

Bethel Board of Education Regular Meeting

Thursday, February 20, 2025 7:00 PM

Board of Education Conference Room E, Live Stream:

<http://devos2.bethel.k12.ct.us/show?video=763ff4de0370> Materials can be viewed at: <https://meetings.boardbook.org/Public/Organization/2425> The opportunity for members of the public wishing to make comments can attend and comment in-person or may send public comments to the Board via email or letter and it will be included as part of the record of the meeting., 1 School Street, PO Box 253, Bethel, CT 06801

1. Call to Order	Speaker(s): Policy 9326
1.A. Roll Call for Quorum	
1.B. Pledge of Allegiance	
2. Board Recognition/A Salute to Excellence	
2.A. Gifts, Grants, & Bequests	
3. Consent Calendar	Speaker(s): Policy 9326
3.A. Approval of Minutes	
3.A.1. January 16, 2025	
3.A.2. January 30, 2025	
3.A.3. February 4, 2025	
3.A.4. February 6, 2025	
3.A.5. February 11, 2025	
4. Correspondence	Speaker(s): Policy 9326
5. Public Comment	Speaker(s): Policy 9326
(Please note: The Board welcomes Public Comment and asks that speakers please limit their comments to 2 minutes. Speakers may offer objective comments of school operations and programs that concern them. The Board will not permit any expression of personal complaints or defamatory comments about Board of Education personnel and students, nor against any person connected with the Bethel Public School System.)	
6. Administrative/Board Member Update	Speaker(s): Policy 9326
6.A. Board Chairperson Update	
6.B. Administrative Update	
6.B.1. Class of 2025 Graduation Date (Pending BOE approval on or after April 1st.)	
6.B.2. 2024-2025 BOE District Data Sheet	
7. Reports to the Board	
7.A. Policy	Speaker(s): Policy

9310, 9311, 9313

7.A.1. Regulation 5145.42 - TITLE IX OF THE
EDUCATION AMENDMENTS OF 1972 - PROHIBITION OF SEX
DISCRIMINATION AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT

7.A.2. First Reading

7.A.2.a. Policy/ Regulation 4118.51 - Employee Use of Social Media **Speaker (s)** : Christine Carver

7.A.2.b. Policy 4152.6 - Family Medical Leave **Speaker (s)** : Christine Carver

7.A.2.c. Policy/Regulation 2232 - Retention and Disposition of Records and Information **Speaker (s)** : Christine Carver

7.A.2.d. Policy 5145.42 Policy Regarding Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 Prohibition of Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment **Speaker (s)** : Christine Carver

7.A.3. Second Reading/Approval

7.A.3.a. Policy/Regulation 6146 - Graduation Requirements **Speaker (s)** : Christine Carver

7.A.3.b. Policy 6172 - Alternative Education **Speaker (s)** : Christine Carver

7.A.3.c. Policy 4117 - Employee Discipline **Speaker (s)** : Christine Carver

7.A.3.d. Policy/Regulation 4122 - Student Teachers **Speaker (s)** : Christine Carver

7.A.3.e. Policy 4124 - Summer Teaching **Speaker (s)** : Christine Carver

7.A.3.f. Policy 4118.232 - Weapons and Dangerous Instruments **Speaker (s)** : Christine Carver

8. **Recommended Executive Session**

8.A. CT General Statues 1-210(b) (9) Negotiations -
Bethel Administrators' Negotiations

9. **Adjourn**

Bethel Public Schools
Bethel, CT

Notification of Receipt of Gifts, Grants, and Bequests Received

Please send a copy of this form to the Superintendent's Office as soon as your school has received a gift, grant, or bequest. The receipt will be announced at the Board of Education's regular meeting. Each school is responsible for sending the donor an acknowledgment for the gift.

Gift, Grant, or Bequest Received:

State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLCGP) Subaward

How the Gift, Grant, or Bequest Will Be Used:

Bethel Public Schools will use grant funding from the SLCGP for costs related to Endpoint Detection and Response (EDR) and Multifactor Authentication (MFA) projects in accordance with the State of Connecticut Cybersecurity Strategy and priorities identified by the Chartered Planning Subcommittee of the Connecticut Cybersecurity Committee. This program provides funding to state, local, tribal and territorial (SLTT) governments to address cybersecurity risks and cybersecurity threats to SLTT-owned or operation information systems.

Estimated Cash Value of the Gift, Grant, or Bequest:

\$75,990

Round 1 of the SLCGP (Period of Award 12/1/2022 to 11/30/2026) is a 90/10 award. The total budget for the cybersecurity projects is \$84,433. The federal award is \$75,990 and the sub-recipient match (Bethel Public Schools) is \$8,443. The award includes reimbursement for services, as well as funding for new EDR and MFA projects, within the period of award in accordance with grant application.

Donor's Name and Address:

State of Connecticut, Department of Emergency Services & Public Protection
Awarding Agency: US Department of Homeland Security

Brenda M. Bergeron, Deputy Commissioner
Division of Emergency Management & Homeland Security
1111 Country Club Road, 3rd Floor North
Middletown, CT 06457

(NOTE: No Goods or Services were provided by the Bethel Public Schools/Bethel Board of Education in exchange for your contribution.)

Receiving School:

Bethel Public Schools
1 School Street, PO Box 253
Bethel, CT 06801

Gift, Grant, or Bequest Received by (Print Name):

Bethel Public Schools

Applicants:

- Donna Burns, Director of Instructional Technology
- Ivelisse Velez, Supervisor of Technology Infrastructure and Operations
- Brandon Husvar, Network Administrator

Date Received:

Notified on award on 12/6/23, Countersignature of Authorized Official 12/19/24, BPS received countersigned documentation on 1/14/25

**Copy to: Donor
Principal
Superintendent**

**(Ref: Board Policy 3280)
Rev: 6/2017**

RECEIVED
Form 3280

JAN 31 2025

Bethel Public Schools
Bethel, CT

BETHEL PUBLIC SCHOOLS
CENTRAL OFFICE

Notification of Receipt of Gifts, Grants, and Bequests Received

Please send a copy of this form to the Superintendent's Office as soon as your school has received a gift, grant, or bequest. The receipt will be announced at the Board of Education's regular meeting. Each school is responsible for sending the donor an acknowledgment for the gift.

Gift, Grant, or Bequest Received: Magnetic Construction Set (Road and Railroad Set)

How the Gift, Grant, or Bequest Will Be Used: Student will have the option to use this toy during free play opportunities during social skills instruction.

Estimated Cash Value of the Gift, Grant, or Bequest: 19.99

Donor's Name and Address: Caryn Schajer
123 Putnam Park Road
Bethel, CT. 06801

(NOTE: No Goods or Services were provided by the Bethel Public Schools/Bethel Board of Education in exchange for your contribution.)

Receiving School: Berry School

Gift, Grant, or Bequest Received by (Print Name): Amy Shulkin

Date Received: 1/30/2025

Copy to: Donor
Principal
Superintendent

(Ref: Board Policy 3280)
Rev: 6/2017

Minutes of the Bethel Board of Education Regular Meeting held on Thursday, January 16, 2025, in Board of Education Conference Room E, 1 School Street, PO Box 253, Bethel, CT 06801 and via live stream.

Attendance: None

Administrative Attendance: C. Carver, K. Brooks, J. Variale

S. Clayton, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Board Members Attendance:

Mrs. Jennifer Ackerman:	Present
Anthony Cassio:	Present
Mr. Scott Clayton:	Present
Mrs. Kara DiBartolo:	<i>Absent</i>
Mr. Bill Foster:	Present
Mrs. Jen Larsen:	Absent
Mrs. Courtney Martin:	<i>Absent</i>
Ms. Pat Rist:	<i>Absent</i>
Mr. Jeffrey Spies:	Present

1. Call to Order

1.A. Roll Call for Quorum

1.B. Pledge of Allegiance

Move to amend the agenda to add an Executive Session to the agenda. Passed with a motion by Mr. Scott Clayton and a second by Mr. Jeffrey Spies.

Mrs. Jennifer Ackerman:	Yea
Anthony Cassio:	Yea
Mr. Scott Clayton:	Yea
Mr. Bill Foster:	Yea
Mr. Jeffrey Spies:	Yea

2. Board Recognition/A Salute to Excellence

2.A. Gifts, Grants, & Bequests

Gifts

Johnson School

- \$3000 in Amazon gift cards to be distributed to JS families in need at the holidays, Loren and Patrick Salerno, Danbury, CT

Bethel High School

- \$1,000 for scholarships, workshops, or special projects, Anne Brecher, Danbury, CT

3. BOARD REPORTS - PROGRESS TOWARDS DISTRICT INITIATIVES

3.A. Strategic Plan Update

Dr. Cover provided the Board of Education with an update on the progress toward the district's Strategic Plan.

- Progress in core academics
- Accountability Index - Bethel's score is 83.3.
- Highest in the DRG
- Very high regionally
- Highest growth in our district
- Made revisions to our literary programming
- Included more courses at BHS and BMS, providing more choice for students

4. Consent Calendar

4.A. Approval of Minutes

4.A.1. December 19, 2024 - Special Meeting - Legislative Workshop

Move to approve the minutes of the December 19, 2024 - Special Meeting - Legislative Workshop. Passed with a motion by Mr. Scott Clayton and a second by Mr. Bill Foster.

Mrs. Jennifer Ackerman:	Abstain (With Conflict)
Anthony Cassio:	Yea
Mr. Scott Clayton:	Yea
Mr. Bill Foster:	Yea
Mr. Jeffrey Spies:	Yea

4.A.2. December 19, 2024 - Annual Meeting

Move to approve the minutes of December 19, 2024 - Annual Meeting. Passed with a motion by Mr. Scott Clayton and a second by Mr. Bill Foster.

Mrs. Jennifer Ackerman:	Abstain (With Conflict)
Anthony Cassio:	Yea
Mr. Scott Clayton:	Yea
Mr. Bill Foster:	Yea
Mr. Jeffrey Spies:	Yea

5. Correspondence

- Letter - Danbury Council of Veterans regarding Pearl Harbor Memorial Day Service

6. Public Comment

None.

7. Administrative/Board Member Update

7.A. Board Chairperson Update

- Mr. Clayton spoke to the Board about:

- Read the article for advocating for more money for education
- Legislative Breakfast, 8-9:30 am, Ridgefield, be vocal, speak out
- The Board needs a representative for the Town's Building Site Committee for the HVAC project.
- Personal technology - policy against use of personal phones during a meeting.

7.B. Administrative Update

Dr. Carver informed the Board:

- NJROTC inspection went very well
- The kick-off meeting for BHS HVAC project begins in February
 - A letter will be sent to parents
- Pay to play - considerations for policy & procedure
 - Will revisit on February 4 for further discussion
- Cybersecurity - Breach with PowerSchool
 - Sent out notifications to families
 - We do not accept Social Security numbers
 - Basic demographic information was taken
 - PowerSchool indicates the data was deleted and is no longer at risk.

7.B.1. 2024-2025 BOE District Data Sheet

Dr. Carver provided the Board with the monthly 2024-2025 BOE District Data Sheet.

8. Reports to the Board

8.A. Policy

8.A.1. First Reading

8.A.1.a. Policy/Regulation 6146 - Graduation Requirements

8.A.1.b. Policy 6172 - Alternative Education

8.A.1.c. Policy 4117 - Employee Discipline

8.A.1.d. Policy/Regulation 4122 - Student Teachers

8.A.1.e. Policy 4124 - Summer Teaching

8.A.1.f. Policy 4118.232 - Weapons and Dangerous Instruments

Move to accept

Policy/Regulation 6146 - Graduation Requirements

Policy 6172 - Alternative Education

Policy 4117 - Employee Discipline, recommended for deletion

Policy/Regulation 4122 - Student Teachers

Policy 4124 - Summer Teaching, recommended for deletion

Policy 4118.232 - Weapons and Dangerous Instruments

for a first reading. Passed with a motion by Mr. Scott Clayton and a second by Mr. Jeffrey Spies.

Mrs. Jennifer Ackerman: Yea

Anthony Cassio:	Yea
Mr. Scott Clayton:	Yea
Mr. Bill Foster:	Yea
Mr. Jeffrey Spies:	Yea

8.A.2. Second Reading/Approval

8.A.2.a. Policy 0521 - Non-discrimination Statement

Move to TABLE Policy 0521 - Non-discrimination Statement Passed with a motion by Mr. Scott Clayton and a second by Mrs. Jennifer Ackerman.

Mrs. Jennifer Ackerman:	Yea
Anthony Cassio:	Yea
Mr. Scott Clayton:	Yea
Mr. Bill Foster:	Yea
Mr. Jeffrey Spies:	Yea

8.A.2.b. Policy 6123 - Use of Certified Therapy Dogs in Schools

Move to approve Policy 6123 - Use of Certified Therapy Dogs. Passed with a motion by Mr. Scott Clayton and a second by Mrs. Jennifer Ackerman.

Mrs. Jennifer Ackerman:	Yea
Anthony Cassio:	Yea
Mr. Scott Clayton:	Yea
Mr. Bill Foster:	Yea
Mr. Jeffrey Spies:	Yea

8.A.2.c. Bylaw 9325.43 - Attendance at Meetings via Electronic Communications

Move to approve Bylaw 9325.43 - Attendance at Meetings via Electronic Communications. Passed with a motion by Mr. Scott Clayton and a second by Mrs. Jennifer Ackerman.

Mrs. Jennifer Ackerman:	Yea
Anthony Cassio:	Yea
Mr. Scott Clayton:	Yea
Mr. Bill Foster:	Yea
Mr. Jeffrey Spies:	Yea

9. Executive Session

9.A. CT General Statutes 1-210(b)(9) Personnel – Negotiations

Administrative Attendance: C. Carver, K. Brooks, J. Variale

Board Members Attendance:

Mrs. Jennifer Ackerman: Present
Anthony Cassio: Present
Mr. Scott Clayton: Present
Mrs. Kara DiBartolo: *Absent*
Mr. Bill Foster: Present
Mrs. Jen Larsen: Absent
Mrs. Courtney Martin: *Absent*
Ms. Pat Rist: *Absent*
Mr. Jeffrey Spies: Present

Move to enter into Executive Session at 7:40 PM for the purpose of negotiations, inviting Dr. Carver, Dr. Brooks, and Mrs. Variale. Passed with a motion by Mr. Scott Clayton and a second by Mrs. Jennifer Ackerman.

Mrs. Jennifer Ackerman: Yea
Anthony Cassio: Yea
Mr. Scott Clayton: Yea
Mr. Bill Foster: Yea
Mr. Jeffrey Spies: Yea

Move to come out of Executive Session at 7:50 PM. Passed with a motion by Mr. Scott Clayton and a second by Mr. Bill Foster.

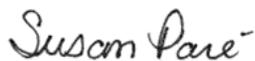
Mrs. Jennifer Ackerman: Yea
Anthony Cassio: Yea
Mr. Scott Clayton: Yea
Mr. Bill Foster: Yea
Mr. Jeffrey Spies: Yea

10. Adjourn

Move to adjourn at 7:50 PM. Passed with a motion by Mr. Scott Clayton and a second by Mrs. Jennifer Ackerman.

Mrs. Jennifer Ackerman: Yea
Anthony Cassio: Yea
Mr. Scott Clayton: Yea
Mr. Bill Foster: Yea
Mr. Jeffrey Spies: Yea

Respectfully submitted,



Susan Pare
Board Recorder

Minutes of the Bethel Board of Education Regular Meeting - Superintendent's Budget Presentation - Part II held on Thursday, January 30, 2025, in Board of Education Conference Room E, 1 School Street, PO Box 253, Bethel, CT 06801 and via Live Stream.

Attendance: Linda Siladi, Suzanne Rodgers, Shantia White Johnson, Kirche Zeile, Michele Metcalf, Kimberly Rissolo, Fran Gallagher, Denise Howe, Debra Desmarais, Jennifer White, Mike Croft

Administrative Attendance: C. Carver, K. Brooks, J. Variale, B. Grieco, J. Taranovich, A. Salerno, B. Watson, L. DiBiase, M. Stabile, C. Troetti, C. Sipala, M. Walsh, T. Soucy

S. Clayton, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Board Members Attendance:

Mrs. Jennifer Ackerman:	<i>Absent</i>
Anthony Cassio:	Present
Mr. Scott Clayton:	Present
Mrs. Kara DiBartolo:	Present
Mr. Bill Foster:	Present
Mrs. Jen Larsen:	Present
Mrs. Courtney Martin:	Present
Ms. Pat Rist:	Present
Mr. Jeffrey Spies:	Present

1. Call to Order

1.A. Roll Call for Quorum

1.B. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Superintendent's Proposed 2025-2026 Education Budget Presentation - Part II

Dr. Carver presented the 2025-2026 Proposed Education Budget. The proposed 9.83% increase had been a 10.48% increase prior to the administration's internal reductions of \$356,592.

Dr. Carver spoke about the significant return on investment due to the districts highest level of academic outcomes this year. Bethel is tied for first in the DRG accountability scores and regionally. However, Bethel is in the lowest end of the per pupil expenditure in the DRG, regionally, and in the state.

The increase in spending is due to health insurance, contractual obligations, and an increase in special education enrollment particularly for students with moderate to severe disabilities. The increase for health insurance is high, it came in at 33%. The district went out to bid and the returns were higher than the quote from the district's current carrier. The district would see a small savings moving the CT Partnership Plan.

Ms. Variale, Director of Finance and Business Operations, reviewed the proposed spending by object code and facilities 460 account budget.

		<u>Year to Year Change</u>
\$1,704,586	Increase to Salary Account:	Increase of 4.63%
\$2,744,017	Increase to Benefit Accounts:	Increase of 28.03%
-\$75,285	Decrease to Professional Services:	Decrease of -10.07%
\$0	Remains Flat, Property Services:	Remains Flat 0%
\$1,018,150	Increase to Purchased Services:	Increase of 18.73%
\$22,521	Increase to Supplies:	Increase of 1.55%
-\$26,593	Decrease to Equipment:	Decrease of -15.34%
-\$4,772	Decrease to Dues & Fees:	Decrease of -4.78%

Summary

2025-2026 Base Budget: \$60,133,756

*Increase: \$5,382,624, 9.83% YTY

Overall Percentage with ECS Increase to Town

	<u>\$ Increase</u>	<u>% Increase</u>
*Proposed Increase in Spending	\$5,382,624	9.83%
ECS increased State Aide	\$1,379,598	
Net of ECS Offset	\$4,003,026	7.31%

Projected ECS increased in State Aide to Town, \$1,379,598. Amount to be finalized by State in February. **If received, net of ECS offset would be \$4,003,026. This would create a proposed 7.31% increase for the 2025-2026 budget.*

460 Facilities Account

Increase: \$202,727, 38.54%

Budget Workshop Dates

- Tuesday, February 4, 2025: BOE Meeting - Budget Workshop (Schools, Athletics)
- Thursday, February 6, 2025: BOE Meeting - Budget Workshop (IT, Curriculum, Special Ed.)
- Tuesday, February 11, 2025: BOE Meeting - Budget Workshop (Facilities)
- Thursday, February 13, 2025: BOE Meeting - Budget Workshop /Approval

Dr. Carver’s 2025-2026 proposed budget presentation Part I & II are available on the District Dashboard on the district’s website:

<https://sites.google.com/bethel.k12.ct.us/bethelpublicschools/financial-dashboard?authuser=1>

and can also be viewed on BEtv at:

<http://devos2.bethel.k12.ct.us/show?video=dee119ce9385&apg=4d17c1b509fc>

Mr. Clayton informed the Board to use the BOE Q&A document to submit questions before the next meeting, on February 4, 2025. Focusing the questions on the topic of schools and athletics. Please submit all questions before noon on the day of the meeting.

3. Correspondence

None.

4. Public Comment

Jessica Ferguson, 139 Walnut Hill, spoke about the positive impact of the Bethel Public Schools on students with disabilities, particularly in support of the need to provide resources and staffing for student success.

5. Adjourn

Move to adjourn at 8:10 PM. Passed with a motion by Ms. Pat Rist and a second by Mrs. Courtney Martin.

Anthony Cassio:	Yea
Mr. Scott Clayton:	Yea
Mrs. Kara DiBartolo:	Yea
Mr. Bill Foster:	Yea
Mrs. Jen Larsen:	Yea
Mrs. Courtney Martin:	Yea
Ms. Pat Rist:	Yea
Mr. Jeffrey Spies:	Yea

Respectfully submitted,



Susan Pare
Board Recorder

Minutes of the Bethel Board of Education Regular Meeting -Budget Workshop - Schools/Athletics held on Tuesday, February 4, 2025, in Board of Education Conference Room E, 1 School Street, PO Box 253, Bethel, CT 06801, and via Live Stream.

Attendance: None.

Administrative Attendance: C. Carver, K. Brooks, J. Variale, M. Rutledge, M. Caron, D. Burns, J. Taranovich, M. Walsh, A. Salerno, T. Soucy, B. Watson, B. Grieco

S. Clayton, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Board Members Attendance:

Mrs. Jennifer Ackerman:	Present
Anthony Cassio:	Present
Mr. Scott Clayton:	Present
Mrs. Kara DiBartolo:	Present
Mr. Bill Foster:	Present
Mrs. Jen Larsen:	Present
Mrs. Courtney Martin:	Present
Ms. Pat Rist:	Present
Mr. Jeffrey Spies:	<i>Absent</i>

1. Call to Order

1.A. Roll Call for Quorum

1.B. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Budget Workshop (Schools/Athletics)

Dr. Carver and her administrative team answered questions submitted by the Board on health insurance costs history, a self-insured model, collaborative athletic teams, pay-to-play caps, additional school psychologist position, stipends for coaches and advisors for after-school clubs, student transportation increase, technology supplies and software, funding for paraeducators, substitute teachers, sport uniform replacements, tutoring cuts impact, custodial overtime, reductions in technology hardware and copier lease, increase ins technology supplies to maintain current platforms, tuition increase for students attending Shepaug, contractual increase for regular and special education student transportation, outside consultant for enrollment study, dues & fees, adult education mandated services provided by WERACE - GED, ESL services, library books and reference materials, textbooks, athletic trainer, Circle of Friends preschool reductions, and library/media center models. The Board will meet again on Thursday, February 6, 2025, for the next budget workshop.

3. Correspondence

- Written Testimony Raised Bill 1217 to Members of the Committee for Children from Dr. Christine Carver, Superintendent of Schools, Mr. Dan Carter, First Selectman, Town of Bethel, and Mr. Nick Ellis, Chair, Bethel Board of Finance.

4. Public Comment

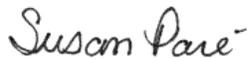
None.

5. Adjourn

Move to adjourn at 8:09 PM. Passed with a motion by Mr. Scott Clayton and a second by Ms. Pat Rist.

Mrs. Jennifer Ackerman:	Yea
Anthony Cassio:	Yea
Mr. Scott Clayton:	Yea
Mrs. Kara DiBartolo:	Yea
Mr. Bill Foster:	Yea
Mrs. Jen Larsen:	Yea
Mrs. Courtney Martin:	Yea
Ms. Pat Rist:	Yea

Respectfully submitted,



Susan Pare
Board Recorder

Minutes of the Bethel Board of Education Regular Meeting - Budget Workshop - Budget Workshop - IT, Curriculum, SPED held on Thursday, February 6, 2025, in Board of Education Conference Room E, 1 School Street, PO Box 253, Bethel, CT 06801 and via Live Stream.

Attendance: Chris Mustakas, Emanuelle Martelari, Maya Jackman, Libby Resendez, Kara Rondamo, Rani Rondano, Lily Friedland, Meghan Friedland, Melissa Hannequiu, Amy Hannequin, Denise Howe, Nicole Avallone, Gabe Barboza, Chris Baker, Maureen DeBlois

Administrative Attendance: C. Carver, K. Brooks, J. Variale, M. Stabile, C. Sipala, L. DiBiase, M. Rutledge, B. Watson, J. Taranovich, B. Hrieco, D. Burns, I. Veleze

S. Clayton, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Board Members Attendance:

Mrs. Jennifer Ackerman: Present
Anthony Cassio: Present
Mr. Scott Clayton: Present
Mrs. Kara DiBartolo: Present
Mr. Bill Foster: Present
Mrs. Jen Larsen: Present
Mrs. Courtney Martin: *Absent*
Ms. Pat Rist: Present
Mr. Jeffrey Spies: *Absent*

1. Call to Order

1.A. Roll Call for Quorum

1.B. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Budget Workshop - IT, Curriculum, SPED

Dr. Carver and her administrative team answered questions submitted by the Board on IT, Curriculum, and Special Education. Dr. Carver informed the Board that the Governor has released his budget and the Town of Bethel is expected to receive \$1,159,485 in revenue for ECS. Dr. Carver stated the administration is trying to find a way to have the least impact on the 1:1 program next year. Dr. Carver reviewed the current 1:1 program and reviewed some options for BYOT. Beginning in 2025/2026 the Board will need to decide what model can be maintained. Dr. Carver and Mrs. Burns, the Director of Instructional Technology, informed the Board that the model will not experience any major changes next year. They spoke about the models and the need for security during testing. Dr. Carver answered questions about library/media paraeducators, BYOT, internet safety, Circle of Friends class size in a half-day program, special education out-of-state placement at being at zero, additional psychologist (district) for evaluations, special education caseloads and staffing, the impact of the possible loss of federal grant funding, through presidential executive orders, of \$1.6 million, 5th-grade sections and

class sizes, curriculum writing, tutors, FTE cuts and impacts on student programming and reduction in force.

Dr. Carver presented a 2025/2026 Reductions Summary outlining the reductions already taken to decrease the proposed budget from a 10.43% increase to the proposed 9.83%. She reviewed potential greater reductions to reduce the proposed increase and informed the Board the administration is developing an early retirement offering.

3. Correspondence

None.

4. Public Comment

- Chris Baker, 3 N. Hearthstone Dr., spoke in support of keeping the elementary music program.
- Kara Rondano, 12 Grandview Terrace, spoke in support of keeping the music program.
- Nick Ellis, 13 Fawn Rd., spoke about not getting information from social media and getting the correct facts about the education budget. Stated there has been no discussion about cutting the music program. He encouraged those present to stay engaged in the process.
- Mia Jackson, 9 Grand St., spoke in support of the music program.
- Lily Friedland, 12 Greenwood Ave. spoke in support of the music program.
- Maureen DeBlois, of 20 Green Pasture Rd., expressed her support for the music program and requested that, if the Board is considering a rotation, they review staff scheduling to ensure that one teacher can effectively accommodate the number of students.

5. Adjourn

Move to adjourn at 8:07 PM. Passed with a motion by Mr. Scott Clayton and a second by Ms. Pat Rist.

Mrs. Jennifer Ackerman:	Yea
Anthony Cassio:	Yea
Mr. Scott Clayton:	Yea
Mrs. Kara DiBartolo:	Yea
Mr. Bill Foster:	Yea
Mrs. Jen Larsen:	Yea
Ms. Pat Rist:	Yea

Respectfully submitted,



Susan Pare
Board Recorder

Minutes of the Bethel Board of Education Regular Meeting - Budget Workshop - Facilities/Budget Deliberations held on Tuesday, February 11, 2025, in Board of Education Conference Room E, 1 School Street, PO Box 253, Bethel, CT 06801 and via live stream.

Attendance: Meghan Freidland, Lily Friedland, Nicole Avvalone, Rachel Diamond, Aileen Mikolajoyk, Amy Hannequin, Jennifer White, Maureen DeBlois, Nyah Rodriguez, Beatrice Tucker, Sara Hower

Administrative Attendance: C. Carver, K. Brooks, J. Variale, D. Burns, M. Rutledge, C. Sipala, B. Watson, B. Grieco, T. Stevens

K. DiBartolo, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Board Members Attendance:

Mrs. Jennifer Ackerman:	Present
Anthony Cassio:	Present
Mr. Scott Clayton:	Absent
Mrs. Kara DiBartolo:	Present
Mr. Bill Foster:	Present
Mrs. Jen Larsen:	Present
Mrs. Courtney Martin:	Present
Ms. Pat Rist:	Present
Mr. Jeffrey Spies:	Absent

1. Call to Order

1.A. Roll Call for Quorum

1.B. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Budget Workshop - Facilities/Budget Deliberations

Dr. Carver answered questions from Board members regarding facility items, landscaping, and EMS/HVAC repairs. Also, questions regarding health insurance and the possibility of approaching bargaining units for concessions. Dr. Carver reviewed the original proposed reductions for clarification.

1. Reduction of Elementary Specials - NO student impact, staff layoffs
2. Reduction of 5th grade section - very small increase in class size
3. JS & MS FTE if we put the library on rotation.

Dr. Carver informed the Board she has sent out an early retirement incentive to BEA members. They would need to submit by February 28th. The Board and administration discussed potential reductions. Dr. Carver will come back to the Board with potential reductions and impacts to programming and support.

The next Board meeting will be on Tuesday, February 18th for budget deliberations.

3. Correspondence

- Bethel CT Public Schools Mail - Bethel music department - A. Schneider
- Bethel CT Public Schools Mail - Concerns of Cuts to Music Education - K. Walker
- Bethel CT Public Schools Mail - Concerns Regarding Potential Cuts to Bethel's Music Programs - L. Botex

4. Public Comment

- Lily Friedman, 12 Greenwood Ave, provided a history of the program and spoke in support of the music program.
- Rachel Diamond, 9 Grand St., spoke in support of the music program.
- Beatrice Tucker, 76 Wooster St., spoke in support of the music program.
- Nyah Rodriguez, Pumtrees Condos, spoke in support of the music program.

5. Adjourn

Move to adjourn at 7:48 PM. Passed with a motion by Mrs. Jen Larsen and a second by Mrs. Jennifer Ackerman.

Mrs. Jennifer Ackerman:	Yea
Anthony Cassio:	Yea
Mrs. Kara DiBartolo:	Yea
Mr. Bill Foster:	Yea
Mrs. Jen Larsen:	Yea
Mrs. Courtney Martin:	Yea
Ms. Pat Rist:	Yea

Respectfully submitted,



Susan Pare
Board Recorder



Board of Education, Bethel <boe@bethel.k12.ct.us>

Re: Removal of DEI programming in Bethel Public Schools

1 message

Carver, Christine <carverc@bethel.k12.ct.us>

Wed, Feb 19, 2025 at 7:57 AM

To: Matthew Paulsen <matthewfromct@yahoo.com>

Cc: Scott Clayton <claytons@bethel.k12.ct.us>, Kristen Brooks <brooksk@bethel.k12.ct.us>, "boe@bethel.k12.ct.us" <boe@bethel.k12.ct.us>, Michelle Rutledge <rutledgem@bethel.k12.ct.us>, Susan Pare <pares@bethel.k12.ct.us>

Good Morning Matt,

Thank you for both of your emails. Please accept this response - Re: to both the one you sent me and Mrs. Rutledge. I will include your correspondence in the BOE agenda also.

Typically, when we receive information from the Federal level, the State Department of Education distributes it to local communities, who provide us with guidance on how the information needs to be implemented. I do not believe I received any information from the State or even this Dear Colleague letter. I forwarded your email to the Commissioner of Education at the State to ask for information. I will also consult with our attorney.

The amount you quoted in Federal grants is not accurate. In 2022-2023 we had the COVID grants from the Federal Government and those grants are all over. None-the-less, the current estimated federal dollars is \$1,435,667.

I will let you know what I hear.

Christine Carver, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools
Bethel Public Schools
P.O. Box 253
Bethel, CT 06801
(203)794-8601



On Tue, Feb 18, 2025 at 7:16 PM Matthew Paulsen <matthewfromct@yahoo.com> wrote:

Dear Dr. Carver -

On February 15, 2025, a letter was sent to all of the Departments of Education in all 50 states, notifying them they have 14 days to remove all DEI programming in all public schools. Institutions which fail to comply may face a loss of federal funding. I have attached a copy of this letter to this email for your reference.

In reviewing the Board of Education's website, I came across several DEI programming references that are still posted and that will need to be removed by February 27:

1. The BPS Equity Statement. This verbiage appears on several pages and will need to be removed.

BPS Equity Statement

The Bethel Public Schools has adopted the CAPSS Equity Statement:

Equity is achieved when student outcomes are not predicted by gender, race, ethnicity, class, or special needs and where all students reach a level of efficacy and competencies that support a rewarding and productive life. This requires the elimination of the inequalities that contribute to disproportionate learning and achievement by students of different social groups while ensuring all students are prepared for a productive and meaningful life.

2. District Mission and Core Beliefs:

that equity is a fundamental value, providing for high-quality education and that the diversity of our students is an asset to the educational community.

3. <https://www.bethel.k12.ct.us/cms/one.aspx?portalId=547022&pageId=547030>

There are several references to equity and the Equity Statement on this page as well.

Bethel Public Schools' CAFE Policies:

4. <http://z2policy.cabe.org/cabe/browse/bethel/bethel/z20000069>

The Superintendent or his/her designee shall investigate the conditions of such grants and decide which of these warrant further consideration. This decision will be based on the following factors:

1. The degree to which the District's efforts to achieve its educational goals would be enhanced through the grant;
2. The source of the grant;
3. The level of effort in terms of district resources likely to be incurred in seeking the grant;
4. The extent to which the acceptance of the grant may commit the district to future dedication of its own resources;
5. The extent to which fairness and equity are maintained among schools or individuals;
6. The conditions of the grant and their concurrence with all provisions of the law and District policy, or other factors as determined by the Superintendent.

The development of funding proposals is the responsibility of the Superintendent or his/her designee.

All funding proposals must meet the following criteria:

1. They will be based on a specific set of internal objectives that relate to the established goals and objectives of the District.
2. They will provide measures for evaluating whether or not project objectives are being or have been achieved.
3. The execution of all projects is to conform to state and federal laws and to the policies of the Board of Education.

5. <http://z2policy.cabe.org/cabe/browse/bethel/bethel/z20000164>

Students**Student Discipline**

The Bethel Board of Education is committed to creating a safe, orderly, and supportive learning environment for all students, staff, and visitors. This policy aims to balance the necessity of maintaining safety and order within our schools while adhering to progressive discipline and restorative practices, which seeks to address and correct inappropriate behavior while promoting accountability, personal growth, and the repair of harm.

Students are expected to comply with school rules and Board policies and may be disciplined for conduct on school grounds or at any school-sponsored activity that endangers persons or property, is seriously disruptive of the educational process, or that violates a publicized policy of the Board. Students may be disciplined for conduct off school grounds if such conduct is seriously disruptive to the educational process and violates Board policy.

Policy Objectives:

- 1. Ensure Safety and Order:** Maintain a secure and disciplined school environment conducive to learning and free from violence, threats, and disruptive behaviors.
- 2. Promote Equity and Fairness:** Apply disciplinary measures in an equitable, consistent, and unbiased manner, ensuring that all students are treated with dignity and respect.
- 3. Support Progressive Discipline:** Implement a progressive discipline model that focuses on intervention and prevention strategies to address and correct student behavior before it escalates.
- 4. Implement Restorative Practices:** Incorporate restorative practices that emphasize accountability, reparation of harm, and the restoration of relationships within the school community.
- 5. Encourage Personal Responsibility:** Foster a sense of personal responsibility and self-discipline in students, helping them to understand the consequences of their actions and to make better choices in the future.

I have not done a thorough review of your site so I would strongly encourage your staff to review each and every web page (as well as all printed documentation and even lesson plans/curriculum) that could put Bethel's schools in non-compliance and subject to loss of federal funds.

Thank you and I look forward to your updates.

Regards,

-Matthew Paulsen

"Like all great travelers, I have seen more than I remember, and remember more than I have seen." - Benjamin Disraeli



Board of Education, Bethel <boe@bethel.k12.ct.us>

Rockwell Art Show - March 27th 4:30- 6:30

1 message

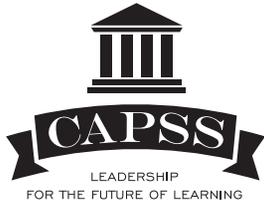
Kearney, Brittany <kearneyb@bethel.k12.ct.us>

Thu, Feb 20, 2025 at 9:43 AM

To: Christine Carver <carverc@bethel.k12.ct.us>, "Brooks, Kristen" <brooksk@bethel.k12.ct.us>, "Lacey, Rebecca" <lacey@bethel.k12.ct.us>, Scott Carrizzo <carrizzosc@bethel.k12.ct.us>, Emily Price <pricee@bethel.k12.ct.us>, Tamarah McCue <mccuet@bethel.k12.ct.us>, Lisa DeGhetto <bluml@bethel.k12.ct.us>, Marjorie Overmier <overmierm@bethel.k12.ct.us>, "Merrill, Danielle" <merrilld@bethel.k12.ct.us>, "Soucy, Trisha" <soucyt@bethel.k12.ct.us>
Bcc: boe@bethel.k12.ct.us

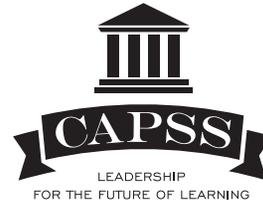
We would love for you to join!





CAPSS 2025 LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS

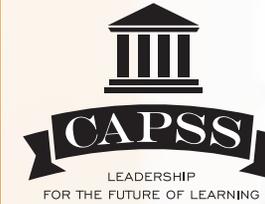
This document outlines specific legislative proposals for consideration during the 2025 legislative session. It serves as a complement to the first-year action steps of the long-range CAPSS plan for public education - **ELEVATE, FUND, IMPROVE: CAPSS Priorities for Connecticut Public Education: Looking Forward.**



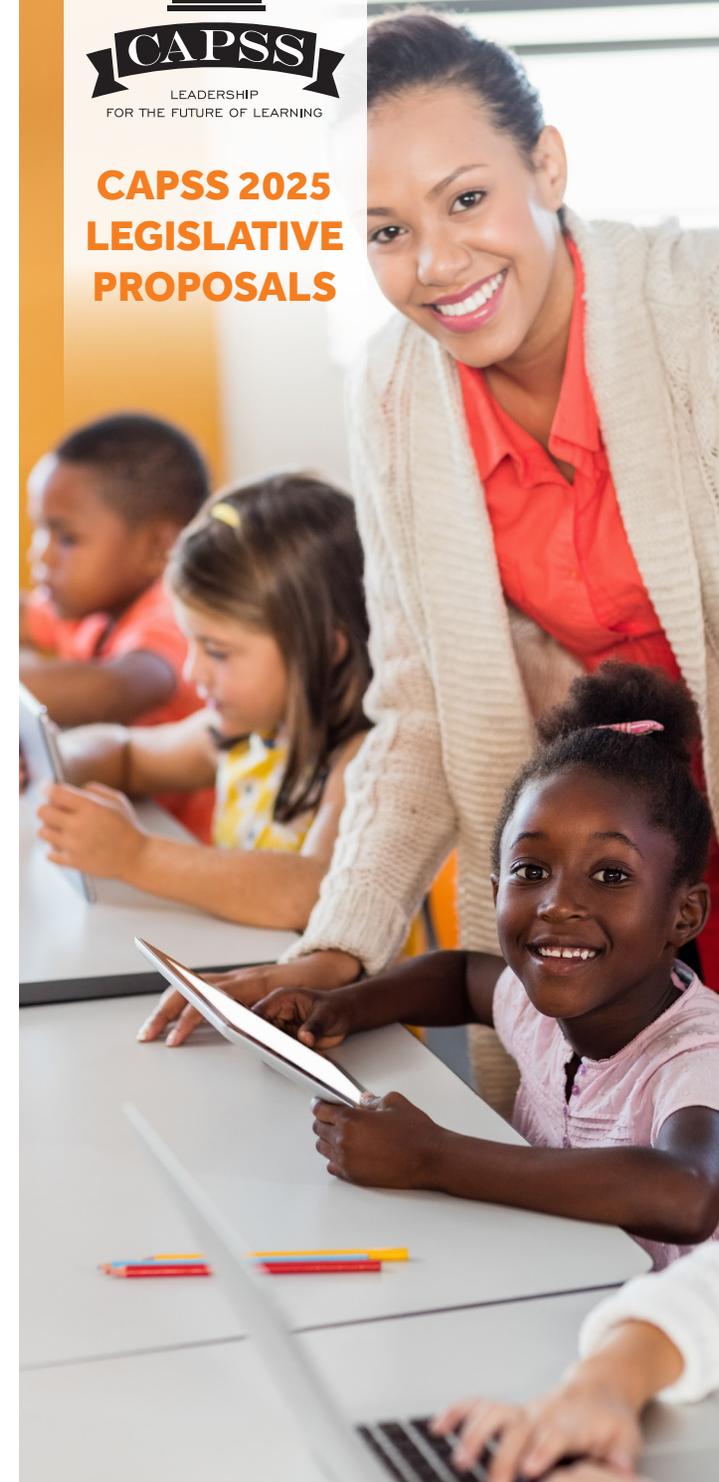
CAPSS MISSION

To lead the continuous improvement of public education for all students by advocating public policy for children, and by developing and supporting executive school leaders.

WWW.CAPSS.ORG



CAPSS 2025 LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS



ELEVATE THE EDUCATION PROFESSION

To elevate education as a profession, there is a need to attract and retain educators, diversify the educator pool, improve the quality of educators' professional experiences, improve educator autonomy, and eliminate mandates that impact educator morale.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish a Blue Ribbon Commission to enhance and elevate the profession through a comprehensive two-year study of compensation, locally focused high-quality professional development, educator diversification, recruitment and retention efforts, and educator preparation programs.
- Create livable and competitive pay for educators, provided by the State, to ensure a widely diverse and highly-skilled workforce.
- Develop a committee that includes the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), the Department of Labor (DOL), the Teachers Retirement Board (TRB), educator preparation programs, educators, and other key partners to create a long-term workforce plan to address educator shortages and retirement trends.
- Provide grants for districts to invest in high-quality, ongoing professional development to enhance teacher skills and knowledge.
- Allocate \$3.5 million to continue professional learning for districts' leadership teams in the Science of Reading.
- Restore autonomy to educators by reducing legislative decisions and mandates that deprofessionalize the profession while preserving the autonomy of the CSDE.

FUNDING AND FINANCE

Under the current funding model for the States' ECS Grant, 89 districts will receive increased support, while 70 districts will see reductions. Some districts are facing significant cuts to their state aid, affecting financially struggling communities the most.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Revise the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula to ensure equitable funding distribution and address the growing needs of districts.
- Hold harmless all districts for the 25-26 school year while the formula is reworked so that all districts remain whole.
- Increase the foundation from \$11,525, established in 2013 (10-162f), to reflect the impact of inflation on services provided to students and the education workforce.
- Fully fund Excess Cost Funding for Special Education to meet the needs of students with disabilities.
- Incentivize the creation and maintenance of high-quality locally and regionally created educational programs for students.
- Monitor and review the impact of the Magnet School Tuition cap on district budgets and student access.

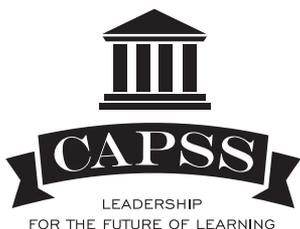
SUPPORTING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Significant research has established a direct and causal relationship between a quality preschool experience and later successful student achievement through school and higher education. CAPSS supports financial assistance for universal preschool for all three- and four-year-olds in Connecticut, focusing initially on the communities and families with the greatest need for preschool programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consolidate efforts and increase funding for pre-kindergarten programs for all three- and four-year-olds whose parents are seeking access to high-quality early education programs across the state.
- Eliminate the kindergarten parent waiver so that all children have equitable access to kindergarten education across the state.
- Support marginalized families by studying the programmatic and financial needs in each community and offering tiered support to families close to the free-and-reduced lunch eligibility cutoff.
- Provide grants to Boards of Education to establish and implement partnerships to expand access to early childhood education by fostering partnerships with childcare providers and other districts by establishing pathways among the CSDE, Boards of Education, Office of Early Childhood, and the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to more effectively support the needs of young children and their families.





LEADERSHIP
FOR THE FUTURE OF LEARNING

ELEVATE • FUND • IMPROVE

CAPSS Priorities for Connecticut

Public Education: Looking Forward

INTRODUCTION

In 2021, the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) published a *Blueprint to Transform Connecticut's Public Schools*, a vision of continuous improvement coupled with a comprehensive, long-term set of recommendations for addressing the educational and fiscal needs of Connecticut's school districts. Progress on the recommendations was published each of the last three years. Coupled with the *Blueprint*, CAPSS put forward an annual public policy agenda with legislative proposals. The legislature and CAPSS accomplished much in strengthening public education in Connecticut in spite of the significant impact of COVID and its lingering effects on families, students and staff.

Looking Forward

As the 2025 legislative session nears, CAPSS is ever mindful of its mission:

“To lead the continuous improvement of public education for all students by advocating public policy for children, and by developing and supporting executive school leaders.”

We believe it is time for CAPSS to revisit and reconsider its public policy priorities as well as its proposals for legislative action with the aspiration to address the current needs of all Connecticut staff and families. CAPSS believes in the ability of every Connecticut student to develop the knowledge, skills and character needed to succeed in their education, as well as in their adult life, as they become responsible and engaged citizens.

While there is much work to do to improve our schools, **let us never forget the overwhelming success of public education in this country.** Compulsory schooling for all, financially supported by all citizens and governments, has **enabled dramatic social and economic mobility for millions of young people**, generation after generation. Few other public or private enterprises can claim such success. Moreover, Connecticut Public Schools is one of the top systems in the nation.

In order to sustain the quality of Connecticut Public Education, we know that equal access to high quality instruction and to successful outcomes for all students requires teachers to develop a personal relationship with each student, differentiate instruction to meet individual student's needs and maintain continuous communication with parents and families. Moreover, we know that additional supports are needed for students with special needs, students of color, students living in poverty, students whose home and first language is other than English and students who are disengaged from school. Finally, it is essential that towns be able to provide sufficient budgets to enable high-quality professional development and support for staff, both professional and non-certified, and to have the necessary tools and supports to fulfill their assigned roles.

Today's students need to acquire the skills to read, write, speak, compute, innovate, engage in scientific inquiry, and work together to solve complex/real-life problems, but they also must develop a love of learning, an appreciation for the history of

this country, a respect for others and the importance of contributing to the betterment of our society. All those involved in leading public education must stay focused on continuously improving students' commitment to their learning and achievement and to ensuring that all students are treated equitably and with dignity.

THE ESSENTIAL QUESTION THAT HAS GUIDED CAPSS IN DEFINING ITS PRIORITIES GOING FORWARD IS:

What changes in CT Public Schools are imperative over the next 10 years that will result in greater success for every student?

CAPSS has chosen to focus on three essential areas for the next three years.

1 Elevating the Education Profession

2 Raising the State's Percentage Share of Education Expenses

3 Improving Pre-School Programs

The rationale for each of these priorities follows ...



Elevating the Education Profession

At the heart of any educational enterprise is the continuous, daily teacher-student interaction. Nothing is more important to the future success of public education in Connecticut than the quality of its teaching force. The need for a more diverse workforce is absolutely essential, as is listening to the voices of educators on how to improve and grow the profession.

However, physical and psychological conditions that teachers are often daily experiencing in our schools is of serious concern. Research studies conducted in the 2023-24 school year by the Pew Research Center, RAND, Kraft and Lyon and many others show teachers are experiencing increasing stress in their jobs including depression and burnout. Research is also suggesting that the overall health of the profession is at one of its lowest points.



Based on this sampling of data, the overwhelming need to elevate the education profession is imperative. Teacher mental health is essential, as is substantive and appropriate professional development. True professional educators have earned the respect of their communities due to their training, experience and genuine commitment to their students, but they need more support.

The salaries of Connecticut public school educators must be increased. The pandemic of 2020-22 helped prove how much education is harmed when there is no continuous, demanding and supportive teaching provided to each student. We are facing a crisis. There is a present shortage of teacher candidates, a projection of even greater shortages over the next 10 years, and a negative salary differentiation between the teaching profession and other bachelor's degree occupations.



A Historical Lens

Connecticut led the nation in 1986 with a Teacher Salary Enhancement Act (TSEA) that elevated all starting salaries and increased compensation to all teachers. It was also equity-based with greater state funds provided to school districts with the greatest need and the least local capacity to pay. For at least 20 years thereafter, the TSEA helped bring more highly-qualified young people into the public schools as teachers.

After the increase in teacher salaries, college students choosing education as their major had higher SAT scores than previously, and student achievement in Connecticut in the later 1990's, when compared to other states and the nation, was at an all-time high level.

It has been 40 years since the leaders of this state have taken the bold step to demonstrate “We want the best for our children”. Today’s students can and will do better than we have done if we invest more in their future NOW.

Nothing will advance CT public education more than elevating the entire education profession.



Raising total compensation, particularly for starting teachers in every town, must be at the center of all proposals. CT must also address the issues of certification, professional development, student teaching, teacher shortages, teacher evaluation, appropriate use of non-certified staff, the work hours of the day and year, advancement, mentoring, diversity and more. These factors are all part of the “total condition” of the education profession, and every one of them needs clarification and greater expectations.

CONNECTICUT’S RECENT EXPERIENCE HAS BEEN A FEW THOUSAND TEACHING VACANCIES ON THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL. THIS IS VERY HARMFUL TO STUDENT LEARNING.



CAPSS RECOMMENDATION

The Governor and General Assembly should:

Enact legislation in 2025 that begins a two-year Blue Ribbon Commission on “Elevating the Education Profession”, including raising the salaries of incoming starting teachers, and improving the job satisfaction of all teachers with action expected in the 2027 session and implementation in the 2027-28 school year.

2 Raise the State's Share of Education Expenses

The State of Connecticut has made very little progress in the last 20 years in increasing the state's share of the total revenue for public elementary and secondary education. Hovering around 40%, annual increases from the State have barely kept pace with inflation and certainly have not provided for more equalized expenditures among school districts. While a good deal of more equity/fairness exists today than before Horton vs. Meskill, the total State funds (from all grants and State funded programs) are not sufficient to accomplish the task of helping the poorest communities, with the most challenged students, to close the expenditure and achievement gaps. (Local funds support roughly 54% and federal funds 6%).

In addition, local communities do not have sufficient resources to fund a multi-year raising of teacher salaries. The State must be prepared to initiate and sustain the increases.



With the full funding of the current Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula and grant to take place in 2025-26, it is time to fix a new target (which could include the required elevation of teacher salaries) that would move the State's total share of the enterprise to be equal to that paid by the 169 towns of CT. Of course, the annual increase in the ECS grant (or its successor) should be reasonable, sustainable, and of a size in each community so that it will be used appropriately on educational opportunities and NOT on property tax relief.

The single greatest failure of the last 25 years has been the inability or unwillingness to fund the promise of State support for the excess costs of special education students needing significant intervention. Virtually all of



the additional costs of special education for the last two-plus decades have been covered by funds from 169 towns. Sufficient funding for special education has been a very broken promise by both the State and Federal governments. This failure has harmed both special and regular education and has eroded the public confidence in the total public education enterprise. The ECS grant does not directly support special education, except in the most holistic view of all revenues supporting all expenditures. The State's Special Education Excess Cost grant should be increased to the level where all districts receive 100% of their calculated grant.

There are also critical needs in the following areas:

- Expanding multilingual programs,
- Merging and supporting several school improvement grants focused on Priority and Alliance Districts,
- Rethinking the delivery of adult basic education,
- Adequately funding the six regional education service centers,
- Continuing the quest for a fair and sustainable method of funding magnets, charters, vo-ag centers, tech schools and interdistrict choice programs.

These increases should be considered after both the new ECS grant and a fully funded EXCESS cost grant have been accomplished.

The State of Connecticut has a legal and moral obligation to appropriately fund its public schools.

Only the State can counteract the influence of local wealth on education disparities among towns.

The State will reduce inequities in its school funding system and increase student achievement only if it genuinely commits to significantly increasing state aid as a percentage of all revenues for public schools. It is essential to the future of Connecticut Public Education.

CONNECTICUT CONTINUES TO RANK IN THE BOTTOM QUARTILE OF ALL STATES, IN THE PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOL REVENUES PROVIDED BY STATE GOVERNMENT.



CAPSS RECOMMENDATION

The Governor and General Assembly should:

- 1) Adopt a revised ECS formula with a new full funding level that more significantly closes the expenditure gap between rich and poor towns without reducing the current ECS grant of any town; and annually increase “the foundation” level of the ECS formula.
- 2) Provide sufficient funds for 2025-26 so that all towns receive in their Excess Cost Grant the full amount calculated, and paid earlier in the school year.

3 Improve Pre-School Programs

CAPSS has supported the growth and integration of programs for three- and four-year-olds for over 60 years, since the beginnings of Head Start in 1965. Moreover, CAPSS agrees with the long-range plan and recommendations of the CT Commissioner of Early Childhood and the Governor's Blue Ribbon Panel, and supports the equitable compensation of early childhood workers as a number one priority. However, this will necessitate a major infusion of State funds. The state funding of pre-school began in 1997 as one response to Sheff vs. O'Neill, and funding grew for approximately 10 years. Unfortunately, but for federal funds, the State financial commitment to three- and four-year-olds has been relatively frozen for the last 20 years.



CAPSS believes in the continued use of many providers: private and public, Head Start, school systems, etc., but with greater clarity around the role of local leaders, the capacity of local district leadership and greater use of the resources of school districts. In most communities, the "coordinating" role for serving three- and four-year-olds has been the School Readiness Council.

One new option is for the local school district to accept a broader role. This is important to achieve a clearly defined integration of preschool with the K-12 system. In order to reach each child, this "coordination infrastructure," with multiple providers, should be encouraged and supported. The State could provide new (small) incentive funds to encourage



school districts, who so choose, to take on this broader role as directed by the readiness council and accepted by the Superintendent of Schools. The district could engage in: communications with families, data gathering, evaluation, professional development, and student assessments to enhance the quality of preschool and provide seamless integration from preschool to grade 12.

The content of the curricular programs for three- and four-year-olds should be clearly defined by the State in both the outcomes and the experiences for children. CAPSS also believes strongly in serving the whole child and the whole family, and advocates for wraparound programs and year-round approaches that often include Family Resource Centers, School Based Health Clinics and before and after school childcare services. Lastly, the recent statewide emphasis on early reading success makes coherent communication with all providers on the “science of reading” absolutely essential.

While Connecticut has been a leader, nationally, in serving an increasing percentage of three- and four-year-olds, it is imperative that the preschool experience be a quality one for every child in Connecticut.

State policy and leadership should focus its resources on the communities and families with the greatest need for preschool programs.

CONNECTICUT’S EXPERIENCE AND SIGNIFICANT NATIONAL RESEARCH HAVE ESTABLISHED A DIRECT AND CAUSAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A QUALITY PRE-SCHOOL EXPERIENCE AND LATER STUDENT SUCCESS THROUGHOUT SCHOOL, FURTHER EDUCATION AND LIFE.



CAPSS RECOMMENDATION

The Governor and General Assembly should:

Begin the sustainable, annual and incremental implementation of the Blue Ribbon Panel’s Early Childhood Plan, and add incentive funds for school districts willing and able to take on a community-defined broader role to enhance the quality of programs and build a better bridge to kindergarten.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Connecticut stands at a critical juncture in public education. The challenges ahead demand bold action, thoughtful policy reform and sustained financial commitment to ensure every student has the opportunity to thrive. These priorities are not just about improving educational outcomes; they are also about creating a more equitable, supportive and sustainable system that prepares all students for the future. Thus, CAPSS is recommending:

- Sustainably and annually increasing state funding for public schools,
- Supporting an appropriately compensated teaching profession with working conditions that re-ignite the joy of teaching,
- Serving better all three- and four-year olds through higher quality and more stable pre-school programs,
- Strongly supporting the powerful recommendations of Young People First in the Dalio Foundation's and CCM's report, particularly improvement in ECS funding, more community schools, and greater coordination among youth services' agencies, and



- Ensuring leadership, at every level, is committed to knowing every student, setting clear and high expectations, assuring accountability for improving achievement, and working passionately to ensure equity for every child.

THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW.

By investing in our educators, ensuring equitable funding for all districts and supporting early childhood education, Connecticut can build on its legacy of excellence and lead the nation in providing a high-quality education for every child. CAPSS is ever mindful that the decisions we make in the coming years will shape the future of our State, and it is deeply committed to ensuring that the future is one in which every student can succeed, every educator is valued, and every community can flourish. Let us work together to make this vision a reality, because the success of our public schools will, ultimately, determine the future success of Connecticut itself.



CAPSS 2025 LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS

In the context of the longer-range CAPSS Priorities previously articulated, CAPSS believes that the following specific legislative proposals should be considered in the 2025 session of the General Assembly.

1 Elevate the Education Profession

To elevate education as a profession, there is a need to attract and retain educators, diversify the educator pool, improve the quality of educators' professional experiences, improve educator autonomy, and eliminate mandates that impact educator morale.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish a Blue Ribbon Commission to enhance and elevate the profession through a comprehensive two-year study of compensation, locally focused high-quality professional development, educator diversification, recruitment and retention efforts, and educator preparation programs.
- Create livable and competitive pay for educators, provided by the State, to ensure a widely diverse and highly-skilled workforce.
- Develop a committee that includes the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), the Department of Labor (DOL), the Teachers Retirement Board (TRB), educator preparation programs, educators, and other key partners to create a long-term workforce plan to address educator shortages and retirement trends.
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- Allocate \$3.5 million to continue professional learning for districts' leadership teams in the Science of Reading.
- Restore autonomy to educators by reducing legislative decisions and mandates that deprofessionalize the profession while preserving the autonomy of the CSDE.



2 Funding and Finance

RECOMMENDATIONS

Under the current funding model for the States' ECS Grant, 89 districts will receive increased support, while 70 districts will see reductions. Some districts are facing significant cuts to their state aid, affecting financially struggling communities the most.

- Revise the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula to ensure equitable funding distribution and address the growing needs of districts.
- Hold harmless all districts for the 25-26 school year while the formula is reworked so that all districts remain whole.
- Increase the foundation from \$11,525, established in 2013 (10-162f), to reflect the impact of inflation on services provided to students and the education workforce.
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- Incentivize the creation and maintenance of high-quality locally and regionally created educational programs for students.
- Monitor and review the impact of the Magnet School Tuition cap on district budgets and student access.



3

Supporting Early Childhood Education

Significant research has established a direct and causal relationship between a quality preschool experience and later successful student achievement through school and higher education. CAPSS supports financial assistance for universal preschool for all three- and four-year-olds in Connecticut, focusing initially on the communities and families with the greatest need for preschool programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consolidate efforts and increase funding for pre-kindergarten programs for all three- and four-year-olds whose parents are seeking access to high-quality early education programs across the state.
- Eliminate the kindergarten parent waiver so that all children have equitable access to kindergarten education across the state.
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- Provide grants to Boards of Education to establish and implement partnerships to expand access to early childhood education by fostering partnerships with childcare providers and other districts by establishing pathways among the CSDE, Boards of Education, Office of Early Childhood, and the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to more effectively support the needs of young children and their families.





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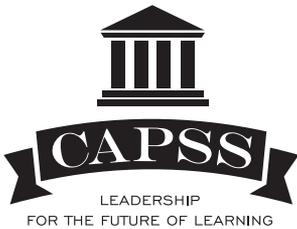
Alison Villanueva, Watertown

Past President

Matthew Conway, Jr., Derby

Immediate Past President

Christine Carver, Bethel



FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT

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WWW.CAPSS.ORG

November 2024



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

THE ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY

February 14, 2025

Dear Colleague:

Discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin is illegal and morally reprehensible. Accordingly, I write to clarify and reaffirm the nondiscrimination obligations of schools and other entities that receive federal financial assistance from the United States Department of Education (Department).¹ This letter explains and reiterates existing legal requirements under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964,² the Equal Protection Clause of the United States Constitution, and other relevant authorities.³

In recent years, American educational institutions have discriminated against students on the basis of race, including white and Asian students, many of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds and low-income families. These institutions' embrace of pervasive and repugnant race-based preferences and other forms of racial discrimination have emanated throughout every facet of academia. For example, colleges, universities, and K-12 schools have routinely used race as a factor in admissions, financial aid, hiring, training, and other institutional programming. In a shameful echo of a darker period in this country's history, many American schools and universities even encourage segregation by race at graduation ceremonies and in dormitories and other facilities.

¹ Throughout this letter, "school" is used generally to refer to preschool, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary educational institutions that receive federal financial assistance from the Department.

² Title VI provides that: "No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." 42 U.S.C. § 2000d, *et seq.*; 34 C.F.R. § 100, *et seq.*

³ This document provides significant guidance under the Office of Management and Budget's Final Bulletin for Agency Good Guidance Practices, 72 Fed. Reg. 3432 (Jan. 25, 2007). This guidance does not have the force and effect of law and does not bind the public or create new legal standards. This document is designed to provide clarity to the public regarding existing legal requirements under Title VI, the Equal Protection Clause, and other federal civil rights and constitutional law principles. If you are interested in commenting on this guidance, please email your comment to OCR@ed.gov or write to the following address: Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20202. For further information about the Department's guidance processes, please visit the Department's webpage [here](#).

Educational institutions have toxically indoctrinated students with the false premise that the United States is built upon “systemic and structural racism” and advanced discriminatory policies and practices. Proponents of these discriminatory practices have attempted to further justify them—particularly during the last four years—under the banner of “diversity, equity, and inclusion” (“DEI”), smuggling racial stereotypes and explicit race-consciousness into everyday training, programming, and discipline.

But under any banner, discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin is, has been, and will continue to be illegal.

The Supreme Court’s 2023 decision in *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard*⁴ (*SFFA*), which clarified that the use of racial preferences in college admissions is unlawful, sets forth a framework for evaluating the use of race by state actors and entities covered by Title VI. The Court explained that “[c]lassifying and assigning students based on their race” is lawful only if it satisfies “strict scrutiny,” which means that any use of race must be narrowly tailored—that is, “necessary”—to achieve a compelling interest.⁵ To date, the Supreme Court has recognized only two interests as compelling in the context of race-based action: (1) “remediating specific, identified instances of past discrimination that violated the Constitution or a statute”; and (2) “avoiding imminent and serious risks to human safety in prisons, such as a race riot.”⁶ Nebulous concepts like racial balancing and diversity are not compelling interests. As the Court explained in *SFFA*, “an individual’s race may never be used against him” and “may not operate as a stereotype” in governmental decision-making.⁷

Although *SFFA* addressed admissions decisions, the Supreme Court’s holding applies more broadly. At its core, the test is simple: If an educational institution treats a person of one race differently than it treats another person because of that person’s race, the educational institution violates the law. Federal law thus prohibits covered entities from using race in decisions pertaining to admissions, hiring, promotion, compensation, financial aid, scholarships, prizes, administrative support, discipline, housing, graduation ceremonies, and all other aspects of student, academic, and campus life. Put simply, educational institutions may neither separate or segregate students based on race, nor distribute benefits or burdens based on race.

Although some programs may appear neutral on their face, a closer look reveals that they are, in fact, motivated by racial considerations.⁸ And race-based decision-making, no matter the form, remains impermissible. For example, a school may not use students’ personal essays, writing samples, participation in extracurriculars, or other cues as a

⁴ *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President & Fellows of Harvard Coll.*, 600 U.S. 181 (2023).

⁵ *Id.* at 207.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Id.* at 218.

⁸ *Village of Arlington Heights v. Metro. Hous. Dev. Corp.*, 429 U.S. 252, 265 (1977).

means of determining or predicting a student's race and favoring or disfavoring such students.⁹

Relying on non-racial information as a proxy for race, and making decisions based on that information, violates the law. That is true whether the proxies are used to grant preferences on an individual basis or a systematic one. It would, for instance, be unlawful for an educational institution to eliminate standardized testing to achieve a desired racial balance or to increase racial diversity.

Other programs discriminate in less direct, but equally insidious, ways. DEI programs, for example, frequently preference certain racial groups and teach students that certain racial groups bear unique moral burdens that others do not. Such programs stigmatize students who belong to particular racial groups based on crude racial stereotypes. Consequently, they deny students the ability to participate fully in the life of a school.¹⁰

The Department will no longer tolerate the overt and covert racial discrimination that has become widespread in this Nation's educational institutions. The law is clear: treating students differently on the basis of race to achieve nebulous goals such as diversity, racial balancing, social justice, or equity is illegal under controlling Supreme Court precedent.

All students are entitled to a school environment free from discrimination. The Department is committed to ensuring those principles are a reality.

This letter provides notice of the Department's existing interpretation of federal law. Additional legal guidance will follow in due course. The Department will vigorously enforce the law on equal terms as to all preschool, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary educational institutions, as well as state educational agencies, that receive financial assistance.

The Department intends to take appropriate measures to assess compliance with the applicable statutes and regulations based on the understanding embodied in this letter beginning no later than 14 days from today's date, including antidiscrimination requirements that are a condition of receiving federal funding.

All educational institutions are advised to: (1) ensure that their policies and actions comply with existing civil rights law; (2) cease all efforts to circumvent prohibitions on the use of race by relying on proxies or other indirect means to accomplish such ends; and (3) cease all reliance on third-party contractors, clearinghouses, or aggregators that are being used by institutions in an effort to circumvent prohibited uses of race.

⁹ *Students for Fair Admissions*, 600 U.S. at 230 (“[U]niversities may not simply establish through application essays or other means the regime we hold unlawful today.”).

Institutions that fail to comply with federal civil rights law may, consistent with applicable law, face potential loss of federal funding.

Anyone who believes that a covered entity has unlawfully discriminated may file a complaint with OCR. Information about filing a complaint with OCR, including a link to the online complaint form, is available [here](#).

Thank you in advance for your commitment to providing our Nation's students with an educational environment that is free of race, color, or national origin discrimination.

Sincerely,

/s/

Craig Trainor
Acting Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
United States Department of Education