

Board of Education Regular Meeting
Tuesday, June 17, 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:	Absent
Callie Grippo:	Present
Debra Guss:	Present
Adam Hayn:	Present
Deborah Kleckowski:	Present
Susan Owens:	Present (6:38)
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

Macdonough students led the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Adoption of Agenda

Ms. Kleckowski requested to postpone items IV.A. XIII.C, XIII.D, IX. B., X. C. and X. D. to a future meeting. Ms. Daniels would like to postpone item XII.B. Mr. Panciera supported postponing the recommended items and Ms. Guss supported keeping the items on the agenda. A motion was made to remove item XII. B. by Ms. Daniels - unanimous vote. A motion was made to postpone items IV.A. XIII.C, XIII.D, IX. B., X. C. and X. D. A roll call vote followed. This motion, made by Sheila Daniels and seconded by Adam Hayn, Carried.

Rakim Grant: Absent, Sheila Daniels: Nay, Debra Guss: Nay, Liz Crooks: Yea, Callie Grippo: Yea, Adam Hayn: Yea, Deborah Kleckowski: Yea, Harold Panciera: Yea
Yea: 6, Nay: 1, Absent: 2

Sheila Daniels: Nay, Debra Guss: Nay

IV. District Highlights

Dr. Vazquez Matos clarified that Macdonough will continue to be a STEM Academy. He invited Rebecca Deotte to explain Project Lead the Way. Project Lead the Way is currently being implemented in two district schools. Ms. Deotte discussed the many benefits of the program. Project Lead the Way would take 3 years to implement the curriculum. Ms. Crooks asked about the cost and funding. Dr. Vazquez Matos shared there is a cost but multiple grant opportunities.

IV.A. Presentation of CABA Bonnie B. Carney Award of Excellence for Educational Communications

Dr. Vazquez Matos shared that this is the fourth year in a row that our district was recognized for the Excellence for Educational Communications. He thanked everyone for their hard work.

IV.B. MHS Boys Golf State Champion

Ms. Elisha DeJesus shared that the spring sports season is winding down. Over 430 student athletes participated in Spring sports. 62% of athletes were named to the CCC All-Academic Team for an 87.5 or higher GPA. Ultimate Frisbee won the 2025 Ultimate State Championship. Boys Track and Field were regular season co-champions. The Girls Tennis team made it to the State Tournament quarterfinals.

Boys Golf Coach Matthew Harris introduced student athlete Andrew Dunn. Andrew will continue his academic and athletic career while studying in college.

IV.C. Recognition of TEAM Program Completers

The TEAM program matches new teachers with trained teachers for mentoring. It is a 2–3 year program. 10 teachers and their mentors completed the program this year. Mr. Griswold read the names of all that completed the program this year.

IV.D. 2025 Retiree Recognition

Assistant Superintendent Jennifer Cannata thanked each retiree for their contributions to the district, students and families.

Dr. Vazquez Matos announced that Ms. Elisha Carta as Principal of Wesley School. Dr. Vazquez Matos announced that Ms. Meg Hanly has been appointed Assistant Principal of Beman Middle School.

V. Public Session

Chair Daniels explained the rules of Public Session.

Ms. Valerie Zimmer, 66 Valley Drive, former employee of Middletown Schools. Ms. Zimmer shared her disappointment in eliminating support staff for students. She asked that the SES SEL positions in Beman and MHS be restored.

Ms. Brooke Carta, president of AFSCME Local 1467 Union and 23 year Middletown Schools employee. Ms. Carta shared her disappointment that Local 1467 was not partnered with when making budget cuts.

Evan Ritskowitz, 145 Preston Ave. Mr. Ritskowitz addressed the stipend cut for DECA advisor. He spoke of the positive aspects of the DECA program. He also addressed the Fine Arts and Performing Arts program cuts. He shared how hard everyone in the department works. He also addressed the elimination of an Aerospace teaching position.

Ms. Sigrid Atherton, parent of MPS students. Ms. Atherton shared her support for Ms. Fairchild and the TAG/STEM program. She shared her support for the STEM Academy.

Ms. Paige McMullen, 136 Lincoln St, parent of MPS students. Ms. McMullen shared her positive experiences with the STEM program. She asked several questions to the Board regarding the position cuts.

Kate Bysiewicz, 663 Congdon St West. Ms. B....addressed the cut to the Manufacturing program. She explained the benefits of the program and department.

Ms. Becky Ficaro, 150 Barbara Rd. Ms. Ficaro shared her positive experiences with the STEM program both in her own family and working within the school.

Ms. Eniola Shokunbi, student. Ms. Shokunbi shared her positive experiences with the STEM program. She asked the Board not to cut the STEM positions and program.

Ms. Funmike Shokunbi, Ms. Shokunbi spoke of her support for the STEM program and STEM positions. She shared the positive experiences of her family.

Ms. Jackie Goodrich, teacher Macdonough School. Ms. Goodrich shared her positive experiences working in the STEM spoke program and STEM positions.

Mr. Logan Dancy, 135 Mount Vernon St. Mr. Dancy shared that he supports a curriculum change if the district necessary, but does not support STEM positions being cut.

Angelina - Macdonough student. Angelina spoke of the TAG program and shared her support for the TAG position.

Erica Patwary, student. Ms. Patwary expressed her support for the TAG STEM extension program. She shared her personal experiences with the program.

Mr. John Ferraro, retired STEM Teacher. Mr. Ferraro spoke his support of the STEM and TAG program.

Janice Pawlak, 27 Brookview Lane, President of Middletown Federation of Teachers. Ms. Pawlak shared the importance of people in education. She asked the Board to consider keeping more staff members.

Kellen Atherton, 116 Breton Rd. Mr. Atherton asked the students to share the signs that they had made. Mr. Atherton reminded the Board of the positive press that Macdonough School has had. He asked the board if the curriculum or teachers make good learning. He asked to preserve the STEM positions.

Jackson Patwary, student. Mr. Patwary spoke of the positive experience he has had in the TAG program.

Jeff Knakal, district employee, former union representative. Mr. Knakal asked the Board to look further up for cuts that do not directly impact students.

Carrie Henry, 70 Grove St. Ms. Henry shared the importance of the STEM Academy and TAG program. She shared her support for the teachers.

Ms. Daniels shared that 17 emails were received by the Board of people that could not attend tonight's meeting.

VI. Communications

VI.A. Report of Student Representative

Ms. Rabah gave her final report as the student representative. She gave a recap of the spring sports highlights. Diversity day was successful with many groups participating. She shared that the 2025 graduation ceremony was held. 80% of graduates are attending a 2 or 4 year college, 12% will attend a trade or technical school and 3% will be going into the military or going into the workforce.

Ms. Rabah will be attending college with a major in the STEM field and a minor in music.

Ms. Daniels presented Ms. Rabah a gift on behalf of the Board of Education.

Ms. Daniels shared that Adult Education graduation was also held. Ms. Daniels shared that she attended the Silent Sounds program and encouraged everyone to read the book from the program.

VII. Consent Agenda

A motion to accept the Consent Agenda was made. This motion, made by Deborah Kleckowski and seconded by Harold Panciera, Carried.

Rakim Grant: Absent, Liz Crooks: Yea, Sheila Daniels: Yea, Callie Grippo: Yea, Debra Guss: Yea, Adam Hayn: Yea, Deborah Kleckowski: Yea, Susan Owens: Yea, Harold Panciera: Yea
Yea: 8, Nay: 0, Absent: 1

VII.A. BOE Meeting Minutes of May 13, 2025

VII.B. Grants Status Report

VII.C. Policy # 5131.911 Climate Policy - First and Final Reading

VII.D. Policy # 3320 Purchasing Policy First and Final Reading

VII.E. Budget Committee

VII.F. Curriculum Committee

VII.G. Facilities Committee

VII.H. Policy Committee

VIII. Department Reports

VIII.A. Financial Report

Ms. Forbes shared there is a projected surplus for the 24-25 school year. She asked everyone to look at line 51921. This line shows the effect of the CT Sick Leave. The Classified Salaries line also has a deficit. Special Education out of town transportation and the out of district tuition lines are also showing deficits. Ms. Forbes shared that Legacy Academy will provide savings in these lines by bringing students back to the district.

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

Ms. Forbes shared that there are no transfers.

VIII.B. Facilities Department

Mr. Gaylord thanked Bob Mounts, custodial staff and maintenance staff for their work on Keigwin. Indoor Air Quality projects are going on throughout the district. The Snow School roof project is starting. The Middletown High School pool project has also started. He shared that graduation was a success.

VIII.C. Personnel Report

Mr. Snyder highlighted the staff in the HR department. Work included processing 105 FMLA requests, 85 special leave requests, 337 workers' comp claims, 585 volunteer requests, as well as hiring of new staff. The process has started for hiring the new Beman principal.

VIII.C.1. Presentation of the New Personnel Policy Manual

VIII.D. Transportation Report

IX. Superintendent's Report

IX.A. Adult Ed Year in Review

Mr. D'Amato shared his excitement for the achievement and growth of Middletown Adult Education. He explained the importance of digital literacy in the Credit Diploma and GED programs. The English Language Learners program has grown. Even Start allows parents to take courses in Adult Education while their young children can come and learn also.

Student population grew 25% in 2024-2025. This reflects expanding community impact and rising demand for adult education. MAE has exceeded the state academic performance Measurable Skill Gain targets set by the SDE. Students achieved measurable progress in literacy, numeracy and credential completion. MAE has many community partnerships to provide students connections while at and beyond their years at MAE.

Mr. D'Amato discussed the enrichment classes. There were over 150 classes with over 1,500 participants enrolled.

IX.B. Climate Survey

IX.C. Wrap up and Look Forward

IX.D. Budget Mitigation

Dr. Vazquez Matos shared that educational funding from the state and federal government are decreasing while student needs are increasing. He thanked the finance team for looking into every line item. He shared that 9 district level Central Office positions were cut in the process. LEAP coordinator, 2 MSEL coordinators, 3 math coaches, STEM director, Director of DEI, 1 custodial manager positions were eliminated.

Ms. Forbes shared that in addition to the cuts handed down by the City, the American Rescue Plan Act funds was also sunsetted as well as other grants. She shared that some federal grants are unknown for funding. She clarified that the DECA advisor cut is not a staffing cut, that it

was paid out of a grant. Mr. Gaylord clarified the Supervisor of Fine and Performing Arts position.

Ms. Forbes explained the Manufacturing and Aerospace cuts. Dr. Vazquez Matos shared that enrollment numbers are looked at while determining master schedules and class offerings. Ms. Cannata shared that of the employees whose jobs were eliminated, two could not be offered a new position due to certifications or seniority.

Dr. Vazquez Matos was able to elaborate on the SES and SEL position cuts. Ms. Forbes shared that the part-time Family Resource position is an open position and will not be filled. Dr. Vazquez Matos explained that the hall monitor responsibilities will be distributed to staff throughout the building.

Dr. Vazquez Matos shared that Macdonough will continue to be a STEM School. PLTW will focus on engineering. Students will still be allowed to create and be innovative. Projects and group work will be continued. Dr. Vazquez Matos explained that the TAG program was expanded to include the entire district.

The Family Engagement Liaison and Leap Coordinator roles were discussed. Dr. Vazquez Matos explained roles and responsibilities and how the work will be distributed.

A grading policy committee has been formed. They will be looking at high school schedules and potential changes to instructional daytimes. Dr. Vazquez Matos shared that the Back to School Fair has been scheduled for August 15, 2025.

X. Action Items

X.A. Approval of Budget Mitigation

Mr. Panciera asked to make an amendment to postpone the hiring of the Assistant Superintendent. Discussion followed regarding the hiring of the Assistant Superintendent other positions and stipends. Mr. Panciera pulled the amendment.

A motion was made to approve the Budget Mitigation as proposed. This motion, made by Deborah Kleckowski and seconded by Debra Guss, Failed.

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

Yea: 3, Nay: 5, Absent: 1

Sheila Daniels: Yea, Debra Guss: Yea, Harold Panciera: Yea

X.B. Discrete Math

A motion to approve Discrete Math was made. This motion, made by Debra Guss and seconded by Deborah Kleckowski, Carried.

Rakim Grant: Absent, Liz Crooks: Yea, Sheila Daniels: Yea, Callie Grippo: Yea, Debra Guss: Yea, Adam Hayn: Yea, Deborah Kleckowski: Yea, Susan Owens: Yea, Harold Panciera: Yea
Yea: 8, Nay: 0, Absent: 1

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

X.D. Policy # 0301 Equity Policy

XI. Future Agenda Items

Ms. Daniels stated that the request for a workshop for Assistant Superintendent position will be addressed. Ms. Kleckowski asked about the grading policy. Ms. Grippo stated how impressed she was with the support for the STEM program and how many people came out for the meeting.

XII. Proposed Executive Session

XII.A. Superintendent Year End Evaluation (Proposed for Executive Session)

A motion to enter Executive Session for the purpose of Superintendent Year End Evaluation (Proposed for Executive Session) and invite Dr. Vázquez Matos was made. This motion, made by Liz Crooks and seconded by Adam Hayn, Carried. This motion, made by Liz Crooks and seconded by Adam Hayn, Carried.

Rakim Grant: Absent, Liz Crooks: Yea, Sheila Daniels: Yea, Callie Grippo: Yea, Debra Guss: Yea, Adam Hayn: Yea, Deborah Kleckowski: Yea, Susan Owens: Yea, Harold Panciera: Yea
Yea: 8, Nay: 0, Absent: 1

XII.B. Board of Education Evaluation (Proposed for Executive Session)

XIII. Possible Action Superintendent's Contract

A motion to extend Dr. Vazquez Matos' s contract one year to make a 3 year contract was made. This motion, made by Sheila Daniels and seconded by Harold Panciera, Failed.

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

Yea: 3, Nay: 5, Absent: 1

Sheila Daniels: Yea, Debra Guss: Yea, Susan Owens: Yea

XIV. Adjournment

Move at 12:36 AM to adjourn. This motion, made by Debra Guss and seconded by Deborah Kleckowski, Carried.

Rakim Grant: Absent, Liz Crooks: Yea, Sheila Daniels: Yea, Callie Grippo: Yea, Debra Guss: Yea, Adam Hayn: Yea, Deborah Kleckowski: Yea, Susan Owens: Yea, Harold Panciera: Yea
Yea: 8, Nay: 0, Absent: 1