

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 MINUTES

Wednesday, June 11, 2025

Gateway Auditorium

7:00 P.M.

7:00 PM I. OPENING OF MEETING & QUESTION TO SEE IF ANYONE IS RECORDING

Call to order: Mr. Forgue, Chairperson

BLANDFORD

Nicole Daviau
Keri Morawiec

CHESTER

Jeana Briggs
Brian Forgue
Jason Forgue

HUNTINGTON

Pegg Dragon
Lisa Goding

MIDDLEFIELD

Tasha Strong

MONTGOMERY

Peter DeGregorio

RUSSELL

Tara Balboni
Alicia Hansen
Lyndsey Papillon

SECRETARY

Stacy Stewart

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

Kristen Smidy, Superintendent
Stephanie Fisk, Assistant Superintendent

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Theodore DeAngelis-Page
Ana Holmes, Alternate

ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL

Kurt Garivaltis, Pupil Services Director
Martha Gendron, Littleville Asst. Principal
Deanna LeBlanc, Curriculum Director
Melissa McCaul, Littleville Principal
Chris Parker, Technology Director
William Sullivan, GRS Principal
Chris Tamburrino, Asst. Pupil Services Dir.
Val Zeh, GRS Assistant Principal

OTHERS: Patty Healy, Joan Tuttle, Wendy Long, Karen Leis, James Hayes, Kristina Schultz, Amy Mason

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)

- Misty Robitaille is a concerned parent of a child at Chester. Recently Mrs. Balboni and Mrs. Goding were involved in communication between the school committee and family. Arguments on an online community page, suggesting that parents bully their way. Does that mean your fellow members were bullying you? They stood there saying parents

were bullying. Additionally they are public officials, who should be held to a high standard. Mrs. Balboni claimed she knew all the facts. Have you genuinely reviewed all of the facts? Have you reviewed all of this? Troubled by the actions of Kristen portrayed here like nothing was happening with their children. They were trying to discredit her, they were forceful. I told you guys everything that was going on with my son. All she is doing is advocating for her son. The school committee is held to higher integrity and professionalism in leadership in public. Not all parents are bullying and disrespectful. It is your job to hear the parents. You should be able to keep your personal feelings off of a public forum.

- Mr. Folta publicly thanked Mrs. Smidy for the opportunity to guide Chester this last month. Your leadership has been second to none. It has been his third foray in Gateway. The third time is a charm. In addition to superintendent Smidy he thanked the hard working staff at Chester, the Chester children made work fun every day, (maddy, heather, Words matter, facts matter, the truth matters, good night good luck good bye.
- Mrs. Briggs thanked Mr Folta for coming to Chester as a whole and for helping her son.
- Mrs. Goding's son is at Littleville. This past year we decided to start school earlier and extend the day. More learning is really important. She would like to re-look at when school starts. The earlier start was very difficult. We can't do anything next year, how about the next two or three years.
- Kayla Brady would like to shout out Maddy Scott and Heather Cabral. They have helped her daughter. She has been able to see Ms. Cabal. Tomorrow Chester students are performing Willie Wonka and she wanted to invite you everyone.

7:17 PM III. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS

- Mrs. Smidy acknowledged Joan Tuttle, our Accountability and Grants Director. She is a Russell resident and has worked for the DESE for the past 19 years.

7:19 PM IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. Revisit discussion to invite any new thoughts or ideas for parental and student notification for policy subcommittee

- How do we go about creating a policy? He didn't receive anything from the last meeting.
- Mrs. Briggs confirmed it was going to the policy sub committee.
- Lisa immediate is better, people can only undercommunicate, they can't overcommunicate, robocall, email, and time for feedback and questions.
- Jason, as a committee we can forward information to Lindsey for the fall.

7:20 PM V. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEM

A. Superintendent Evaluation Approval

Mrs. Dragon made a motion seconded by Mr. Brian Forgue to approve the Superintendent's FY '25 Evaluation.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 12 Nays Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Tara, Jeana, Peter, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Lisa, Alicia, Keri, Lyndsey, Tasha, Jason

B. Superintendent Replacement Discussion and Potential Vote

- Mr. Jason Forgue went through a bunch of old emails and timelines. We had a much longer timeframe then. He is happy to share that with anyone. We still had a community outreach person to conduct a survey to the characteristics people would like to see. That would be nice to do again.
- Mrs. Balboni said it was a lot of work. We talked about the search.
- Mr. Forgue said MASC will assist, but we voted to keep the cost down and do the search ourselves.
- Mrs. Dragon thought the information was very informative and we should work toward an interim, as we don't have the time to do a permanent superintendent. We have evaluation information and the long-term plan. If you want someone on board for September, we should go through the association and begin our search.
- Mr. Jason Forgue sent basic starting information to those who are interested in participating. A quote on quote guide created by MASC. He has the initial timeline, job posting, every single communication he has with Mrs. Smidy and the others. Dr. Hopson announced his retirement in October, posted in January, and hired Mrs. Smidy in May. We have half of that time. We are starting behind the 8 ball. He is open to posting it and seeing what we get. We need to decide if we include people from the outside.
- Mrs. Balboni said community members can be part of the process after the executive session.
- Mr. Jason Forgue said we need to decide how to comprise a search committee. He said he will not be on the committee.
- Mr. Brian Forgue asked how many members were part of it last time.
- Theodore De'Angelis Page asked if there is the availability for a student representative.
- Mr. Jason Forgue said in a perfect world we would do a survey, and post the position.
- Mrs. Dragon asked, "Do you think there isn't an opportunity because it is too late?"
- Mr. Jason Forgue said when he looked online, he was shocked how many positions were open
- Mrs. Balboni said we will be lucky to find a good candidate. It takes time. Some of them were flying from different parts of the country.
- Mr. Jason Forgue said last time we had 22 candidates which we trimmed down to 8.
- Mrs. Daviau asked if there were internal candidates?
- Mr. DeGregorio asked what will happen on September 1.
- Mr. Jason Forgue said superintendent, budget and policy.
- Mrs. Balboni said in the past there were internal candidates who applied.
- Mrs. Smidy said there are two people with their superintendent's license.
- Mrs. Papillon asked if the interim superintendent has to be certified.
- Mrs. Smidy said if they are not we need to post for two weeks.
- Mrs. Papillon said we need to decide if we want to go with the interim or regular.
- Mr. Jason Forgue thinks we should post for the position as soon as possible and then decide whether we accept an interim, and let them know we are doing the search.
- Mrs. Morawiec agrees we need to post immediately. We need to strongly consider an interim. It is not realistic to find a quality candidate.
- Mr. Jason Forgue said the job description he has is based on the community survey and he is not 100 percent those are the wants and needs.
- Misty Robitaille definitely thinks for the interim, Mr. Garivaltis should fill the role, he was a great.
- Mr. Jason Forgue said when we post, we hope he will apply.

- Mrs. Goding asked if we could take the job description and have Mrs. Smidy tweak it by what she does.
- Mrs. Hansen asked if the job posting was the true job description.
- Mrs. Smidy is willing to tweak the job description.
- Mrs. Papillon asked if you would post the interim position in-house first or one posting.
- Mrs. Daviau said this seems murky.
- Mrs. Morawiec said it happens more often than not.
- Kayla Brady said you may get less interest in an interim than you would a permanent position.

Mrs. Goding made a motion seconded by Mr. DeGregorio to use the job posting from last time to post immediately and make it clear an interim is being sought during the search.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 12 Nays Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Tara, Jeana, Peter, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Lisa, Alicia, Keri, Lyndsey, Tasha, Jason

- Mrs. Goding asked how many people expressed interest in the search committee
- Mrs. Smidy will send an email.
- Barr will be interested in who is applying but they won't have input.
- Mrs. Daviau asked what is the involvement of those not on the search committee. When the finalists are invited to a public forum, anyone can participate.
- Mrs. Papillon community memes and students reps, and staff, is the core search committee just sc members until we get to a certain point. Or forming a committee with the stakeholders.
- Mr. Jason Forgue said that would be up to us.
- Mrs. Goding said based on the five months would it be fair to estimate 15 hours a week?
- Mr. Jason Forgue said most meetings are in executive session, that is here too. This is where the disclosures come in.

Mrs. Daviau made a motion seconded by Mrs. Briggs to form the school committee member search committee while we are looking into the legalities.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 12 Nays Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Tara, Jeana, Peter, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Lisa, Alicia, Keri, Lyndsey, Tasha, Jason

C. School Based Health Center Request to see children outside the district Discussion and Potential Vote (Enc.)

- CeO and CO are neutral on the request. Our security monitor is concerned.
- Mrs. Balboni said because there are adults without CORI checks we were against because of the safety concern.
- Mr. Brian Forgue said the difference was anyone.
- Mrs. Goding said so they live in the district
- Misty Robitaille asked what if they are parents who have children who come here.
- Mr. Jason Forgue said we voted not to have outside participation in the school based health center. It shouldn't be our security monitor's job to see if people live in the district.

- Mrs. Balboni said not every parent belongs.
- Misty Robitaille but if they are allowed to be there for any other time.
- Mrs. Dragon said there are kids who go to a vocational school who could drive themselves here.
- Mr. DeGegorio said because we are not going to have a superintendent September 1 and if we have an interim this is just an added burden. We should table this.
- Mr. Jason Forgue said the double dipping they receive grant money, are we crowding out the actual student.
- Mrs. Dragon asked we do not follow the new protocol and continue the present protocol,

Mrs. Dragon made a motion seconded by Mrs. Brian Forgue to approve the School Based Health Center's Request to See students from outside the district.

Motion Failed (VOTE) Yeas 1 Nays 11 Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Lisa

Nays: Tara, Jeana, Peter, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Alicia, Keri, Lyndsey, Tasha, Jason

- Mrs. Goding said if the child is in the district it could be for younger siblings.
- Mrs. Morawiec said with their member adults so it doesn't take away the other concerns. Maybe we can work proactively with them in the future .

D. GRS Handbook Approval (Enc.)

E. Elementary Handbook Approval (Enc.)

- Mrs. Smidy said the school committee approves policy and code of conduct. There are other things that need to be added after.
- Mrs. Dragon asked, is this normal that it is so long?

Mrs. Daviau made a motion seconded by Mrs. Dragon to accept the GRS and Elementary Handbooks as proposed with additions that are submitted.

- Mrs. Briggs said if we are approving this, her son was terrorized, and nothing in here helped him.
- Mrs. Daviau asked if it is the lack of follow through of the policy.
- Mrs. Briggs said steps should have been taken that were not. There have been many attempts by many people.
- Mr. Jason Forgue has some issues. On page 22 we have a grade scale that makes no sense. For each level whether we consider them to be honors or any other levels. It punishes college prep students more than it does for AP Students. We need to revisit it to properly affect how they are calculated.
- Mrs. Dragon said the academic quality of the program should be part of the calculation.
- Mr. Jason Forgue has no problem with a better A is better than a worse A. Simply inequitable I wish. He will be a no on the handbook until it is fixed. We fail to properly reflect the difficulty of the classes outside of here and online.
- Mrs. Daviau asked if there were other equitable solutions or it is too detrimental at the top and less at the bottom.

- Dr. Sullivan tried to do some fact finding to see where this originated and was not successful. He will do some more research and see if there is a more equitable way.
- Ana Holmes said when you talk about other online classes it is unclear.
- Mr. Jason Forgue if someone takes an online class someone here should determine the worth, where we are taking the class.
- Dr. Sullivan said we use ingenuity and they let us know what the class is.
- Mr. Brian Forgue asked if it would be possible to do an addendum in the fall.
- Mrs. Dragon said this doesn't seem right, we may be able to change it in the future, but not once the year has started.
- Mr. Jason Forgue said we have got to get rid of test corrections. It is a complete do over and not done by everyone.
- Theodore DeAngelis-Page asked what they think about half or quarter credit.
- Mr. Jason Forgue said there should be a reward for trying.
- Mrs. Hansen said if it is going to the school committee for discussion, she would love a document.
- Mr. Jason Forgue would love it to be in a future handbook.
- Dr. Sullivan is happy to talk to the academic council about test corrections.
- Mrs. Balboni asked if we can bring this forward at a summer meeting if we are having a superintendent search meeting.
- Mr. Jason Forgue said that will be the sub committee, not the full committee.
- Mrs. Smidy said it is tricky for those who are going into their senior year. It isn't fair to change the calculation in their last year. This may need to be phased in.

Mrs. Daviau made a motion seconded by Mrs. Dragon to accept the GRS and Elementary Handbooks as proposed with additions that are submitted.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 9 Nays 1 Abstain 2 Absent (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Tara, Peter, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Alicia, Keri, Lyndsey, Tasha

Nays: Jason

Abstain: Jeana, Lisa

F. GRS New Course Approval (Program of Study Enc.)

- Mrs. Dragon asked if we are increasing the number of classes will they have less than 10 students in them.
- Dr. Sullivan said it might result in some smaller class sizes but students will have more options.

Mrs. Daviau made a motion seconded by Mrs. Balboni to approve the GRS Program of Study.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 11 Nays 1 Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Tara, Jeana, Peter, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Lisa, Alicia, Keri, Lyndsey, Tasha,

Nays: Jason

G. Vote to approve/acknowledge the proposed School Improvement Plan for Littleville Elementary (Enc.)

- Mr. Brian Forgue said this is very well put together.
- Mrs. Goding asked how the timelines are going?
- Mrs. McCauls said right on target. They are almost at the butterfly project.

Mr. Brian Forgue made a motion seconded by Mrs. Daviau to approve the Littleville School Improvement Plan.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 12 Nays Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Tara, Jeana, Peter, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Lisa, Alicia, Keri, Lyndsey, Tasha, Jason

H. District Bullying Prevention Plan Approval (Enc.)

- Mrs. Smidy said it needs to be updated every two years.
- Mrs. Goding asked how we put this into action.
- Mrs. Smidy said we are required to roll it out on our opening day for professional development.

Mrs. Daviau made a motion seconded by Mr. Brian Forgue to approve the District Bullying Prevention Plan.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 12 Nays Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Tara, Jeana, Peter, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Lisa, Alicia, Keri, Lyndsey, Tasha, Jason

I. Academic Honesty Policy - First Read (Enc.) Move to the next agenda for a vote.

J. Fourth Quarter Budget Transfers

- Ms. Fisk said the biggest difference is 17 new staff members not opting to take health insurance. That will go into OPEB.

Mr. Brian Forgue made a motion seconded by Mrs. Daviau to approve the FY '25 Fourth Quarter Transfers.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 12 Nays Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Tara, Jeana, Peter, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Lisa, Alicia, Keri, Lyndsey, Tasha, Jason

7:55 PM VI. CONSENT ITEMS

A. Acceptance of Grants/Donations (Enc.)

Mr. Brian Forgue made a motion seconded by Mrs. Balboni to approve the Grants and Donations presented.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 12 Nays Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Tara, Jeana, Peter, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Lisa, Alicia, Keri, Lyndsey, Tasha, Jason

Mr. Brian Forgue made a motion seconded by Mrs. Daviau to extend the meeting until 9:15 p.m.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 12 Nays Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Tara, Jeana, Peter, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Lisa, Alicia, Keri, Lyndsey, Tasha, Jason

8:00 PM VII. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE UPDATE

General:

- Last month he and Anna spoke to Patrick Tutwiler at Northampton High School. The Northampton Youth Commission hosted 7 different school districts around western mass to speak to the Secretary of Massachusetts Education. Ana and I relentlessly relayed our dire need for financial aid, but we feel that steps being taken towards rural aid are absent. It's unfortunate that our advocacy is met with silence, but all we can do is keep going.
- The band participated in the Blandford and Russell memorial day parades this year.
- The best buddies 5k took place, giving the opportunity for students throughout the school to take 10 laps around the school. In total, 250 kids ended up participating.

Highschool:

- I know most of you, if not all of you, attended graduation, but I still wanted to report on the monumental achievements from the class of 2025. Although their class was small, figures of great leadership emerged. I wanted to acknowledge The Papillion, the president of the class, Jesse Balboni, the Salutatorian of the class, and Olivia Maciver, the valedictorian.
- High School elections took place at the beginning of the month. I'm glad to say ana and I will be returning next year as you're student Representatives.
- Highschool NHS students volunteered at Chester and Littleville field days last week. Students helped run activities, while also joining the fun with elementary students.
- Prom took place at Union station on May 23rd from 6-10:30. 75 High school students attended the dance,
- Following the High School awards ceremony, the student council put on another great Spring fling with help from Barr. A large rock wall was rented for spring fling, along with a variety of food. Additionally, The national guard brought an inflatable obstacle course and a pull up bar.
- "She kills monsters" was a phenomenal play. Happening May 16th and 17th, Students took us through the story of Agnes and her late sister, Tilly. Agnes ends up reconnecting with her sister through the Dungeons and Dragons Campaign Tilly left behind, which takes the audience through the adventures of Agnes. I

thought it was a heartwarming play with excellent characters, and I hope that next year is just as good.

- Mr. Duggan took his history classes on a trip to Historic Deerfield last month. There, students participated in a walking tour of deerfield sites, learned about historic voting practices, and also got insight on their civic action project.
- I wanted to advertise the junior class carwash fundraiser. It's taking place this Friday from 12-6pm, so come by whenever. (Hand out fliers)
- Student council is a popular club for many High School students. Although the interest is quite high, there are only 4 positions available per grade. We were wondering if we would work on expanding the club to at least 5 per grade, which could help the council in a variety of ways. I'm wondering if this committee would be able to make that change.

Middleschool:

- Middle school had their field day already. Video game trucks, kickball, and soccer accompanied middle schoolers for the day.
- Middle school had their band concert last Tuesday. Additionally, the middle school also won gold in their Great East Festival performance.
- 6th graders went on a field trip to Storrs adventure park. Students were able to enjoy ziplining free of charge, with the help of Barr. Additionally, 7th graders took a trip to the Franklin park zoo.
- The 8th grade graduation ceremony will be held in the auditorium next Tuesday for their step into Highschool.

Littleville:

- Both Littleville and Chester students grouped together for step up day. Students met with administrators and teachers, and were also accompanied by current 6th graders to help them get used to the new academic landscape. The Littleville step up day will be tomorrow from 1-1:45 in the GPAC.
- Littleville had their field day last Friday. Students altered between 14 stations around the school.
- The birds of prey organization revisited Littleville to educate students about his birds earlier this month.

8:05 PM VIII. COMMUNICATIONS

A. School Committee

- Ms. Papillon thanked Mrs. Smidy. You came here and brought so much light, positivity, and hope. You were invigorating for staff and students. We are very excited for new endeavors, you are going to crush it!
- Mr. Jason Fogue said we had a quick reception before meeting for retirees and Abbey Keller. He echoes the sentiments of Mrs. Papillon. It has been an honor to do this with her.
- Mrs. Balboni reminded everyone if you brought it, bring it out.

B. Chairperson -

- Retirement/Recognition Celebration 6-7 p.m. Courtyard

C. Superintendent - Central Office Update (Enc.)

- Mrs. Smiddy said since the FY '26 budget passed, she invited Representative Blais to do a follow up briefing for the rural schools bill. She will email us.
-

D. Assistant Superintendent

- Ms. Fisk will have a final operations report.

E. Administration (Enc.) - None

F. Town Officials - None

8:10 PM IX. COMMITTEE REPORTING (Enc.)

A. Superintendent's Evaluation - None

B. Legislative Liaison

- Highlight the positive and great impact that Theo and the students had on Tutwiler after the students made their presentations. It is going to be tough finding and replacing Mrs. Smiddy who has made a name for herself for supporting and fighting for rural school aid.
- Mrs. Briggs brought up that It was stated at a selectboard last week at the town meeting that Mrs. Maffuccio was fired before she was fired.
- Mr. Brian Forgue said at that meeting it was only the intention to share . He made a statement on assumptions he personally reached that she made. It was not a statement he should have said. It was an assumption.
- Mrs. Briggs said after a whole year of privacy.
- Mr. Jason Forgue said nothing has been presented from a legal standpoint.
- Brian's statements were not necessarily conclusive. He was vague in his answer and not conclusive.

C. Negotiations

D. Building Liaisons

E. CES Update

F. Policy

8:15 PM X. OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

- Revisit Regional Agreement
- Start Times

8:20 PM XI. INFORMATION

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

AP#1080 \$152,700.50

PR #023 \$539,914.47

AP#1079 \$147,539.10

PR #024 \$508,030.83

AP#1081 \$57.55

AP#1083 \$24,256.82

AP#1088 \$148,200.10

8:25 PM XIII. ADJOURNMENT by 9 p.m. unless extended by majority vote.

Mr. Brian Forgue made a motion seconded by Mrs. Daviau to adjourn the meeting at 9:12 p.m.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 12 Nays Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Tara, Jeana, Peter, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Lisa, Alicia, Keri, Lyndsey, Tasha, Jason

Respectfully submitted,
Stacy L Stewart,
School Committee Secretary