

Suffield, Connecticut

Approved by Bd. of Ed. 07/13/2026

Board of Education Regular Meeting
Suffield High School Library Media Center
and via Zoom Webinar
June 1, 2026

Call to Order

Board Chair Sattan called the meeting to order at 6:37 p.m. The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Board members Melissa Finnigan, Brian Fry (arrived at 6:38), James Mol, Dustin Rose, Gianna Rossi, Maureen Sattan, and Greg Sparzo; and Superintendent Matt Dunbar, Assistant Superintendent Laura Norbut, Ed.D., and Business Manager Eric Remington

Absent: Debra Dudack, Sam Toskin

Recognition

Superintendent Dunbar and the Board recognized Olivia Mishtal, Suffield High School Class of 2026 Board of Education Student Representative. Board Chair Sattan thanked Student Representative Mishtal for her work with the Board of Education and wished her all the best in her future.

Superintendent Dunbar and the Board recognized staff members who are retiring at the end of the 2025-26 school year. Suffield High School Principal Anthony Hibbert spoke of Eddy Huppe, Suffield High School Math Teacher. Suffield Middle School Principal Ken Smith spoke of Carol Zaczynski, Suffield Middle School English Language Arts Teacher. McAlister Intermediate School Principal Kris Pryce spoke of Gina Cronin, McAlister Intermediate School Grade 4 Teacher. Secondary Supervisor of Special Education Sharon Goulet, Ed.D., spoke of Suffield High School Paraeducator Lori Foss.

Superintendent Dunbar and the Board recognized the 2027 Paraeducator of the Year, Mike Rubba and the 2027 Teacher of the Year, Joe Grimard as presented by Dr. Goulet and Teacher of the Year Committee Chair, Samantha Schrager, respectively.

Board members expressed congratulations to all and thanked them for their work and service within the district.

Suffield High School Student Representatives

Olivia Mishtal, Class of 2026, shared the news and events at Suffield High School and Suffield Middle School. Student Representative Mishtal reported that Suffield Middle School had its Scholastic Book Fair, band concert, and district choral concert. Suffield High School awarded select students in Drama Club, Future Farmers of America (FFA), and Quiz Bowl. She reported on athletic team conference championships, which now move on to state title. She thanked Board

members for attending Multicultural Night and for providing her with the opportunity to serve as Student Representative.

Lucy McCoy, Class of 2027, shared the news and events at McAlister Intermediate School and A. Ward Spaulding School. Student Representative McCoy reported on Spaulding School field trips, Step-up day for Grade 2, and Field Day. McAlister Intermediate School, in support of the Trees of Suffield initiative, allowed a homeroom representative to plant a sugar maple tree at the edge of the playground area. The spring concert is on June 4 and Field Day is June 9. Student Representative McCoy congratulated Student Representative Mishtal and thanked her for her mentorship.

Public Comment

Noora Khaled, Andrew Tini, and Anish Jindal, Suffield High School Class of 2026, addressed the Board regarding STEM education and engineering opportunities within the district. The students plan to pursue engineering-related fields in college and expressed appreciation for the positive impact the robotics program had on their academic and career interests. They encouraged the district to continue investing in STEM opportunities, increase awareness of engineering and computer science pathways, and promote broader student participation. The students shared their observations regarding the functionality and use of equipment in the STEAM Lab and recommended expanding opportunities for hands-on, project-based engineering experiences that emphasize problem solving and independent design.

Amelia Hosack, Suffield High School Class of 2026, encouraged the Board to consider an 8-period schedule and continue reviewing the high school course selection process. She expressed concern about scheduling limitations that may prevent students from taking all of the courses aligned with their interests and future goals. She encouraged the district to continue exploring ways to increase flexibility and access to coursework so that students can pursue a broader range of interests throughout their high school experience.

Board Member Comment

- Board member Rossi congratulated all of the honorees and thanked the students who provided public comment.
- Board member Finnigan echoed congratulations to the honorees. She thanked the students for sharing their perspectives and offering thoughtful recommendations.
- Board member Fry extended compliments to the state legislature for funding a universal free breakfast program for students. He thanked the honorees and recognized Olivia Mishtal. He thanked those involved with Multicultural Night for creating a meaningful community celebration.
- Board member Mol congratulated the honorees. He appreciated the students' comments and thanked them for providing feedback. He thanked the district for publishing detailed information about the middle school project online.
- Board member Rose congratulated all of the honorees and recognized the dedication and care demonstrated by all. He emphasized the importance of student voice in the decision-making process and noted that civic engagement begins with opportunities such as speaking before the Board.
- Board member Sparzo remarked that hearing directly from students provides valuable insight into their experiences and perspectives and appreciates their feedback.

Reports to the Board

A. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Dunbar reported that the Multicultural Night was a success and thanked staff members and organizers for their efforts. The district had a strong showing at the Connecticut HALO Awards, reflecting the high quality of Suffield's performing arts programs. McAlister Intermediate School had a successful Walk and Bike to School Day with beautiful weather and high student and family participation. Connecticut State Comptroller Sean Scanlon recently met with a group of Suffield High School students and staff in a roundtable discussion focused on teen mental health. Superintendent Dunbar praised the participating students as outstanding representatives of the high school and community.

B. Board Chair's Report

Board Chair Sattan announced that the Board of Education budget passed. A joint meeting with the Permanent Building Commission was held on May 21 and provided detailed information regarding the Suffield Middle School Building Project. The roundtable discussion with State Comptroller Scanlon was particularly valuable because students shared firsthand accounts of academic, social, and personal pressures they face. Interviews for the new Board of Education Student Representative will take place on Tuesday and there is strong student interest in serving on the Board. The final graduation planning meeting is this week and the graduation ceremony has been confirmed for June 13, 2026. Board members were reminded to complete the summer availability survey.

C. Business Manager's Report

Business Manager Eric Remington announced that the annual transportation survey will be distributed to families in the next week or so. Information from the survey is used by transportation provider M&J Bus Company to develop routes for the upcoming school year. Mr. Remington expressed appreciation for the partnership with M&J Bus Company noting their flexibility and responsiveness. The district hopes to bring a transportation contract proposal to the Board for consideration at the next meeting.

Mr. Remington explained that Connecticut's recently approved state budget includes funding for a universal breakfast program. Under the initiative, schools would be able to provide breakfast to students without charge. The district has not yet received implementation guidance from the state regarding the universal breakfast program and will monitor developments closely.

Summer work on capital improvement projects are planned across all schools. Several upgrades are planned for school kitchens including dishwasher replacements and walk-in cooler improvements. The Suffield High School HVAC Project is ready to begin immediately after school ends. Projects at Spaulding School that will go out to bid in the next few weeks include brick repointing and bathroom renovations. The district is also looking at a lighting upgrade project at Spaulding that was funded in the budget and completing the flooring replacement.

The district is still awaiting final state approval from the Connecticut Department of Administrative Services (DAS) on the Suffield High School Roof and Photovoltaic Project. Delays in the project were linked to legislation specifically addressing the project. The governor recently signed the budget but state authorization has not yet been finalized. Mr. Remington expressed concern about the timeline because project economics are tied to federal incentives.

Superintendent Dunbar is pleased that the district is moving forward with replacing all the heating and air conditioning units at the high school, as there were last minute issues with the auditorium air conditioner on Friday night for the 60th Anniversary of the Suffield Agriscience Program. There

was a large turnout with strong alumni participation and positive community engagement. The event was a powerful reminder of the long-standing impact of the agriscience program.

Board members questioned the roof project timeline and state approval of the project.

D. Board of Selectmen Liaison's Report

None

E. Board of Finance Liaison's Report

None

Approval of Minutes

MOTION #26-71: Mol moved, Rossi seconded to approve the Board of Education Regular Meeting minutes of May 4 and May 18, 2026 and the Permanent Building Commission and Board of Education Joint Special Meeting minutes of May 21, 2026. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **7-0-0**.

Consent Agenda

None

Discussion/Action Items

A. A. Ward Spaulding School Year End Review

Principal Gina Olearczyk presented the year end review for A.Ward Spaulding School. Highlights included the school's continued focus on strengthening Tier 1 instruction through implementation of CKLA literacy and Bridges Mathematics, refining Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), and fostering a positive school culture centered on kindness and belonging.

Students have demonstrated significant academic growth. DIBELS reading assessment data showed increases in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding benchmark expectations across all grade levels. Mathematics data also reflected strong student performance, with 83% of students ending the year at the proficient level. Principal Olearczyk attributed the gains to consistent implementation of Bridges Mathematics and Number Corner routines. She reviewed improvements to intervention systems, progress monitoring, and social-emotional supports.

Board members recognized the positive academic growth and questioned classroom disruption.

B. McAlister Intermediate School Year End Review

Principal Kris Pryce provided a year end review for McAlister Intermediate School. Highlights included student achievement, school climate initiatives, and instructional improvements. She said work remains closely aligned with district priorities, including strengthening literacy and mathematics instruction, refining intervention systems, supporting student wellness, and fostering a positive and inclusive school culture. She emphasized the importance of supporting students during the transition from the primary grades into the more independent learning environment of McAlister.

Staff continue to build consistency in literacy instruction while expanding implementation of Bridges Mathematics. Principal Pryce discussed the use of assessment data to inform instruction, identify student needs, and provide targeted interventions. The school continues to refine MTSS processes to ensure students receive timely academic and behavioral support. She highlighted the

collaborative efforts of classroom teachers, interventionists, special education staff, and support personnel in monitoring student progress and responding to individual learning needs. She reported that staff regularly review student performance data and adjust instructional supports to maximize student growth.

Principal Pryce discussed efforts to build positive relationships, support student belonging, and maintain a strong school culture while responding to increased student needs. She highlighted successful community engagement activities, including Walk and Bike to School Day and family involvement opportunities.

Board members questioned if math data was available and if the elementary schools had any open positions.

Olivia Mishtal and Lucy McCoy exited the meeting at 8:22 p.m.

C. Kindergarten Enrollment Update

Superintendent Dunbar, along with Principal Olearczyk, provided an update on kindergarten enrollment for the 2026-2027 school year. To date there are currently 102 kindergarten students registered. Last year at this point in time the district had approximately 116 registered kindergarten students. The district anticipates receiving additional registrations over the summer months, potentially increasing enrollment to between 120 and 130 students. If enrollment remains lower, kindergarten would operate with seven sections and one kindergarten teacher would be reassigned. If enrollment increases significantly, kindergarten would remain at eight sections and staffing adjustments would be considered to maintain favorable class sizes.

The district has received 11 kindergarten waiver requests for the 2026-2027 school year. Four requests have been approved, four have been denied, and three remain under review after recently being received. This will be the final year the district is required to administer the waiver process.

Board members thanked administration for the update.

D. Cell Phone Use at Suffield High School

Superintendent Dunbar noted that proposed statewide legislation regarding student cell phone restrictions did not advance, leaving policy decisions to local districts. He said there is mixed opinion on cell phones in school when talking to superintendents across the state. Tonight's discussion is intended to bring a broader conversation about whether changes to current policy are necessary.

Principal Hibbert reported that students currently are not allowed to use phones during class time. He shared feedback from high school staff, noting mixed experiences with cell phone use in classrooms. While some teachers successfully manage student phone use, others reported concerns about distractions, reduced engagement, and the impact of phones on learning. Principal Hibbert recommends restricting cell phones during class time by utilizing a pouch or caddy system to try to increase academic focus and on-task time. This recommendation would not require additional review of the policy by the Policy Subcommittee.

Board members discussed how cell phones have become increasingly integrated into students' daily lives and acknowledged that schools across the country continue to struggle balancing instructional

needs, student independence, safety considerations, and family expectations. Board members were in support of Principal Hibbert's recommendation.

E. Suffield Middle School Building Project Update

Superintendent Dunbar provided an update regarding the Suffield Middle School Building Project following the recent joint meeting with the Permanent Building Commission. He discussed efforts to increase community awareness by posting project materials and presentations on the district website and making information available to the public.

A potential referendum had initially been targeted for November 2026 but there is growing concern that a referendum during that timeframe may not allow sufficient opportunity for community education and engagement. The district and town have a responsibility to ensure residents fully understand the project's scope, costs, educational benefits, and long-term implications before being asked to vote. No final decision has been made regarding the referendum timeline and district and town leadership continue to evaluate the timeline and are considering whether a later referendum date would better support comprehensive public engagement efforts.

Board members discussed communication and grant timelines. They emphasized the importance of ensuring residents have access to accurate project information prior to any referendum vote.

F. Discussion and Possible Action on Preschool Program Tuition

Director of Special Services Diana Kelley, Ed.D., reported that it has been three years since preschool tuition has been increased. The recommendation is to increase peer-model preschool tuition from \$1,900 plus the \$100 registration fee to \$2,200 annually. The proposed increase would maintain affordability while remaining below tuition rates charged by many neighboring districts.

MOTION #26-72: Sattan moved, Sparzo seconded to approve the \$200 increase in Preschool tuition for the 2026-2027 school year making the cost \$2,200 annually for the half day program. Finnigan, Mol, Rose, Rossi, Sattan, and Sparzo voted in favor. Fry voted against. The motion passed **6-1-0**.

Board members discussed the number of peer models.

G. April Financial Report

Mr. Remington reviewed the April financial report. He reported that the district's projected year-end deficit had improved from approximately \$172,000 in March to approximately \$102,000 in April. He reviewed available budget accounts that may help offset the remaining deficit and discussed ongoing monitoring of expenditures through the close of the fiscal year.

Mr. Remington discussed the uncertainty surrounding Open Choice funding. He informed the Board that Hartford Public Schools has raised concerns regarding certain special education cost calculations associated with Open Choice reimbursement payments. He explained that the issue affects multiple participating districts and could potentially result in requests for reimbursement or adjustments to previously distributed funds. Discussions remain ongoing and no final determination has been made. Mr. Remington will continue to monitor developments and will provide updates to the Board as additional information becomes available. He said that despite this concern, he is confident that the district will eliminate the remaining projected deficit before the end of the fiscal year and finish the year with a balanced budget.

Subcommittee Reports

- A. May 6, 2026 – Community Engagement and Public Relations Subcommittee Special Meeting – Subcommittee Chair Mol reported that the Suffield Middle School Building Project was discussed with a focus on public outreach and strategies to ensure residents have access to accurate and timely information. The district’s use of communication platforms and community engagement opportunities were discussed.
- B. May 20, 2026 – Policy Subcommittee Special Meeting – Subcommittee Chair Fry reported that five policies were discussed and the following policies will be placed on First Read: Policy #5141.41 Reports of Suspected Abuse or Neglect of Adults with an Intellectual Disability or Autism Spectrum Disorder; Policy #6163.3 Live Animals in the Classroom.
- C. May 22, 2026 - Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee Special Meeting – Subcommittee Chair Finnigan reported that the subcommittee discussion focused on continued implementation of CKLA literacy and Bridges Mathematics, the use of student performance data, and ongoing efforts to strengthen MTSS.
- D. May 28, 2026 – Finance and Facilities Subcommittee Special Meeting – Topics were discussed in the Business Manager’s report. Superintendent Dunbar anticipates having a transportation contract for review at the next subcommittee meeting.

Board Liaison Reports

- A. Capital Region Education Council (CREC) – No report
- B. Agriscience – Board member Mol reported that the May edition of the *The Blue & Gold Times* is out and includes graduating agriscience students. The 60th Anniversary of the Suffield Agriscience Program was held on May 29 and highlighted the program’s history. June 3 is the Senior Class Banquet and June 4 is the Senior Awards and Scholarship Ceremony.

Future Business

Review of Out of District Costs

Public Comment

Anna-Kristin Daub-Murphy, 107 East Street South, encouraged the district to consider expanding opportunities for unstructured play and recess at the elementary level. She expressed the need to continue examining the role of technology in schools and thanked the Board and Principal Hibbert for the thoughtful consideration regarding cell phone use in the high school.

Board Member Comment

- Board member Rossi thanked Anna-Kristin Daub-Murphy for providing public comment.
- Board member Finnigan expressed concern regarding comments associated with the STEAM program and student perception regarding academic rigor at the high school and the need to promote and increase available academic and elective opportunities.
- Board member Fry appreciated hearing the thoughtful and articulate comments from the students. He said an eight period day has been considered and could be part of an ongoing conversation.
- Board member Mol thanked Anna-Kristin Daub-Murphy for her comments and looks forward to seeing her at the next Wellness committee on Wednesday.
- Board Chair Sattan highlighted the Suffield Middle School Building Project and possible referendum. She encourages Suffield voters to get informed and to understand the needs, costs, and opportunities of that build.

Adjournment

Fry moved, Mol seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:45 p.m. All members voted in favor.

Click here to view the meeting: [01JUN2026 BOE Regular Meeting Minutes](#)

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of July 13, 2026

Respectfully submitted,

Gianna Rossi
Secretary