

Suffield, Connecticut

Approved by Bd. of Ed. 10/05/2026

Board of Education Regular Meeting
Suffield High School Library Media Center
and via Zoom Webinar
September 8, 2026

Call to Order

Board Chair Sattan called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Board members Melissa Finnigan, Brian Fry, James Mol, Dustin Rose, Gianna Rossi (via Zoom), and Maureen Sattan; and Superintendent Matt Dunbar, Assistant Superintendent Laura Norbut, and Business Manager Eric Remington

Absent: Debra Dudack, Greg Sparzo, Sam Toskin

Recognition

Superintendent Dunbar and the Board recognized Jackie McDunnah Lemay, M&J Bus Inc. for her continued partnership and commitment to Suffield Public Schools' students and families.

Business Manager Eric Remington described the scope and complexity of district transportation, including more than 1,600 students, approximately 56 regular bus runs, roughly 2,000 daily stops, approximately two dozen vans, and additional transportation for after-school programs, field trips, activities, and athletics. Ms. Lemay was praised for her professionalism, problem-solving, commitment to safety, responsiveness to changing student transportation needs, and advocacy for drivers.

Superintendent Dunbar, Mr. Remington, and the Board thanked Ms. Lemay for her long-standing service and acknowledged representatives of M&J Bus Inc. who were present for the recognition.

Suffield High School Student Representatives

Board Chair Sattan welcomed Board of Education Student Representatives Olivia Nicora, Class of 2028, and Lucy McCoy, Class of 2027. Board Chair Sattan introduced Olivia Nicora who is new to the role this year, and encouraged both students to contribute to agenda item discussions, as the Board is interested in hearing student voice at its meetings. Student Representative Nicora thanked the Board and expressed excitement at serving on the Board.

Student Representative Nicora shared the news and events at McAlister Intermediate School and A. Ward Spaulding School. Student Representative Nicora reported that the K-5 Back to School Bash was held on August 26, the first day of school was August 27, breakfast is free to all students across the district this year, and McAlister Intermediate School is holding its open house and book fair on September 15.

Student Representative McCoy shared the news and events at Suffield High School and Suffield Middle School. Student Representative McCoy reported Suffield Middle School opened the year with a school-wide assembly emphasizing each student's role in a positive school climate. Open house is scheduled for September 10. Suffield High School held new student orientation on August 20 and Agriscience held its Welcome Back Picnic on September 3. Students are adjusting to the new classroom cell phone procedures and electronic hall pass system. Open house is scheduled for September 24.

Public Comment

None

Board Member Comment

- Board member Finnigan thanked Jackie Lemay for her commitment to the district.
- Board member Mol congratulated Jackie Lemay on her recognition and thanked her for her commitment to the district. He welcomed Olivia Nicora and Lucy McCoy and he hopes to hear about the cell phone procedure at Suffield High School during Principal Hibbert's school advancement plan presentation.

Reports to the Board

A. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Dunbar reported a positive and smooth opening to the 2026-2027 school year and thanked staff and Board members who participated in opening events. He recognized Teacher of the Year Joe Grimard for his remarks at Convocation.

The district received a \$1,200 donation to the middle school cross-country team from the Cpl. Stephen Bixler Memorial Fund and Superintendent Dunbar thanked Linda and Richard Bixler for the generous donation in memory of their son.

Assistant Superintendent Norbut reported on a \$7,500 grant that was awarded for 'Bringing Literacy to Life Through Purposeful Play' at Spaulding, supporting literacy instruction through developmentally appropriate dramatic play and a \$6,000 grant that was awarded to create a collaborative makerspace in the Suffield Middle School library. The district will apply for a \$50,000 Connecticut State Department of Education high-dosage mathematics tutoring grant, targeting grades 7 and 8 with small-group tutoring.

Superintendent Dunbar said the Effective School Solutions (ESS) in-district programming at McAlister and Suffield Middle School are off to an encouraging start, serving approximately eight students at each school. The program is intended to support students who are returning from outplacement or who might otherwise require out-of-district placement.

An additional special education teacher was hired at Spaulding School to increase support. The staffing configuration is expected to save money compared with filling other support positions that otherwise would have been required.

Work on the bridge connecting Suffield High School and Spaulding School will begin mid-December and should be complete by February. The Suffield Middle School Building Project remains under review after soil and environmental testing identified soft soils and wetlands/vernal-pool constraints. The architect developed a revised concept on the existing property and additional meetings with project stakeholders are planned.

B. Board Chair's Report

Board Chair Sattan reported that Board subcommittees are beginning their work for the year and meeting dates are being established. Board members are welcome to attend open houses and other start-of-year events.

C. Business Manager's Report

Business Manager Eric Remington reported that FY26 financial reporting has been filed with the state. Final audited figures are not expected until later in the year, following the audit process. It is early in FY27, natural gas costs have been identified as the primary budget area being watched at this time. Transportation opened smoothly and requested route changes have been processed after the initial two-week route stabilization period. Transportation represents approximately \$2.2 million, or about 5% of the district budget, and is the largest expenditure area after salaries and benefits. Open Choice transportation from Hartford continues to require attention. Food Service had a smooth start and free breakfast participation was strong at the elementary level, with room for growth at the secondary level. A new food service point-of-sale system has been implemented, and a new ice cream vendor is being secured following a supplier change.

D. Board of Selectmen Liaison's Report

None

E. Board of Finance Liaison's Report

None

Approval of Minutes

MOTION #27-05: Fry moved, Finnigan seconded to approve the Board of Education Regular Meeting minutes of July 13 and August 10, 2026. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **6-0-0**.

Consent Agenda

MOTION #27-06: Finnigan moved to approve the following on the consent agenda:

- A. #6161.1 Library Collection Development and Maintenance Policy
- B. #6161.12 Library Material Review and Reconsideration Policy
- C. #6161.13 Library Display and Program Policy
- D. Suffield High School Field Trip Request – New York City Festivals of Music – April 3-4, 2027 – NYC, NY

Mol seconded the motion. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **6-0-0**.

Discussion/Action Items

All schools presented their advancement plans, which align with the District Advancement Plan that Superintendent Dunbar previously shared with the Board.

A. A. Ward Spaulding School Update and School Advancement Plan

Principal Gina Olearczyk presented the advancement plan for Spaulding School. Spaulding's plan continues academic work in core instruction and intervention while placing increased emphasis on social-emotional development and coordinated student and family supports.

Board members questioned the difference between ConnectIV and Effective School Solutions (ESS). They discussed seeing a comparison of data from last year.

B. McAlister Intermediate School Update and School Advancement Plan

Principal Kris Pryce presented the advancement plan for this school. McAlister's central theme for the year is consistency across instruction, student supports, expectations, and staff practice.

C. Suffield Middle School Update and School Advancement Plan

Principal Ken Smith presented the advancement plan for Suffield Middle School. He said that the plan is being presented as the next phase of work begun last year, with emphasis on Tier 1 instruction, school climate, social-emotional learning, MTSS, and scheduling.

Board members discussed the future of the robotics team at Suffield Middle School and questioned the cost of the CREC.

D. Suffield High School Update and School Advancement Plan

Principal Anthony Hibbert presented the advancement plan for this school. Suffield High School's plan prioritizes that every student be challenged, supported, and connected.

Principal Hibbert reported that the new cell phone procedures were going better than anticipated. The policy did not change the times when students are permitted to use phones; rather, classroom routines were changed so phones are put away during instruction. Medical accommodations remain available when documented.

The electronic hall pass system has reduced hallway traffic substantially. Students sign out electronically, staff can see destinations and elapsed time.

Student Representatives McCoy and Nicora described a generally smooth adjustment, with some initial concerns about bathroom access and device compatibility. Board members discussed staff climate, the cell phone policy, and staff opportunities for data dives.

Lucy McCoy and Olivia Nicora exited the meeting at 7:58 p.m.

E. Facilities Update

Mr. Remington thanked Director of Facilities Larry Plano and his facilities team for preparing the buildings for the opening of school. At Spaulding School the remaining flooring replacement work and LED lighting upgrades have been completed. Brick repointing and bathroom projects are progressing toward bidding and the exterior door replacement work has moved forward.

McAlister Intermediate School has a newly installed outdoor pavilion that will provide shade during recess. The Board of Selectmen took no action on a requested bid-policy waiver for lockers, so the district will proceed through the bid process. The replacement library furniture related to the prior flood has arrived and the library is fully operational again.

Improvements to the Suffield Middle School Family and Consumer Science room have been completed. At Suffield High School, the first-floor flooring work has been completed. The roof project continues toward contract finalization.

F. **Action Item:** Discussion and Possible Board of Education Appointment to the Cable Advisory Council

MOTION #27-07: Mol moved, Fry seconded to appoint Carl Casinghino as a member of the Cable Advisory Council. Finnigan, Fry, Mol, Rossi, and Sattan voted in favor. Rose abstained. The motion passed **5-0-1**.

Eric Remington left at 8:06 p.m., returned at 8:09 p.m.

Subcommittee Reports

A. September 3, 2026 – Finance and Facilities Subcommittee Special Meeting – Board Chair Sattan reported the principal topics were covered in the Business Manager’s Report and Facilities Update.

Board Liaison Reports

A. Capital Region Education Council (CREC) – None
B. Agriscience – Board member Mol reported that the Agriscience program is in full swing and students will be participating in the Suffield on the Green and the Big E.

Future Business

Board member Finnigan would like an overview of the Framework for Effective Tier 1 Instruction.

Public Comment

None

Board Member Comment

None

Adjournment

Mol moved, Finnigan seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:12 p.m. All members voted in favor.

Click here to view the meeting: [08SEP2026 BOE Regular Meeting](#)

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of October 5, 2026

Respectfully submitted,

Gianna Rossi
Secretary