

**MINUTES OF CHESHIRE BOARD OF EDUCATION BUSINESS MEETING  
HELD IN TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON DECEMBER 19, 2024 AT 7:30 PM**

---

Board Members Present: Samantha Rosenberg, Chair; Anne Harrigan, Vice Chair; Adam Grippo, Secretary; Anne Marie Cullinan; Timothy White

Board Members Absent: Mark Ecke; Anthony Perugini

Administrators Present: Jeffrey F. Solan, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools; Vincent Masciana, Chief Operating Officer; Marlene Silano, Assistant Superintendent of Schools; Mary Jocelyn-Gadd, Principal, Cheshire High School; Maureen Reed, Ed.D., Assistant Principal, Cheshire High School; John Perosino, Athletic Director, Cheshire High School; Kelly Grippo, Principal, Dodd Middle School; Diana Burns, Ed.D., Principal, Chapman Elementary School, Scott Jeffrey, Principal, Highland Elementary School; Kevin Hanlon, K-8 Curriculum Coordinator

---

**1. CALL TO ORDER – 7:30 P.M.**

- A. Roll for Quorum. The roll was called and a quorum determined.
- B. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America. Ms. Rosenberg led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.
- C. Student Representatives. Lydia Ghaly, student representative for the 2024/2025 school year, reported on recent events at Cheshire High School. She reported on Link Crew Leaders assisting freshmen in creating study schedules, organizing and preparing for exams. She reported winter sports have begun, and rehearsals will be beginning for their spring musical, Footloose.

**2. PRESENTATIONS**

**A. School Partnership Award – Dodd Middle School**

Dr. Harrigan, the Board of Education representative to Dodd Middle School, introduced the school's recipient, Keri Banack. Keri's unwavering commitment to building a strong school-home partnership is truly inspiring. As a dedicated member of their PTA, she continually supports teachers through thoughtful hospitality efforts throughout the year. Keri's dedication shines through in the many events she volunteers for and the countless hours she devotes to chairing committees, attending meetings, and collaborating with the broader PTA to plan and execute meaningful initiatives. Her tireless efforts organizing events like Stock the Fridge, the Coffee Truck, and teacher luncheons reflect her deep appreciation for our teachers and her commitment to fostering a positive and supportive school environment. Keri's role in strengthening Dodd's connection with the wider PTA community greatly enhances the educational experience for our students. Her exceptional dedication and hard work make her an outstanding choice for the School Partnership Award. The Cheshire Board of Education thanked Keri for going above and beyond for our students!

**School Partnership Award – Chapman School**

In Mr. Perugini's absence, Ms. Rosenberg introduced Chapman school's recipient, Nastia Karpoukhina and the American Red Cross. The Red Cross has made a meaningful and lasting impact on our school and this award celebrates the vital role partnerships play in enriching the educational experience and fostering student growth. Chapman is proud to recognize the American Red Cross for their incredible support of Chapman School. Recently, they provided our students with a program called "There's Nothing Stopping You from Becoming a Preparedness Champion!" Through this initiative, our students learned essential skills like proper hand-washing techniques. They also gained valuable insights into the lifesaving work the Red Cross does to support communities like ours. On behalf of our students, staff, and families, thank you to the American Red Cross for your commitment to helping us create a safer, more informed, and prepared community. The Cheshire Board of Education thanked Nastia and the Red Cross for going above and beyond for the students of Chapman Elementary School.

**B. Unified Champion Schools**

At tonight's meeting, Highland Elementary and Cheshire High School were recognized for being Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools. Barbara Horn, Unified Champion School Coordinator and Steve Trifone, Assistant Director of CIAC/SOCT Special Olympics Unified Sports made the presentation. Ms. Horn said she is thrilled to be part of celebrating Highland Elementary School's renewal of their Unified Champion Schools, National Banner status, reflecting an ongoing commitment of inclusion for all students in the athletic and social arenas. Highland Elementary is a model for other schools. She said she often shares Highland's best practices, such as their Unified Newsletter, their unified Leadership Team and their seasonal celebrations.

Steve Trifone congratulated Principal Scott Jeffrey in the elementary program, as one of the finest programs we have in the State. Mr. Trifone, Assistant Director of the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference, Unified Sports Program, Special Olympics said it is not very often that two schools in the same district receive a Unified Champion Recognition Banner in the same year. It just demonstrates how strong Cheshire unified sports are. The National Unified Program offers opportunities for students with and without intellectual disabilities to participate in athletic programs and activities. Currently, close to 90% of eligible high schools have a unified sports program, but some of those schools go above and beyond to successfully demonstrate larger commitment and inclusion by offering additional activities to achieve the overall goal of full school wide social inclusion. The Cheshire High School Unified Program serves as an example to others of how to make all students be part of a school climate. To achieve national status, a program must meet 10 national standards, which encompass three components; whole school engagement, involving the whole school inclusively and inclusive school leadership allowing all students to get a

chance to be leaders. The Cheshire High School unified program is not a newcomer to this prestigious award. Through the continued dedication and commitment of the Cheshire High School Athletic Department and administration, Cheshire has once again met the requirements of national status. He said they, at the unified office, congratulate Cheshire High School for continued support in this inclusive program for all students.

Student athletes and program leaders gathered to receive the banners and recognition.

C. **Recognition of Trades Partners**

Superintendent Solan reported that about two years ago, we had a School Business Partnership meeting and they discussed how to breathe some life into our programming. They called members of the trade community in Cheshire, and we were thrilled to be able to meet with them and pick their brains about how we can better support our students and at the same time, support the local trades. We decided to offer our middle school students and high school students the opportunity to get out, visit the work sites, and see the businesses in action. Dr. Solan said there is tremendous demand in these fields for skilled members of our community to connect, learn and work with the partners that we are acknowledging tonight. Over the last two summers, these folks have taken their time, multiple nights, to invite students from Cheshire High School and Dodd Middle School into their workplace to educate them and their families about the professional opportunities that exist. Dr. Solan introduced representatives from East Coast Mechanical, Richard Chevrolet, FF Hitchcock, and Hanwa Aerospace. Unfortunately, Doug Johnson from Marion Manufacturing could not be here this evening. Board Members thanked the trade partners for all they have done to support Cheshire Public Schools.

3. **AUDIENCE**

Patricia Baker, 341 South Brooksvale Road. Ms. Baker said she is very proud that Cheshire Public Schools will approve an Equity and Diversity Policy.

4. **REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

A. **CURRICULUM**

I. **Curriculum Report**

Ms. Cullinan, the Chair of the Curriculum Committee asked Assistant Superintendent Silano to report. Ms. Silano said two teachers were at the meeting requesting out-of-country field trip approval. German Teacher, Kristin Haase, is requesting approval for a field trip to Germany and French Teacher, Tina Ocone is requesting approval for a trip to Rennes and Paris, France. Ms. Silano reported that she updated the Committee on a number of items.

Matt Mervis, Director of Skills21 and AI Strategy at EdAdvance spoke with the Administrative Team and Strategic Planning Committee about AI.

The first session of robotics in grades four and five is nearly complete. This was designed as a pre-engineering experience. The STEM and STEM teacher-coaches shared all of the SEL implications that this has had for students. While they learned coding and robotics, they really learned so much more. They talked about emotional regulation and collaborating with each other and having to compromise. They talked about the sheer perseverance that they had to endure to get the robots to do the things that they wanted. There is one robot and three kids in a group, so they really had to work together.

Ms. Silano said she and Mr. Masciana recently toured the Southington Agriculture Science Program. While students from Cheshire currently have the option to apply to Lyman Hall (we have 13 students at Lyman Hall this year) they are exploring whether or not the Southington program might provide yet another option for our students. The Southington Agriculture Science Program has connections with some of our local farms in Cheshire, including Dietrich Farms and Kurtz Farm.

Ms. Silano reported there was a YMCA survey that is going to go out to support children with special needs. Doug Levins has been meeting with her as part of the Health District Health and Wellness Committee. He has been active and involved in so much of what is happening in the Cheshire Public Schools. He is connecting with the Special Education Parent Teacher Association to conduct a survey to see which activities the YMCA might provide to students with special needs.

A new textbook, Essentials of Human Anatomy and Physiology was presented. This book was reviewed by a team of high school teachers who were looking for an updated book aligned to the NGSS content and standards. There were many things they liked about this textbook, including some interactive online options. They felt that it supported multilingual learners, that the questions provided in the text have varying levels of complexity and particularly had some real-world applications. This book went on display both at Central Office, at the Cheshire Public Library and at Cheshire High School. There was no feedback from any of those groups.

**II. Approval of Textbook**

Based upon its review and following the public viewing period, the Curriculum Committee recommends to the Board approval of the purchase of the following textbook:

<b>Textbook</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Essentials of Human Anatomy & Physiology, 13th Edition	Pearson	11-12

**MOTION by Ms. Cullinan and seconded by Dr. Harrigan.**

***MOVED** that the Cheshire Board of Education approve the purchase of the following textbook: Essentials of Human Anatomy & Physiology, 13th Edition, as recommended by the Curriculum Committee.*

**VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously by those present.**

**III. Approval of Out-of-Country Field Trips**

Board of Education policy requires that out-of-country field trips receive the permission of the Board of Education.

**Approval of Field Trip to Rennes and Paris, France**

Cheshire High School teacher, Tina Ocone, requested permission to take students to Rennes and Paris, France in June/July 2025. Superintendent Solan recommends approval of this request. The Superintendent reserves the right to cancel the trip should national security issues warrant.

**MOTION by Ms. Cullinan and seconded by Dr. Harrigan.**

***MOVED** that the Cheshire Board of Education approve the participation of Cheshire High School students in the educational field trip to Rennes and Paris, France from June 19, 2025 – July 4, 2025.*

**VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously by those present.**

**Approval of Field Trip to Cologne, Germany**

Cheshire High School teacher, Kristin Haase, has requested permission to take students to Cologne, Germany, in June/July 2025. Superintendent Solan recommends approval of this request. The Superintendent reserves the right to cancel the trip should national security issues warrant.

**MOTION** by Ms. Cullinan and seconded by Mr. Grippo.

***MOVED** that the Cheshire Board of Education approve the participation of Cheshire High School students in the educational field trip to Cologne, Germany from June 19, 2025 – July 2, 2025.*

**VOTE:** The Motion passed unanimously by those present.

**B. CALENDAR COMMITTEE**

**I. Report on Meeting Held December 3, 2024**

Dr. Harrigan Board liaison to the Calendar Committee met on December 3. Dr Solan shared a draft of the calendar that was approved by last year's Calendar Committee for the 2025/26 year and a proposed draft of the 2026/27 school calendar.

**II. Approval of 2025/26 School Calendar**

Dr. Harrigan said that because of the opening of the new schools, the 2025/26 calendar is different from past years. In order to allow as much time as possible to move into the new schools during the summer of 2026, the school year is starting earlier and ending earlier than in past years. The Committee reviewed the significant dates. The first day of school will be for students is August 21, 2025, which is significantly earlier than usual. That means Convocation is scheduled for August 18 and professional development days will be on the 19th and 20th of August, November 4, 2025, and March 20, 2026. With no snow days, the last day for school for students is projected to be June 4, 2026, and the last day for teachers would be June 5. Snow days will be made up June 5 through June 12 and any additional snow days beyond those six will begin on April 10 and move backwards to April 8.

Dr. Solan added the biggest challenge would be getting everything out of Norton into the new Norton and then demolishing that building and laying down space for parking. We really need as much time as we possibly can get, so we are adjusting the calendar. We are making every effort to keep to that calendar. Mr. Grippo raised the question if a three-hour delay could help. Not for the current school year, but I think in the spring we will continue that conversation to consider a three-hour delay to limit entire days missed.

**MOTION** by Dr. Harrigan and seconded by Ms. Cullinan.

**MOVED** *that the Committee approve the 2025/2026 School Calendar as presented.*

Discussion

Mr. White said he supports for the proposed calendar dates but plans to vote against the calendar due to concerns about the shift from Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples' Day. He said last year he was unaware of the change until the vote was imminent and feels he did not have enough time to thoughtfully consider the implications. His concern is the unclear meaning behind celebrating Indigenous Peoples' Day. He said he visited Arizona and Montreal, where he learned from historians that indigenous peoples were involved in wars and other complex histories before European colonization. He said he is worried that the narrative is swinging too far toward the wrongs of colonization without acknowledging the complexities and mixed nature of history. Mr. White would like to have a more candid and balanced discussion about this, rather than following trends based on what other towns are doing. He said he is not necessarily opposed to Indigenous Peoples' Day, but a broader conversation is needed to understand its significance fully.

**AMENDED MOTION** by Mr. Grippo and seconded by Mr. White.

**MOVED** *that the Board of Education adopts the 2025/2026, school calendar and change Indigenous People, Italian American Day to Indigenous People/Columbus Day.*

Discussion

Ms. Cullinan said she is surprised at the Amendment, recalling that there was a robust discussion about the issue the previous year. She said the current wording of the calendar, which combines Indigenous Peoples' Day with Italian American Day, was a compromise that aimed to balance both sides of the issue. She said this decision was not made to follow the trend of other districts in Connecticut, many of which have adopted Indigenous Peoples' Day. She argued that the wording chosen reflects the diverse heritage of the town, state, and country.

Mr. Grippo acknowledged the conversation last year, but was told the State of Connecticut does not recognize Columbus Day anymore. He said that is not true. He said only 14 states do not celebrate Columbus Day and Connecticut is not one of them. He said he is attempting to bring the calendar back into line with our State.

Dr. Harrigan said even though she agrees with the amendment, this is not the time to bring it up. She said we need to honor the conversation that was held and the outcome that came from it.

Ms. Rosenberg said during the conversation held last year, we did not want to honor colonialism that led to the forceful taking of land and deaths of the indigenous people. That was the decision of the full Board along with the agreement to recognize Italian Americans. She said we need to approve this calendar because of the school construction and to give parents time to plan for the shift in dates.

**VOTE:** The Amended Motion failed 1-4 (Ms. Rosenberg, Dr. Harrigan, Ms. Cullinan, and Mr. White opposed.)

The original Motion was back on the floor.

Discussion

Mr. Grippo said he would not support the Motion. He fully agrees with the content of the calendar. Mr. White clarified that he did bring this up to the Calendar Committee and a member of the Committee said this should be discussed by the full Board and that is why he brought it up tonight. Dr. Solan said if we would like to have a broader discussion at the Committee level next year that we should publicize it in advance of the meeting. Ms. Cullinan said that tonight the calendar needs to be approved so people can plan but understands Mr. Grippo's concerns. She said we should note in the minutes that further discussion on this topic is needed.

**VOTE:** The Motion passed 3-2 (Mr. Grippo and Mr. White opposed.)

**III. Approval of Proposed Draft 2026/27 School Calendar**

**MOTION** by Dr. Harrigan and seconded by Mr. Grippo.

**MOVED** *that the Cheshire Board of Education adopts the 2026/27 Proposed Draft School Calendar recommended by the Calendar Committee.*

Discussion

Mr. Grippo said he would support the Draft Proposed Calendar because there is time to make changes before final approval. Mr. White suggested there is a conversation regarding this in September.

**VOTE:** The Motion passed unanimously by those present.

**C. FINANCE****I. Financial Report**

Mr. Masciana reported the expended and encumbered portion of our budget is 80.4%, which is typical at this time of year. The budget is tracking very well. He said there are no budget concerns.

**II. Medical Benefits Report**

Mr. Masciana said in November, our medical benefit claims were \$1,048,866 below the \$1.18 million expected, and that enabled the reserve balance to increase by \$94,623, so the Medical Reserve ended November at \$1.48 million, 1.24 months' worth of claims. He said they are receiving \$250,000 in stop loss reimbursements and another roughly \$200,000 in prescription rebates, so that will bring our reserve fund balance to about \$1.9 million, certainly healthier than it is currently.

**III. Discussion regarding an Increase to School Meal Prices**

Emily Taylor, Assistant Chief Operating Officer and Food Services Director, Erica Biagetti gave a presentation on recommendations to increase school lunch meal prices (copy on file). They explained they are not looking for approval this evening, this is a preliminary discussion. Inflation in labor rates, food and supply costs have increased significantly in recent years, which continues to put pressure on the ability of the Food and Nutrition Services to provide student meals at current pricing levels. The price of school meals in the district has not been increased since the 22-23 School Year when a \$0.25 increase was approved to all lunch meal prices and we note that breakfast prices remained unchanged. In June 2024, the Board of Education considered a recommended increase to school meal prices but elected to defer the increase until the start of the new School Year in 24-25. Over the summer of 2024, the district applied for and was granted an exemption to meal prices through the Paid Equity Lunch Exemption.

The Paid Equity Lunch (PLE) Exemption was provided in the Consolidated Appropriation Act of 2024, which allowed any School Food Authority (SFA) with a positive or zero balance in its nonprofit school food service account as of June 30, 2023, to be exempt from paid lunch equity pricing requirements for School Year 24-25. Cheshire Public Schools requested a PLE Exemption Waiver in July 2024 for school year 24-25 because the district's weighted average school meal price of \$3.75 was below the CSDE target price of \$3.85.

Dr. Harrigan noted that students who qualify for reduced lunches now receive free lunches and asked if this will continue. Ms. Biagetti responded that the State of Connecticut has funded this program covering

the 30 cents and 40 cents that parents would have to pay for the reduced lunches. The legislative session opens in January and members of the School and Nutrition Association across the state is fighting to keep the funding.

The proposal for the Board of Education is to increase each meal price by \$0.25 in 2025-26, with an average price increase of 7.8% across breakfast and lunch. There would be no increase in the cost of an 8 oz. milk, which would remain at \$0.75. Ms. Biagetti reviewed the factors that this recommendation is based on, including:

1. The increase on January 1, 2025 to the minimum wage of 4.2% to \$16.35, escalating labor costs in all school meal operations.
2. The rising cost of food & supplies, including locally grown items. The potential loss of the PLE Exemption in 2025-26 which would drive a mandated increase in school meal prices regardless.

Mr. White asked about unpaid balances. Mr. Masciana responded that the unpaid meal balance as of November is about \$22,300, which is about where it was at this time last year. The board remembers that at the end of the year it was about \$18,000 that the Board's Operating Budget had to cover to repay the Food Service Program. That is a requirement under state law and we will continue to try to work that balance and collect as much of that as we can, like we did last year, in the most respectful way that we possibly can.

Mr. White asked for an update on the Performance Contract. Mr. Masciana responded that the bids have been extended until January 9. Five bidders attended the walk-through.

#### **D. POLICY**

##### **I. Policy Report**

In Mr. Ecke's absence, Dr. Harrigan gave the Policy Report for the meeting held December 2, 2024. At the meeting, the Director of Technology, Mike Papa provided a presentation where he explained the safety management program, Gaggle that monitors all student drives. He also talked to us about keywords and how things come up. Another product of Gaggle is a program called Speak Up, which is essentially a digital tip line that encourages K through 12 students to share their concerns anonymously.

##### **II. First Reading of Policies**

###### **0521 Nondiscrimination Policy & Notice**

Dr. Harrigan said this policy was previously scheduled for a third reading, but they are bringing it back to a first reading, because, on the advice of

our attorneys, it was recommended that we dovetail this policy with the sexual harassment and Title IX policy.

4000.1/4200.1/5145.44 Sexual Harassment/Title IX & Regulation

This is a completely revised policy and regulation due to the US Department of Education's 2024 amendments to its Title IX Rule. This policy is dictated by law.

**III. Second Reading of Policies**

Dr. Harrigan gave a second reading to the policies. There were no changes since the first reading.

4112.5/4212.5 Security Check/Fingerprinting/Criminal Justice

All individuals hired for a position with a board of education must submit to state and national criminal history records checks within thirty days from the date they begin employment.

4118.51 Rights, Responsibilities, Duties – Social Networking

This policy was reviewed by Attorney Dugas who shared his suggested revisions to the language in our existing policy. The shared revisions include, "Employees may not use their school district title or affiliation . . .", "... may not access social media or update their status on any social networking sites during normal working hours . . ." and "shall not post or publish any information the Superintendent in his/her reasonable discretion would deem to be inappropriate". Dr. Solan said there are protections for Freedom of Speech.

6148 FAFSA Completion Program

This replacement policy is recommended by CAFE and required by law. The policy mandates that "Beginning with classes graduating in 2027, graduating students must have completed a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), completed and submitted to a public institution of higher education an application for institutional financial aid for students without legal immigration status, or completed a waiver, on a form prescribed by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) signed by the student's parent/legal guardian or by the student if 18 years of age or older.

6172 Alternative Education Program

This policy and regulation are to ensure that students who are in an alternative program have access to the same educational opportunities as the standard high school. It also adds language regarding a credit recovery program. While we do not have a program through Humiston, we do through an agreement with Wallingford Board of Education.

**IV. Third Reading and Approval of Policies**

Dr. Harrigan brought forward two policies for a third reading and approval.

*0523 Equity and Diversity*

Our attorney, Rebecca Goldberg reviewed our draft policy and made some changes to update the language in this policy. It has been under review by the Policy Committee for several months and has been reviewed by CAFE and our attorneys.

**MOTION** by Dr. Harrigan and seconded by Ms. Cullinan.

**MOVED** *that the Cheshire Board of Education give a third and final reading to Policy #0523 Equity and Diversity and direct the Superintendent to put said policy into immediate effect.*

Discussion

Mr. Grippo expressed frustration with the policy. He said initially, the policy contained aggressive and divisive language, but over time, much of this was removed through the work of himself, Mr. Perugini, and the attorney. He questions the purpose and necessity of the policy, arguing that its content overlaps with existing affirmative action, non-discrimination, and Title IX policies. Mr. Grippo said the policy is not required by state law, and although the board is choosing to move forward with it, he has consistently voted against it and will continue to do so.

Mr. White asked the Superintendent if there were problems that would be addressed by this policy. The Superintendent said it does not so much solve a problem as it makes a declarative statement. Mr. White said in general he does support the concept of equity. He said he feels this is a solution in search of a problem, it is unnecessary, and he will not be supporting it tonight.

Dr. Harrigan said she agrees that this is a strong statement but does not agree that it is symbolic. It is simply stating to our vulnerable population, students and families, that we value all backgrounds. She said she thinks it is necessary to have. The Committee has been working long and hard to make it brief and concise and it is an expression of what we value here at Cheshire Public Schools. She said she would support this motion.

Ms. Cullinan asked Dr. Solan to elaborate on what DEI means. Dr. Solan emphasized its value as a declarative statement that demonstrates the commitment of educators in Cheshire Public Schools to valuing every student, regardless of background. The policy outlines the steps the school system will take to ensure all students have access to success, reinforcing the belief that all students deserve

equal opportunities. The Superintendent acknowledged that efforts are already being made to support students, but the policy formalizes this commitment and sends a clear message.

Ms. Cullinan said she is confused about opposition to the policy and why we, as a Board of Education, would not want every child who walks through our doors and every family who is behind that child, and the community as a whole, to know that we believe in accepting every child regardless of wherever they came from. That we believe in a diverse culture, and how healthy that is for all students to have exposure to other peoples and religions etc. Everyone grows from that exposure. We have a general ed population that can become passionate about students with disabilities, and later on in life, people that they are working with, who may come in to a company or wherever, with a disability, they have that empathy built into them because what we have given them in the Cheshire Public Schools. She said she would support this motion.

Mr. Grippo said he agrees with the importance of values like diversity and inclusion but argues that a declarative policy statement is unnecessary, as the school, system already demonstrates these values through its actions. He said the policy still contains language about applying an "equity lens" that remains undefined and could potentially override existing practices. He said that while the policy may make some feel better, it is not needed and could create further divisiveness. They emphasize that the school's actions and adherence to laws already contribute to its success, and adding an additional layer through this policy is unnecessary and potentially harmful.

Ms. Cullinan said she respectfully disagrees with Mr. Grippo's comments, particularly the idea that the actions of the school system alone demonstrate a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. As Board of Education members, they cannot confidently claim to know what happens in every classroom, lunch table, or bus, and therefore, they cannot assume that all children are being fully protected or accepted. This policy, by putting these values in writing, ensures that the Board explicitly commits to these principles, reinforcing their responsibility as guardians of the schools.

Mr. Grippo said he respectfully disagrees with Ms. Cullinan because what she is saying is that we have been operating without any guardrails up until this very moment, which is not true. We have hundreds of pages of policies, laws, and administrative directives that has made this one of the best school systems in the state. He reiterated that this policy is not necessary, and it is not needed because we do all those things already.

Ms. Cullinan countered that not every student may feel included when they walk through the school doors and writing these values down in the policy will not

automatically ensure that every child feels included. However, she feels it is important to state clearly that the Board of Education believes in diversity, inclusion, and equity for all students, families, and the community. She wants to go on record as affirming these principles, even if the policy itself cannot guarantee that every child will always feel included.

Dr. Harrigan and Ms. Rosenberg stated that they would support the approval of this policy. Ms. Rosenberg thanked the Policy Committee for their work and the length of time they spent working on this.

**VOTE:** The Motion passed 3-2. (Mr. Grippo and Mr. White opposed.)

*5114 Suspension & Expulsion Due Process*

Dr. Harrigan reviewed this revised policy and regulation containing statutory changes. CABE said they combined two other policies - #5144 and #5131 for easier reference. The policy contains language that reduces the maximum number of consecutive days for in-school suspensions for preschool to grade two and shortens the maximum out-of-school suspension for these grades from ten to five days.

**MOTION** by Ms. Harrigan and seconded by Mr. Grippo.

**MOVED** *that the Cheshire Board of Education give a third and final reading to Policy #5114 Suspension & Expulsion Due Process and direct the Superintendent to put said policy into immediate effect.*

**VOTE:** The Motion passed unanimously 5-0.

**E. OTHER STANDING COMMITTEES**

None.

**5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**MOTION** by Mr. Grippo and seconded by Mr. White.

**MOVED** *that the Cheshire Board of Education approve the minutes from meetings held on November 21, 2024.*

**VOTE:** The Motion passed unanimously 5-0.

**6. CORRESPONDENCE**

Mr. Grippo read a letter from Mr. Bestor who expressed disheartenment over recent calls for book banning at the Board of Education meeting, firmly believing that reading and understanding diverse perspectives is essential for fostering compassion and empathy.

7. **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

A. **PASS Survey**

Dr. Solan said this evening they would be providing an overview of the Pupil Attitudes to Self in School survey. While the district has focused on SEL for nine years, they have never had a clear way to measure progress until now. This new approach provides an opportunity to better understand how students perceive themselves and their school environment, which will help improve their personal and academic success. Much like academic performance, the district performs well overall but always looks for areas to improve our ranking as the eighth-best school system in Connecticut. I credit this success to the efforts of teachers, paraeducators, administrators, students, and families. Dr. Solan introduced Ms. Silano who reviewed the survey results. She provided a high-level review of the results and stated that each of the schools will look at their own individual school and individual student data. The survey looks at nine attitudinal factors. A copy of the presentation is on file.

There was discussion between Board members, Dr. Solan and Ms. Silano regarding the questions asked and the results. Board members thanked them for the information.

B. **New Schools Report**

Dr. Solan reported that there was a groundbreaking event this past Monday and thanked the community and countless people who played a role in getting us to where we are. He noted there would be notifications mailed out to neighborhoods near the schools to let them know the construction timeline and other important information. The actual construction will begin on January 10. He said they would be initiating redistricting plans in the spring.

Dr. Solan announced that Cheshire High School Principal, Mary Gadd had announced her retirement at the end of the year but in the meantime has found her dream job. She will be leaving at the end of January and Kevin Hanlon will be the Interim Principal. His hope is to appoint a new principal by July 1.

Dr. Solan acknowledged Seong Uk Yang, who will be returning to South Korea after spending the entire semester with Cheshire Public Schools. He said he is an impressive educator, and his commitment and character are incredible. He will miss by everyone at Highland.

8. **OLD BUSINESS**

None.

9. **NEW BUSINESS**

A. **Chairperson's Update**

Ms. Rosenberg said for those who were not able to join them at the groundbreaking event on Monday, they laid the foundation for our children's future with two incredible new schools. She said she felt like it was really an inspiring month for our school district with the celebration of the groundbreaking of the new North End and Norton Elementary schools. She said these events are a testament to the collaborative spirit and our dedication to the community. She extended thanks to everyone who played a role, our current and former Board of Education members, our Town leaders, and just overall, the support of the community.

She noted the school naming process for the North End School has officially begun. She encouraged the public to participate and share their recommendations based on the criteria that is or will be outlined. It is a unique opportunity to leave a lasting mark on our district.

Ms. Rosenberg addressed the tragic school shooting in Madison, Wisconsin. She said it reminds us of the critical importance of maintaining a safe and secure environment for our students and staff, and she assured our community that the safety of our schools remains our highest priority. She thanked Dr. Solan, our school administration and local law enforcement for their ongoing efforts to keep our schools safe and their proactive measures in planning and dedication to providing us a sense of security that allows our kids to learn and grow.

B. **Announcement of Upcoming Meetings**

Ms. Rosenberg announced the upcoming meetings

10. **ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Mr. White, and seconded by Ms. Cullinan, the meeting was adjourned into Executive Session, including Dr. Solan at 10:33 p.m. to discuss the Superintendent's Evaluation.

Respectfully submitted,

---

Samantha Rosenberg, Board Chair

Attest:

---

Carol K. Jesensky, Board of Education Clerk

Filed at the Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, Cheshire: 1/14/2024.