifications; position requires a **special education license**. **Jeanna Briggs** noted that many community members expressed support for Mr. Tamburino and his contributions over the years. **Brianna Sloane** asked about the purpose of moving positions; noted as a cost-saving measure. **Jason Forgue** questioned moving HR to a grant-funded position, emphasizing the essential nature of the HR role and the potential impact if grant funds are not received.
 - b. Committee members raised concerns about the **student impact of proposed cuts**: **Lisa Goding** asked if a Director of HR position is necessary, noting past practices involved splitting responsibilities across multiple positions. Questions about employee engagement responsibilities were raised; currently handled by direct leaders.
 - c. Potential implications if additional grant funds are received were discussed, including obligations to return excess funds to local towns.
 - d. **Stephanie Simonowski** expressed concern that eliminated positions do in fact have a direct impact on students.
 - e. **Brian Forgue** acknowledged that we will not always agree what and where cuts are made, but sometimes these types of cuts are necessary.
 - f. **Dr. Matarazzo** addressed trends in homeschooling and vocational choices, noting the need to understand why students leave the district.
 - g. **Jeanna Briggs** raised concerns about ongoing cuts and lack of support from towns and wanting to put more pressure on them to help more.
 - h. **Jason Forgue** emphasized that budget proposals should be presented clearly to towns, especially given historical opposition to increases above 2.5%.
 - i. **Dr. Matarazzo** highlighted that the district secures over \$1.5 million annually in funding as is and continues to advocate for state and federal funds.
 - j. Discussion on **program reductions and staffing impacts**: Arts and elective program reductions were questioned; staff are adapting creatively. Woodshop and school adjustment counseling roles were noted to have lower enrollment or indirect impact on student learning.

- k. **Kellye Down** raised concerns about removing adjustment counselors given mental health needs; Dr. Matarazzo noted the trade-off with core class teachers' positions.
- l. **Jeanna Briggs** inquired about additional support for STEM teachers; **Todd Gazda** confirmed capacity exists and current staff looks forward to the challenge.
- m. **Lisa Goding** asked about potential food/facility cuts; Amy confirmed that our food services are fully self-funded.
- n. **Jason Forgue** inquired about health insurance mitigation; included in the budget. **Dr. Matarazzo** confirmed that what is there is the max and do not anticipate a surprise next year like it is this year.
- o. Salary disparities among principals are based on experience and comparative data.
- p. **Extraordinary maintenance** defined as emergency, significant issues with funds allocated for such events. Concern raised about balancing building needs versus instructional impact.
- q. **Brian Forgue** questioned why the prediction of 14 teacher positions to cut did not hold; noted that grant availability and what was legally allowed to be moved in those grants impacted staffing.
- r. **Peter DeGregorio** asked about driver increases and health insurance costs; historical data partially provided (last year's budget included 18% health insurance, with an additional 20% increase not previously calculated).
- s. The committee discussed community expectations and potential limitations for requesting higher contributions from towns. Consensus indicated reluctance to request more than 2.44% increase.
- t. **Jason Forgue** recommended that the Committee consider reducing the contribution of funds to a Capital Stabilization Fund to limit the reductions proposed. The committee expressed support for this approach and requested that the administration develop proposals with this approach for a next meeting.
- u. **8:44pm** Motion to hold a special meeting on Monday, March 16th by **Lisa Goding**.
 - i. **Seconded by:** Alicia Hansen
 - ii. **Vote:** Approved **10–0**
- v. **8:45pm** Motion to enter Executive Session by 9:15 a.m. by **Brian Forgue**
 - i. **Seconded by:** Peter DeGregorio
 - ii. **Vote:** Approved **10–0**

8:46 PM V. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEM

- A. Approval of [Adjusted Grades 6-8 Pathway Policy](#)
 - a. First read today, will vote next meeting

8:57 PM VI. CONSENT ITEMS

- A. [Approval of Minutes for May 14, 2025](#)
 - a. **Moved by:** Alicia Hansen
 - b. **Seconded by:** Brian Forgue
 - c. **Vote:** Approved **7–0, 3 abstentions** (Brianna Sloane, Pegg Dragon, Stephanie Simonowicz)

- B. [Approval of Minutes for June 11, 2025](#)
 - a. **Moved by:** Alicia Hansen
 - b. **Seconded by:** Brian Forgue
 - c. **Vote:** Approved **8–0**, **2 abstentions** (Brianna Sloane, Stephanie Simonowicz)
- C. [Approval of Minutes for February 25, 2026](#)
 - a. **Moved by:** Alicia Hansen
 - b. **Seconded by:** Brian Forgue
 - c. **Vote:** Approved **10–0**
- D. [Donations & Grants](#)
 - a. No new donations/grants

9:00 PM VII. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE UPDATE

- A. [Student Update Report](#)

9:10 PM VIII. COMMUNICATIONS

- A. School Committee
 - **5th Annual GEF Trivia Night:** Scheduled for **March 21** at the **Blandford Town Hall**.
- B. Chairperson
 - **Jason Forgue** reported that he and **Dr. Matarazzo** attended a meeting to discuss funding with local representatives.
- C. Superintendent - Central Office Update ([Enc.](#))
 - Moving to multi factor sign in with our Google accounts. Affects SC members and hopes to complete by April meeting.
- D. School Business Administrator
- E. Administration ([Enc.](#))
- F. Town Officials

9:13 PM IX. COMMITTEE REPORTING

- A. Superintendent's Evaluation
- B. Legislative Liaison
- C. Negotiations
- D. Building Liaisons
- E. CES Update
- F. Policy

9:13 PM X. OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

- Approval of [Adjusted Grades 6-8 Pathway Policy](#)

9:13 PM XI. INFORMATION

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

#1067 - \$283,559.83

PR#18 - \$339,441.18

9:14 PM XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION - 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:

James Hayes
School Committee Secretary