

Board of Education Regular Meeting
Tuesday, September 16, 2025 6:30 PM Eastern
<https://www.youtube.com/@MiddletownStream>

Beman Middle School
1 Wilderman's Way
Middletown, CT 06457

Liz Crooks:	Present
Sheila Daniels:	Present
Rakim Grant:	Present
Callie Grippo:	Present
Debra Guss:	Present
Adam Hayn:	Present
Deborah Kleckowski:	Present
Susan Owens:	Absent
Harold Panciera:	Present

Present: 8, Absent: 1.

I. Call to Order

Ms. Daniels called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM.

II. Salute to the Flag

Dr. Vázquez Matos introduced Salahaldin Marnus Kunate, the new Board of Education Student Representative. Dr. Vázquez Matos gave an overview of the process to become the student representative. He gave an overview of Sal's achievements and plans for the future. The Board Members welcomed Sal to the Board of education.

Student Representative Salahaldin Marnus Kunate led the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Adoption of Agenda

A motion to adopt the agenda was made. This motion, made by Debra Guss and seconded by Harold Panciera, Carried.

Rakim Grant: Absent, Susan Owens: Absent, Liz Crooks: Yea, Sheila Daniels: Yea, Callie Grippo: Yea, Debra Guss: Yea, Adam Hayn: Yea, Deborah Kleckowski: Yea, Harold Panciera: Yea

Yea: 7, Nay: 0, Absent: 2

Ms. Kleckowski made a motion to add the Public Information Officer to the agenda. This motion, made by Deborah Kleckowski and seconded by Harold Panciera, Carried.

Rakim Grant: Absent, Susan Owens: Absent, Debra Guss: Abstain, Liz Crooks: Yea, Sheila Daniels: Yea, Callie Grippo: Yea, Adam Hayn: Yea, Deborah Kleckowski: Yea, Harold Panciera: Yea

Yea: 6, Nay: 0, Absent: 2, Abstain: 1

IV. District Highlights

IV.A. New Administrator Introductions

Dr. Vázquez Matos introduced the new administrators. These include Colleen Fitzpatrick as the Interim Chief Academic Officer, Travis Santiago, Principal at Bielefield School, Dr. Lilyana Auster, Principal at Beman, Maghan Heslin, Interim Principal at Macdonough, Keshia Hogan Assistant Principal at MHS, Elba Llantín-Cruz, Assistant Principal at MHS, Steve Matthews, Supervisor of Fine and Performing Arts, Angela Caputo, Interim Supervisor of K-5 ELA, Intervention and ML and Scott Roberts, Public Information Officer.

IV.B. MHS Robotics Team 9909

Dr. Vázquez Matos welcomed Mr. Sam Faulkenberry and Team 9099. Mr. Faulkenberry also recognized the Beman Robotics Team for their hard work and achievements. Mr. Faulkenberry introduced MHS Team members. Mikayla shared her experiences with the robotics team and the competition plans for the year. Isabella shared the process of qualifying for the world competition. Natalie shared the program highlight which gave an overview of the team and thanked Ms. Natalie Forbes and Dr. Vazquez Matos for their support throughout the years.

IV.C. Upcoming District Events

MHS football will have their first home game this Friday and will include a dedication ceremony for Stephen Hill, Jr. MHS Marching Band will be performing at UConn on Saturday.

V. Public Session

Chair Daniels explained the rules of Public Session.

Dr. Marlon Millner, 1 Long Lane. Mr. Millner spoke of his experience with Middletown High School and actions that he has taken to have it corrected.

Autumn Mierzejewski, 34 Gleeson Rd., student. Autumn spoke of the lack of after-school buses. She shared that an after-school bus would allow more students to participate in clubs and sports.

Ms. Funmike and Enoila Shucumbi. 108 McCormick Lane. Ms. Shocumbi spoke of her daughter's experience in going to UCONN for her project with the Macdonough STEM program. She stated the negative aspects that her daughter has faced with her achievements. Ms. Shocumbi is advocating for the Board to support her daughter and the future of the project.

Kayleigh Mierzejewski, 34 Gleeson Rd. Parent and employee of MPS. Ms. Mierzejewski wanted to highlight and celebrate the KPA program. Ms. Mierzejewski spoke of the lack of after-school buses for the students in clubs and sports.

Ms. Emily Roback, 136 Aspen Drive, parent. Ms. Roback spoke of a Facebook post by a Board member, Adam Hayn. Ms. Roback called for the post to be removed, accompanied by an apology.

Colleen Sylvester, 94 Hunting Hill Ave., parent. Ms. Sylvester spoke of the Facebook post made by Mr. Hayn. She asked the Board of Education to address the post.

VI. Communications

VI.A. Report of Student Representative

Mr. Salahaldin Marnus Kunate is a senior at MHS. He gave an overview of the cell phone policy and improved school atmosphere. His goal is to bridge the student voice at MHS to the board of education.

Ms. Daniels attended Convocation this year and is looking forward to seeing the Choose Love Movement implemented in MPS.

VII. Consent Agenda

Ms. Daniels pulled VII. Q - Grants Status Report. A motion to accept the consent agenda was made. This motion, made by Deborah Kleckowski and seconded by Adam Hayn, Carried.
Susan Owens: Absent, Liz Crooks: Yea, Sheila Daniels: Yea, Rakim Grant: Yea, Callie Grippo: Yea, Debra Guss: Yea, Adam Hayn: Yea, Deborah Kleckowski: Yea, Harold Panciera: Yea
Yea: 8, Nay: 0, Absent: 1

VII.A. BOE Minutes of June 17, 2025

VII.B. BOE Special Meeting Minutes July 15, 2025

VII.C. BOE Special Meeting Minutes July 22, 2025 6:00

VII.D. BOE Special Meeting Minutes July 22, 2025 6:15

VII.E. BOE Special Meeting Minutes August 19, 2025

VII.F. Spring 2025 Sports End of Season Report

VII.G. MHS DECA Power Trip

VII.H. MHS 4-H / FFA / Ag ABGA Silver Buckle Show @ Eastern States

VII.I. MHS 4-H / Ag Science New England 4-H Horse Activity @ Eastern States

VII.J. MHS ASTE / FFA Eastern States Exposition

VII.K. MHS Crew Regatta New England Regionals

VII.L. MHS Crew Regatta Head of the Fish

VII.M. MHS Crew Regatta Head of the Charles

VII.N. MHS VEX Robotics National Tournament - Worcester, MA

VII.O. MHS VEX Robotics National Tournament - Orono, ME

VII.P. Beman GSA Club Proposal

VII.Q. Grants Status Report

Ms. Forbes explained that there is funding secured. Ms. Forbes gave an overview of the Family Resource Grant and Alliance Grant. The Family Resource Centers will be at FaArm Hill School and the YMCA (formerly at Macdonough). The Alliance Grant has an allocation for MPS. The funds are used to increase student outcomes and progress towards academic achievement.

A motion to approve the accept the Family Resource Grant and alliance grant as explained was made. This motion, made by Deborah Kleckowski and seconded by Liz Crooks, Carried. Susan Owens: Absent, Liz Crooks: Yea, Sheila Daniels: Yea, Rakim Grant: Yea, Callie Grippo: Yea, Debra Guss: Yea, Adam Hayn: Yea, Deborah Kleckowski: Yea, Harold Panciera: Yea

Yea: 8, Nay: 0, Absent: 1

VII.R. Budget Committee

VII.S. Curriculum Committee

VII.T. Facilities Committee

VII.U. Policy Committee

VIII. Department Reports

VIII.A. Financial Report

Ms. Forbes shared the report outlines from July 1 to September. The district is aware of the tight budget constraints this year. The Finance Department is meeting with each principal, department heads and directors each month. Ms. Forbes discussed the seasonal temporary workers. These workers worked all summer on projects in each school and major work on Keigwin to be ready for Macdonough students.

Summer transportation has a deficit. This is due to the ESY program. The Natural Gas line had an overage due to bills being separate from the Beman building and the former WWMS building.

Chair Daniels asked if the Finance Committee chair be invited to budget meetings.

VIII.A.1. Action on Line Item Transfer Report

Ms. Forbes shared that transfers are happening to keep budgets balanced. She also detailed the RISE grant at MHS and matching funds by the district. Ms. Kleckowski asked if any grant-funded programs have funds that are sun setting and possible program cuts.

A motion to accept the Line Item Transfers was made. This motion, made by Deborah Kleckowski and seconded by Debra Guss, Carried.

Susan Owens: Absent, Liz Crooks: Yea, Sheila Daniels: Yea, Rakim Grant: Yea, Callie Grippo: Yea, Debra Guss: Yea, Adam Hayn: Yea, Deborah Kleckowski: Yea, Harold

Panciera: Yea
Yea: 8, Nay: 0, Absent: 1

VIII.B. Facilities Department

Mr. Gaylord shared that the district was very busy this summer to focus on Keigwin. Indoor Air Quality work is being completed. Bielefeld and Farm Hill cafes are complete, Moody cafe and Snow school cafe are 90% complete. The pool at MHS is complete. The City Fire Marshals were thanked for working with the team on getting the schools ready and keeping them safe.

VIII.C. Personnel Report

Ms. Cannata shared that HR worked with building principals and directors on filling positions. She discussed current vacancies and gave updates on the hiring process for them. Ms. Cannata answered questions regarding paraprofessionals, science teachers, and manufacturing teacher as well as enrollment in the manufacturing program. Classroom enrollment recruitment suggestions included an Expo Fair, guest speakers, and posting videos of class projects on the website.

VIII.D. Transportation Report

Mr. Langton reported that the district is continuing to partner with Dattco. There have been hundreds of new students and changes for the new school year. Two buses were added for Macdonough at the new location. Mr. Langton stated that grants are being explored for after school programs.

IX. Superintendent's Report

IX.A. Opening of Schools

Dr. Vázquez Matos shared that the school year started with canvassing. MPS employees went into neighborhoods to share the Back to School fair, the importance of attendance and discussions with families about preparing for the upcoming school year. Over 2,300 people attended the Back to School fair. There were 60 vendors and community groups that participated. Convocation was a successful event. Scarlett Lewis was the guest speaker. Training for staff has begun to implement Choose Love. Schools were filled with excitement and anticipation for the first day of school. The Keigwin site has had positive reviews from both Macdonough staff, families and students as well as the Legacy Academy. The cell phone policy is being enforced at Middletown High Schools. Students are required to keep cell phones in the Yondr pouch. Attendance policies are also being enforced to encourage daily class attendance. Administrators are using rolling desks and are monitoring the halls throughout the school day. Administrators had a tour of the Vo-Ag Land Lab. There are many impressive projects at each site. Ms. Spaulding elaborated on Legacy

Academy. She explained the student and staff population as well as having students placed out of district being brought back to the district.

IX.B. Climate Survey Results

Dr. Vázquez Matos shared that the Climate Survey Results were scheduled to be shared in June and were tabled until September.

Mr. Paul Griswold shared summaries of families, students and employees results. He described the process for the surveys. All surveys are voluntary, anonymous and confidential. Participation was improved in the employee survey. Highlights for family surveys include overall positive trends in climate and safety. Employee surveys showed that there was improvement in feeling supported in professional growth. The student survey indicated that students feel seen as an individual person and teachers are excited about teaching their classes and students. Mr. Griswold summarized the open-ended questions and trends.

Added Item: Public Information Officer

Ms. Kleckowski asked for a legal opinion on union membership for noncertified staff. She also questioned changes in job descriptions.

Dr. V shared that there is an MOU from 2022 regarding the Director of Communications and UPSEU. He will send the MOU to the Board Members. Ms. Cannata shared that the MOU is posted on page 66 of the UPSEU contract.

X. Action Items

X.A. Policy #0301 Equity Policy - First Reading

Ms. Daniels asked for the redlined version of the policy. If approved, it would go back to the Policy Committee for edits. Ms. Daniels asked for the item to be tabled. A motion to table Item X.A. Policy #0301 was made. This motion, made by Deborah Kleckowski and seconded by Debra Guss, Carried.

Susan Owens: Absent, Liz Crooks: Yea, Sheila Daniels: Yea, Rakim Grant: Yea, Callie Grippo: Yea, Debra Guss: Yea, Adam Hayn: Yea, Deborah Kleckowski: Yea, Harold Panciera: Yea

Yea: 8, Nay: 0, Absent: 1

X.B. Policy #5114 - Student Discipline Policy - First and Final Reading

Dr. V shared that there is a new C.G.S 10-22 b that requires schools to introduce the new challenging behavior definition and form and redefine the term bullying. Ms. Daniels asked for PreK to be included.

A motion to accept Policy #5114 was made. This motion, made by Deborah Kleckowski and seconded by Callie Grippo, Carried.

Susan Owens: Absent, Liz Crooks: Yea, Sheila Daniels: Yea, Rakim Grant: Yea, Callie Grippo: Yea, Debra Guss: Yea, Adam Hayn: Yea, Deborah Kleckowski: Yea, Harold Panciera: Yea

Yea: 8, Nay: 0, Absent: 1

XI. Future Agenda Items

Mr. Panciera would like to discuss continuing as a member of CABA and seeking competitive bids for legal services. He also asked for an executive session to read exit surveys. Ms. Crooks discussed clarification on math data and math teachers leaving the district.

XII. Adjournment

Move at 9:30 PM to adjourn. This motion, made by Deborah Kleckowski and seconded by Liz Crooks, Carried.

Susan Owens: Absent, Liz Crooks: Yea, Sheila Daniels: Yea, Rakim Grant: Yea, Callie Grippo: Yea, Debra Guss: Yea, Adam Hayn: Yea, Deborah Kleckowski: Yea, Harold Panciera: Yea

Yea: 8, Nay: 0, Absent: 1