

Board of Education Regular Meeting
Suffield High School Media Center
August 10, 2026

Call to Order

Board Chair Sattan called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

Present: Board members Melissa Finnigan, Dustin Rose, Gianna Rossi, Maureen Sattan, Greg Sparzo, and Sam Toskin; and Superintendent Matt Dunbar, Assistant Superintendent Laura Norbut, and Business Manager Eric Remington

Absent: Debra Dudack, Brian Fry, James Mol

Consent Agenda

MOTION #27-03: Finnigan moved to approve the following on the consent agenda:

- A. Policy #6146 Graduation Requirements (U.S. History)
- B. Policy #5112 Ages of Attendance

Sparzo left the meeting at 6:34 p.m. and returned to the meeting at 6:40 p.m.

Rose seconded the motion. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **5-0-0**.

Discussion/Action Items

A. Superintendent's Update

Staffing:

The Superintendent provided an update on district staffing for the upcoming school year. The district is nearly fully staffed, with one part-time music position remaining open. Special education positions are difficult to fill but the district was able to hire experienced staff for Spaulding School and Suffield Middle School. The Superintendent noted that the hires were budget neutral because the positions were already budgeted at the top step. Additional staffing is being coordinated with the ESS program, including support at MIS and SMS. The district is also exploring the potential enrollment of an ESS/tuition-based student from another district.

The Board was also updated on a Technology Education staffing change at Suffield High School. Kevin Mattia will transition from SMS to SHS, teaching at both schools and working with the newly hired teacher, particularly in the HBI program.

SMS Building Project:

The Superintendent reported that the SMS building project is currently on hold pending completion of soil samples and environmental testing. Progress has been delayed due to a staffing change at the environmental firm. The architect does not currently anticipate significant issues but indicated that the building location may need to be adjusted depending on the testing results. The PBC will continue to monitor the project, with its next meeting scheduled for the following Thursday.

SHS Capital Projects:

The Board received updates on several ongoing projects at Suffield High School. The gym floor replacement is progressing and is expected to be completed near the start of the school year. Rooftop HVAC units have been installed and connected, with programming and balancing underway with assistance from a hired firm. The roof replacement project received two bids below the original estimate; the PBC is reviewing the proposals. The project is expected to continue into the school year.

The Board was also updated on the photovoltaic project, with bids due the following morning. Stage lighting was discussed, with consideration given to completing the project in one phase next summer rather than the originally planned two phases. The district will review pricing and consider the ACCE process and/or state contract pricing.

Family and Consumer Science Renovations:

Renovations to the SMS Family and Consumer Science classroom are underway to improve the learning environment and student safety. The project includes new appliances and removal of a wall, with significant improvements already visible.

MIS Lockers:

The Business Manager provided an update on the planned replacement of lockers at MIS. Existing lockers are too narrow for modern student backpacks. The initial quote significantly underestimated installation costs. The district identified a small shop capable of producing custom lockers and ordered a bank of lockers to evaluate the specifications. The Business Manager reported being satisfied with the product and requested authorization to proceed with the contractor for the full project. Because the project exceeds the town's bid requirements, a waiver from the Board of Selectmen will be requested.

AWS Facilities:

The Board was informed that bathroom renovations at AWS are planned for next summer. Repointing work at the building is ongoing.

B. Draft District Advancement Plan

The Board reviewed the 2026-2027 District Advancement Plan, which focuses on strengthening elementary curriculum implementation, deepening Tier 1 instructional practices at the secondary level, and improving student outcomes through data-driven instruction and targeted professional development.

Key areas include continued implementation of Amplify CKLA and Bridges mathematics, targeted small-group instruction, coaching cycles, professional learning, and Learning Walks at the elementary level. The plan also includes targeted secondary professional development related to Illustrative Mathematics, the Amplify ELA pilot, TCI Social Studies, and World Language programming.

Superintendent Dunbar noted that this is the third year of elementary reading and math curriculum implementation and that additional professional development funding will likely be requested during the upcoming budget process. Classroom drop-ins will continue, with the process being refined to align with the Framework for Effective Tier 1 Instruction and identify school-based areas for improvement.

The plan also addresses the strategic use of artificial intelligence, including development of districtwide guidance, separate elementary and secondary AI committees, professional learning, and classroom protocols for secondary students.

Place-based learning will continue to expand across the district, including integration into elementary curriculum, professional learning for secondary teachers, K-5 Specials, and increased partnerships with community organizations. The plan further includes continued development of in-district ESS support, staff capacity-building for students with significant needs, and implementation of social-emotional learning initiatives, including Fly Five and RULER.

C. Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Financial Report

The Board reviewed the year-end financial position. Special education outplacement tuition and transportation costs were more than \$800,000 over budget. This overage was offset by savings in salaries and health insurance, as well as other budget management measures.

The district also incurred significant costs related to glycol in HVAC systems at three schools in the district. A budget freeze was maintained for much of the year. The district currently anticipates an approximately \$59,000 surplus at year-end, subject to completion of the audit.

The Board discussed transferring the anticipated \$59,000 surplus to the non-lapsing fund. The Town has requested that the Board contribute toward the cost of repairing the Suffield High School/Bruce Park bridge, and the non-lapsing fund could be used for this purpose. The Board also discussed a potential reimbursement obligation to Hartford related to Choice Program students from prior years. The district is awaiting final information from Hartford regarding the amount owed. However, the estimated liability was accrued in FY26.

D. Discussion and Possible Approval of Bridge Funding

The bridge is used by the Agriscience program to transport equipment to the extension property. ASTE funds cannot be used for the proposed bridge repair. The Town has proposed repairing the bridge for both vehicular and pedestrian use, although the existing bridge was not originally rated for vehicular traffic. The proposed project includes specialized railings funded through the BOE budget, with the remaining costs funded by the Town. The total project cost discussed was approximately \$286,000. The Board discussed alternatives for addressing the bridge, including keeping the bridge closed and pursuing funding through ACCE, which could delay repairs by a year or more.

MOTION #27-04: Finnigan moved, Sparzo seconded that the Suffield Board of Education authorize the appropriation of up to \$100,000 from the Non-lapsing Fund for repairs to the bridge connecting Suffield High School to the Agricultural Extension property. This appropriation is for the portion of the bridge project related to repairs and upgrades to the structure allowing for the use of the bridge by vehicular traffic. Finnigan, Rose, Rossi and Sparzo voted in favor. Sattan and Toskin voted against. The motion passed **4-2-0**. Superintendent Dunbar will communicate with the First Selectman and report back to the Board.

E. Board of Education Self-Evaluation

The Board reviewed the self-evaluation rubric and discussed areas for continued improvement. Discussion included the Board's role in advocating at the national, state, and local levels and the challenges associated with staying informed about upcoming state policies and legislative changes. The Board also discussed communication with the public, including the appropriate use of social media and responding to public input. Members identified an opportunity to more consistently

communicate positive information about district schools and student accomplishments. The Board discussed highlighting student voices and increasing its positive presence and engagement within the community.

Subcommittee Reports

- A. August 10, 2026 – Policy Subcommittee Meeting – Board Chair Sattan reported that three policies were discussed and the following policies will be placed on First Read: #6161.13 Library Display and Program Policy; #6161.1 Library Collection Development and Maintenance Policy; #6161.12 Library Material Review and Reconsideration Policy

The Board discussed state requirements for library policies and materials, noting that the requirements are very prescriptive. The policies listed above are being placed on First Read with expected action at the September Board meeting.

Adjournment

Toskin moved, Sparzo seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:41 p.m. All members voted in favor.

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of September 8, 2026.

Respectfully submitted,

Gianna Rossi
Secretary