

# Board of Education Regular Meeting

Thursday, May 15, 2025 7:00 PM

BOE Meeting Access: BOE (5/15/25 at 7 p.m.) Web:

<https://zoom.us/j/94669241321> Dial In: (929) 205-6099 Meeting ID: 946 6924 1321 , 3 Brush Hill Road, New Fairfield, CT 06812

## I. CALL TO ORDER

## II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

## III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

### III.A. May 1, Regular

## IV. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

- V. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - *The Board welcomes public participation. Pursuant to our Board Policy, public participation is limited to no more than three (3) minutes per speaker and a total of no more than thirty (30) minutes total for the entire meeting. Individuals who wish to speak longer are encouraged to attend any and all related subcommittee meetings where most of the board's groundwork is done. We value your input, but due to these time limitations, we ask you to be concise and to observe the rules of common courtesy. [9320(a) of Board Bylaws]***

## VI. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

### VI.A. Chairman's Report

### VI.B. Superintendent's Report

### VI.C. Student Representatives' Report

### VI.D. Committee Reports

#### VI.D.1. Business Operations/Resource Management (*Greg Flanagan*)

### VI.E. Liaison Reports

#### VI.E.1. Parks and Recreation Committee (*K. LaTourette, G. Flanagan*)

## VII. INFORMATION/ACTION ITEM

### VII.A. Bus Lot Update

## VIII. INFORMATION ITEMS

### VIII.A. New Fairfield High School/Consolidated School Building Project Update

### VIII.B. Board of Education Policy (*Second Reading*)

VIII.B.1. Policy 6172 - Alternative Education Programs

VIII.C. District Goal Progress Report

**IX. ACTION ITEMS**

IX.A. Personnel Report

IX.B. Board of Education Policy

IX.B.1. Policy 5131.911 - Connecticut School Climate Policy

IX.C. Healthy Food Certification

IX.D. Non-Union Salaries and Benefits and Contracts (*To be voted on after Executive Session.*)

X. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** - *The Board welcomes public participation. Pursuant to our Board Policy, public participation is limited to no more than three (3) minutes per speaker and a total of no more than thirty (30) minutes total for the entire meeting. Individuals who wish to speak longer are encouraged to attend any and all related subcommittee meetings where most of the board's groundwork is done. We value your input, but due to these time limitations, we ask you to be concise and to observe the rules of common courtesy. [9320(a) of Board Bylaws]*

**XI. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

**XII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

**XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING NON-UNION CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS**

**XIV. ADJOURNMENT**

**NEW FAIRFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION  
NEW FAIRFIELD, CT**

The New Fairfield Board of Education held a regular meeting on Thursday, May 1, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. in the New Fairfield Community Room, 33 Route 37, New Fairfield, CT.

**MINUTES – May 1, 2025**

**PRESENT:** Dominic Cipollone (Chairman), Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Greg Flanagan (arrived 7:12 pm), Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, and Ed Sbordone

**ABSENT:** None

**ALSO PRESENT:** Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kenneth Craw, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Kristine Woleck, High School Assistant Principal Michael Chapleau, Middle School Principal Karen Gruetzner, Elementary School Principal Allyson Story, Director of Pupil Personnel Services Monika Krepsztul, Director of Business and Operations Carrie DePuy, and Middle School Teacher Rachel Wilson

**I. CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Dominic Cipollone called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. April 3, 2025 - Regular meeting - Approved by consensus.

**IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**MOTION:** Dominic Cipollone made a motion to approve the agenda for tonight’s meeting with the addition of Information Item D “Policy 6172 - Alternative Education Programs.” Kimberly LaTourette seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

**V. RECOGNITION ~ CABE STUDENT LEADERSHIP AWARDS**

Middle School Science Teacher Rachel Wilson presented the CABE Leadership awards to students Elizabeth Cook and Colin Hood.

High School Assistant Principal Michael Chapleau presented CABE Leadership awards to students Madison Cipollone & Hudson Schaefer.

**VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Pat Toth asked for an update on the policy which decides the process for how to name fields after certain individuals.

**VII. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS**

A. Chairman’s Report - Dominic Cipollone spoke of the following:

- Noted that the fiscal year 2025-2026 passed at the first referendum and thanked everyone that voted.
- He thanked the principals and administrators for implementing the new cell phone policy in the schools.

- Recommended the book “The Anxious Generation” by Jonathan Haidt which speaks of four “harms” that are causing anxiety in today’s youth. These include social media, sleep deprivation, attention fragmentation and addiction.
- Spoke of a “Cookie Swap” hosted by the High School PTO between New Fairfield High School Culinary Arts students and the New Fairfield Senior Center.

#### B. Superintendent’s Report - Dr. Kenneth Crow

- Thanked everyone in the community who supported the budget at referendum.
- Noted that today was “Decision Day” for college acceptances. He congratulated all the Seniors and spoke of the many accomplishments throughout the year.

#### C. Student Representatives’ Reports

Senior Representative Emilia Sedlak spoke of the following:

- A raffle is currently being held as a fundraiser for the Class of 2027. The drawing will be held on May 9<sup>th</sup> and the prizes are gift cards to local establishments.
- Tomorrow is the last day to donate to the “Food for All” initiatives.
- Senior Prom will be held on May 17<sup>th</sup>.
- SEE Projects will begin on May 9<sup>th</sup>.

Junior Representative Ella Skogstrom spoke of the following:

- The PTO has organized a Staff Appreciation Luncheon for May 14<sup>th</sup>.
- The Fine Arts Boosters are holding a clothing drive on Saturday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- AP exams begin next week.

#### D. Committee Reports

1. Business Operations/Resource Management - Greg Flanagan noted that this subcommittee met on April 22<sup>nd</sup> and discussed the budgeted vs. actual numbers. A few line items are running on a deficit but are expected to be on budget by the end of the year. A new Finance Director was hired and will begin May 1<sup>st</sup>.

2. Curriculum – Tim Blair noted that this subcommittee met on April 28<sup>th</sup> and had two presentations. The first was on Mathematics progression and the second was on Summer Reading Programs at each school. There was a suggestion of having the BOE members share reading suggestions.

3. Policy – Samantha Mannion noted that the subcommittee met on April 30<sup>th</sup>. They discussed the policy for naming fields and memorials and the cell phone/electronic device policy. Policy 6172 (Alternative Education Program) was discussed and moved to the full board for a first reading for tonight’s meeting.

#### E. Liaison Reports

1. Board of Finance - Ed Sbordone spoke of the following meetings of the BOF:

April 22<sup>nd</sup> - Medical Subcommittee - The claims for March were as expected and didn’t change the projection. The committee reviewed prescription drug and medical claims. They discussed the importance of building and maintaining a reserve in the medical fund and discussed the possibility of adopting a policy that will require a minimum amount in the reserve fund. The subcommittee will recommend to the full Board of Finance an Individual Stop Loss of \$200,000 and the premiums associated with that. The next meeting of the Medical subcommittee will be held on Tuesday, May 20<sup>th</sup> at 3:30 p.m. in the Annex.

April 23<sup>rd</sup> - Regular Meeting - The BOF reviewed ongoing updates. The audit has been finalized but not adopted yet. An audit subcommittee has been set to review the audit before bringing it to the full BOF. Town Treasurer Terry Friedman spoke of the need to clarify the Investment Policy to specify that the Investment Policy does not apply to Pension Plan investments, Other Post Employment benefits (OPEB) and Length of Service Award (LOSAP).

April 28<sup>th</sup> - Special Meeting - The BOF set the Mil Rate at 26.33 for Real Estate, Personal Property and Motor Vehicles.

The next regular meeting of the BOF will be on Wednesday, May 28<sup>th</sup>.

2. Parks and Recreation - Kimberly LaTourette noted that the Parks and Rec Commission met on April 21<sup>st</sup>.

- Hat City will clean the Beach House twice a week for a charge of \$65 each time.
- The cost of demolition for the snack shop is approximately \$5,500 plus extra to add a slab for a possible gazebo in the future. There was a brief discussion of asking Public Works to install this slab and the approximate measurements.
- All of the boat slips have been filled and paid for the 2025 season. There is still one jet ski slip available.
- Summer camp will run from June 16<sup>th</sup> to July 31<sup>st</sup> with 180 campers. There will be one field trip per week and beach days on Fridays.
- The “Sip and Stroll” will be held on Saturday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>. The price per glass is \$30 if purchased ahead of time and \$35 at the day of the event. There was a discussion of ways to make sure that everyone has purchased a glass. Linda Lull noted that some of the businesses had concerns with patrons coming in multiple times.
- The Candlewood Lake Authority Clean Up Day will be held on Saturday, May 17<sup>th</sup>. Participants will meet at New Fairfield Beach.
- Mike Mallon approached the commission about the possibility of donating a bench in memory of his son, Michael Mallon. He showed pictures of the sample bench and there was a discussion of the exact location.
- New Fairfield Day is scheduled for Saturday, September 27<sup>th</sup>. There was a discussion about this event and whether it is worth continuing. There are approximately 1500 attendees each year and the cost to Parks and Rec is between \$6,000 and \$10,000. This will be discussed further at a future meeting.
- Saturday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> - Sip and Stroll; Memorial Field concerts - June 26<sup>th</sup>, July 10<sup>th</sup>, July 24<sup>th</sup> and August 7<sup>th</sup>; Friday, July 11<sup>th</sup> - Boat Parade; Saturday, September 27<sup>th</sup> - New Fairfield Day; Friday, October 24<sup>th</sup> - Trick or Treat; Sunday, November 23<sup>rd</sup> - Turkey Run; Saturday, November 29<sup>th</sup> - Santa’s Workshop.

## **VIII. INFORMATION ITEMS**

### **A. Strategic Plan Update**

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Kristine Woleck gave a presentation regarding the Strategic Plan. She spoke of the Vision of a Learner and compared the plan to Lego building. She spoke of the Curriculum Leadership Committee, Instructional Practices and the Vision of a Learner. She spoke of how data is used to affect curriculum and professional development. Unified Programs were also discussed.

Dr. Woleck spoke of goals for 2025-2026 and thanked all the staff members who have worked on this.

Dr. Craw noted that a progress report of goals will be discussed at the next meeting.

### **B. New Fairfield High School /Consolidated School Building Project Update**

Director of Business and Operations Carrie DePuy noted the following:

- Topsoil is being installed at the old Consolidated School site. Paving will be done soon.
- The playground at the Elementary School will be fixed over the summer.
- Demolition of the turf and track will begin on June 16<sup>th</sup> and is expected to be done by August 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Work will start soon for the new PPS office area.

### **C. Board of Education Policy (Second Reading)**

1. Policy 5131.911 - Connecticut School Climate Policy

D. Board of Education Policy (First Reading)  
1. Policy 6172 - Alternate Education Programs

**IX. ACTION ITEMS**

A. Personnel Report

**MOTION:** Kathy Baker made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of the Personnel Report for April 28, 2025, as recommended by the administration. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

**X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - None**

**XI. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

Ed Sbordone asked for an update on the Capital and Nonrecurring projections at a future meeting. Samantha Mannion asked for an update on the residency policy and results with the enforcement over the last year.

**XII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

Sue Huwer spoke of concerns with electronic devices and encouraged everyone to read “The Anxious Generation.”

Kimberly LaTourette encouraged parents to read “The Anxious Generation.”

**XIII. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** Dominic Cipollone made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:12 p.m. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

Respectfully submitted,  
Suzanne Kloos

*A new policy to consider. Boards of education that have approved an alternative program are mandated to have a policy on this topic.*

## **Instruction**

### **Alternative Education Programs**

The purpose of this policy is to recognize the need for alternative education programs for some District students.

The Board of Education (Board) is dedicated to providing educational options for all students within available financial constraints. It is recognized that there will be students in the District whose needs and interests are best served by participation in an alternative education program. The Board believes alternative education is a student-focused perspective based on respect for students, the belief that all students can learn given the right environment, and participation in an alternative setting is an informed choice made by students and their families.

**“Alternative education”** means a school or program maintained and operated by the Board that is offered to students in a nontraditional educational setting and addresses the social, emotional, behavioral and academic needs of such students. Alternative education does not, for purposes of this policy, and Connecticut State Board of Education (CSDE) guidelines, include private schools, homeschooling, *“School Choice,”* adult education, approved private special education programs, gifted and talented programs, and schools or programs within the Connecticut Technical High School System.

The Board shall provide alternative education to students in accordance and compliance with the *“Guidelines for Alternative Education Settings,”* established by the State Board of Education. Such guidelines shall include, but not be limited to, a description of the purpose and expectation of alternative education, criteria for student eligibility, and criteria for how and when a student may enter or exit alternative education. The philosophy of alternative education utilizes a whole-student approach. This approach promotes individualized programming to address students' personal, emotional, social, intellectual, work skills, safety and security needs and academic achievement. The Board views enrollment in an alternative setting not as punishment but as a learning opportunity.

In providing alternative education to students, the Board may use space in an existing school, establish a new school, or establish a program affiliated with one or more schools or districts. Programs must be affiliated with at least one district with a code previously assigned by CSDE. Such programs must comply with state laws pertaining to the number and length of school days in an academic year and shall be subject to all other federal and state laws governing public schools.

The Board may form a cooperative arrangement with other boards of education to provide alternative education pursuant to C.G.S. 10-158a.

## **Instruction**

### **Alternative Education Programs (continued)**

The Board, as required, will post information about any alternative education offered on its website, including purpose, location, contact information, staff directory, and enrollment criteria. Clear and objective admission criteria, consistent with stated program guidelines, must be evident. Also, to be a part of the alternative education program, clear and explicit criteria and procedural exit criteria frameworks must be used to address a student's return to the traditional school setting. There shall be an annual evaluation of alternative education programs.

Determination of enrollment shall be made by the student support team, which includes, but is not limited to, parent or family representative, student (if in secondary school), appropriate representative of the alternative environment, student's teachers, school administrator and if the student is identified as disabled, a special education teacher or PPT/504 Team representative. In addition, the Board recognizes its responsibility to give all children in the District who receive alternative education as nearly equal advantages as may be practicable compared to other children in the District. In addition, the Board shall annually submit to the Commissioner of Education a strategic school profile report for each alternative school or program under its jurisdiction.

All students in an alternative education program shall receive instruction based on a curriculum aligned to the Connecticut Core State Standards, unless modified in particular curricular areas as indicated by the goals and objectives of an IEP.

Alternative education programs implemented by the District are meant to maintain flexible learning options regarding environment, structure, and pedagogy. Such programs include but are not limited to, a separate school, tutorial instruction, small group instruction, large group instruction, counseling and guidance, computer-assisted instruction, cooperative work experience, supervised community service activities, and supervised independent study. Before considering an alternative placement, a review of the student's academic, health, and behavioral records, including any PPT and Section 504 records, Student Success Plans, and other history of interventions, must occur.

Students may be placed in an alternative education program within available financial resources upon parent request if the District determines that the placement serves the student's educational needs and interests and assists the student in achieving district and state academic content standards. Families shall have a right of appeal if they disagree with the District's placement decisions.

(cf. 6172.11 – Relations with Charter Schools)

(cf. 6172.12 – Magnet Schools)

(cf. 6172.41 – Title I Program)

(cf. 6172.6 – Virtual/Online Courses)

## **Instruction**

### **Alternative Education Programs (continued)**

Legal Reference	Connecticut General Statutes 10-4p(b) Implementation plan to achieve resource equity and equality of opportunity. Assessment. Reports. (as amended by PA 15-133) 10-15 Towns to maintain schools. 10-16 Length of school year. 10-158a Cooperative arrangements among towns. School building projects. Student transportation. 10-220 Duties of boards of education (as amended by PA 15-133) 10-223h(c) Commissioner's network of schools. Turnaround committees. Operations and instructional audit. Turnaround plans. Report. (as amended by PA 15-133) PA 15-133 An Act Concerning Alternative Education Guidelines for Alternative Education Settings, State Department of Education, approved by CT State Board of Education, Oct. 5, 2016.
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**Policy adopted:**

cps 11/15  
rev 4/17  
rev 9/24

**NEW FAIRFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
New Fairfield, Connecticut

**New Fairfield Public Schools  
District Priorities  
2024-2025**

May 15, 2025

Completed	In Process	Early Development	Anticipated / Not Yet Begun
<b>1. Curriculum Goal</b>			
	1.1 Define a cohesive PreK-12 curriculum approach, to include a curriculum design tool and design criteria, NFPS Curriculum Guidebook outline, and electronic curriculum platform.		
	1.2 Implement a comprehensive curriculum design process to include Stage 1 mapping and transfer goals for PreK-12 across all disciplines and PreK-12 Science full curriculum design as a model.		
<b>2. Instruction Goal</b>			
	2.1 Implement data protocol cycles to monitor student learning progress and inform instruction.		
	2.2 Implement instructional practices that foster students' engagement, critical thinking, and inquiry.		
	2.3 Launch AI study group to investigate instructional opportunities with AI to deepen student critical thinking skills.		

	2.4 Map indicators and levels of competency that operationalize the NFPS Vision of the Learner with curriculum connections.	
	2.5 Continue to build staff capacity and provide relevant professional learning for Special Education Teachers, Related Service staff, and Paraeducators in the areas of writing high quality IEPs, structured literacy, and behavior management/strategies	
<b>3. Wellness Goal</b>		
	3.1 Begin articulation of a vertically-aligned PreK-12 continuum to foster students' social-emotional wellness, including the design and implementation of a developmental guidance curriculum in grades 9-12.	
	3.2 Enhance community and family partnerships in support of student wellness, including family education programs and resources to address technology use, challenging behaviors, and mental health.	
<b>4. Attendance</b>		
	4.1 Continue efforts to reduce the student chronic absenteeism rate to 8%.	
	4.2 Partner with collective bargaining units to achieve at least a 95% staff attendance rate.	
<b>5. Resources to Support Learning</b>		
<u>Finance</u>	5.1 Develop and present a FY 26 Operational and Capital Budget request to the community that is transparent, fiscally responsible and ensures continuous improvement.	
	5.2 Manage the FY 25 Operational and Capital Budget to provide resources as planned and to address unanticipated expenses.	
<u>Transportation</u>	5.3 Continue to provide leadership and collaborate with town leaders on the identification of the permanent bus lot location.	
<u>Facilities</u>	5.4 Close out the New Fairfield Elementary and High School building projects and continue to monitor large punch list items such as the elementary playground and lack of propane at the high school.	

	5.5 Identify appropriate classroom space for middle school programs: chorus, orchestra, general music, talented and gifted, and world language expansion). Consider relocation of central office departments in the lower level of the middle school.	
	5.6 Work in partnership with the PBC to complete the underground oil tank removal and replacement by July 2025 deadline.	
	5.7 Upgrade the Middle School Cafeteria and servery without impact to operational budget using our food service fund.	
	5.8 Execute documents and monitor stadium project for summer 2025 completion.	
	5.9 Launch partnership between STRIDES and another district as part of move to a larger space and enhanced program.	
<u>Human Resources</u>	5.10. Assess HR functions across the district and standardize and optimize processes, such as all aspects of recruitment including Frontline Software and OLAS, the hiring process and flow of information, onboarding, best practices with Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS) and benefits management.	
	5.11 Promote multiple channels for HR information and updates to strengthen relationships districtwide via newsletters, email blasts, one on one meetings with HR and visiting buildings.	
	5.12 Foster a positive workplace culture by proactively addressing employee concerns and creating pathways to increase satisfaction and reduce turnover - utilizing data from future climate surveys and exit interviews.	
<u>Technology</u>	5.13 Begin the process of thoughtfully integrating AI tools into the classroom to enhance the delivery of high-quality instruction.	
	5.14 Continue to enhance access to educational support technology for K-12 curriculum initiatives. (SmartBoards, document cameras, projection and sound reinforcement)	
	5.15 Continue to grow into our upgraded facilities to cultivate STEM initiatives to full potential with industry leading hardware and software. (K-5 STEM lab, new HS Robotics, digital media, and art/music labs)	

	5.16 Continue maintaining and bolstering the digital repository of online tools and resources increasing efficiency in delivering high-quality instruction.	
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*A mandated policy.*

## **Students**

### **Connecticut School Climate Policy**

#### **Policy Statement**

All schools must support and promote teaching and learning environments where all students thrive academically and socially, have a strong and meaningful voice, and are prepared for lifelong success.

Implementation of the following set of guiding principles and systemic strategies will promote a positive school climate, which is essential to achieving these goals.

This policy sets forth the framework for an effective and informed school climate improvement process, which includes a continuous cycle of (i) planning and preparation, (ii) evaluation, (iii) action planning, and (iv) implementation, and serves to actualize the Connecticut School Climate Standards, as detailed herein.

The Board recognizes that improving school climate is contextual. Each school needs to consider its history, strengths, needs, and goals. Furthermore, this policy will support and promote the development of restorative action plans that will create and sustain safe and equitable learning environments.

The New Fairfield District Board of Education adopts this policy.

#### **Definitions**

1. **“School climate”** means the quality and character of the school life, with a particular focus on the quality of the relationships within the school community, and which is based on patterns of people's experiences of school life and that reflects the norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, leadership practices and organizational structures within the school community.
2. **“Positive Sustained School Climate”** is the foundation for learning and positive youth development and includes:
  - a. Norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, culturally, racially, intellectually, and physically safe.
  - b. People who treat one another with dignity and are engaged, respected and solve problems restoratively.
  - c. A school community that works collaboratively together to develop, live, and contribute to a shared school vision.
  - d. Adults who model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning; and
  - e. A school community that contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment.

## Students

### Connecticut School Climate Policy

#### Definitions (continued)

3. **“Social and emotional learning”** means the process through which children and adults achieve emotional intelligence through the competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making.
4. **“Emotional intelligence”** means the ability to (A) perceive, recognize, and understand emotions in oneself or others, (B) use emotions to facilitate cognitive activities, including, but not limited to, reasoning, problem solving and interpersonal communication, (C) understand and identify emotions, and (D) manage emotions in oneself and others.
5. **“Bullying”** means unwanted and aggressive behavior among children in grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, that involves a real or perceived power imbalance.
6. **“School environment”** means a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program, whether on or off school grounds, including at a school bus stop or on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by a local or regional board of education, and may include other activities, functions or programs that occur outside of a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program if bullying at or during such other activities, functions or programs negatively impacts the school environment.
7. **“Cyberbullying”** means any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone or other mobile electronic devices or any other electronic communication.
8. **“Teen dating violence”** means any act of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, including stalking, harassing and threatening, that occurs between two students who are currently in or who have recently been in a dating relationship.
9. **“Mobile electronic device”** means any hand-held or other portable electronic equipment capable of providing data communication between two or more individuals, including, but not limited to, a text messaging device, a paging device, a personal digital assistant, a laptop computer, equipment that is capable of playing a video game or a digital video disk or equipment on which digital images are taken or transmitted.
10. **“Electronic communication”** means any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photoelectronic or photo-optical system.

## **Students**

### **Connecticut School Climate Policy**

#### **Definitions (continued)**

11. **“School climate improvement plan”** means a building-specific plan developed by the school climate committee, in collaboration with the school climate specialist, using school climate survey data and any other relevant information, through a process that engages all members of the school community and involves such members in a series of overlapping systemic improvements, school-wide instructional practices and relational practices that prevent, identify and respond to challenging behavior, including, but not limited to alleged bullying and harassment in the school environment.
12. **“Restorative practices”** means evidence and research-based system-level practices that focus on (A) building high-quality, constructive relationships among the school community, (B) holding each student accountable for any challenging behavior, and (C) ensuring each such student has a role in repairing relationships and reintegrating into the school community.
13. **“School climate survey”** means a research-based, validated and developmentally appropriate survey administered to students, school employees and families of students, in the predominant languages of the members of the school community, that measures and identifies school climate needs and tracks progress through a school climate improvement plan.
14. **“Connecticut school climate policy”** means the school climate policy developed, updated and approved by an association in the state that represents boards of education and adopted by the Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative, established pursuant to section 10-222q of the general statutes, as amended by this act, that provides a framework for an effective and democratically informed school climate improvement process that serves to implement Connecticut school climate standards, and includes a continuous cycle of (A) planning and preparation, (B) evaluation, (C) action planning, and (D) implementation.
15. **“School employee”** means (A) a teacher, substitute teacher, administrator, school superintendent, school counselor, school psychologist, social worker, school nurse, physician, paraeducator or coach employed by a local or regional board of education, or (B) any other individual who, in the performance of his or her duties, has regular contact with students and who provides services to or on behalf of students enrolled in a public school, pursuant to a contract with a local or regional board of education.
16. **“School community”** means any individuals, groups, businesses, public institutions and nonprofit organizations that are invested in the welfare and vitality of a public school system and the community in which it is located, including, but not limited to, students and their families, members of the local or regional board of education, volunteers at a school and school employees.

## **Students**

### **Connecticut School Climate Policy**

#### **Definitions (continued)**

17. **“Challenging behavior”** means behavior that negatively impacts school climate or interferes, or is at risk of interfering, with the learning or safety of a student or the safety of a school employee.
18. **“Evidence Based Practices”** in education refers to instructional and school-wide improvement practices that systematic empirical research has provided evidence of statistically significant effectiveness.
19. **“Effective School Climate Improvement”** is a restorative process that engages all stakeholders in the following six essential practices:
  - A. Promoting decision-making that is collaborative and actively involves all stakeholders (e.g., school personnel, students, families, community members) with varied and meaningful roles and perspectives where all voices are heard;
  - B. Utilizing psychometrically sound quantitative (e.g., school climate survey, discipline data) and qualitative (e.g., interviews, focus groups) data to drive action planning, preventive and intervention practices and implementation strategies that continuously improve all dimensions of school climate, including regularly collecting data to evaluate progress and inform the improvement process;
  - C. Tailoring improvement goals to the unique needs of the students, educators, and broader school community. These goals shall be integrated into overall school improvement efforts thereby leveraging school strengths to address evidence-based areas of need, while sustaining the improvement process over time;
  - D. Fostering adult learning in teams and/or professional learning communities to build capacity building among school personnel and develop common staff skills to educate the whole child;
  - E. Basing curriculum, instruction, student supports, and interventions on scientific research and grounding in cognitive, social-emotional, and psychological theories of youth development. Interventions include strength-based programs and practices that together represent a comprehensive continuum of approaches to promote healthy student development and positive learning environments as well as address individual student barriers to learning and adult barriers to teaching; and
  - F. Strengthening policies and procedures related to:
    - a. climate and restorative informed teaching and learning environments;
    - b. infrastructure to facilitate data collection, analysis, and effective planning;
    - c. implementation of school climate improvement plans with the goal of becoming restorative;
    - d. evaluation of the school climate improvement process; and
    - e. sustainability of school climate and restorative improvement efforts.

## **Students**

### **Connecticut School Climate Policy (continued)**

#### **School Climate Coordinator Roles and Responsibilities**

For the school year commencing July 1, 2025, and each school year thereafter, the superintendent of schools for each school district, or an administrator appointed by the superintendent, shall serve as the school climate coordinator for the school district.

The school climate coordinator shall be responsible for:

1. providing district-level leadership and support for the implementation of the school climate improvement plan for each school;
2. collaborating with the school climate specialist, for each school to (A) develop a continuum of strategies to prevent, identify and respond to challenging behavior, including, but not limited to, alleged bullying and harassment in the school environment, and (B) communicate such strategies to the school community, including, but not limited to, through publication in the district student handbook;
3. collecting and maintaining data regarding school climate improvement, including, but not limited to, school discipline records, school climate assessments, attendance rates, social and emotional learning assessments, academic growth data, types and numbers of alleged and verified bullying complaints submitted by members of the school community, types and numbers of challenging behaviors addressed using the restorative practices response policy, and data concerning the implementation and outcome of restorative practices; and
4. meeting with the school climate specialist for each school at least twice during the school year to (A) identify strategies to improve school climate, including, but not limited to, by responding to challenging behavior and implementing evidence and research-based interventions, such as restorative practices, (B) propose recommendations for revisions to the school climate improvement plan, and (C) assist with the completion of the school climate survey.

#### **School Climate Specialist**

For the school year commencing July 1, 2025, and each school year thereafter, the principal of each school, or a school employee who holds professional certification pursuant to section 10-145 of the general statutes, is trained in school climate improvement or restorative practices and is designated as the school climate specialist by the school principal, shall serve as the school climate specialist for the school.

The school climate specialist shall be responsible for:

1. leading in the prevention, identification, and response to challenging behavior, including, but not limited to, reports of alleged bullying and harassment;

## **Students**

### **Connecticut School Climate Policy**

#### **School Climate Specialist** (continued)

2. implementing evidence and research-based interventions, including, but not limited to, restorative practices;
3. scheduling meetings for and leading the school climate committee; and
4. leading the implementation of the school climate improvement plan.

#### **School Climate Committee**

For the school year commencing July 1, 2025, and each school year thereafter, each school climate specialist shall appoint members to the school climate committee who are diverse, including members who are racially, culturally, and linguistically representative of various roles in the school community.

The school climate committee shall consist of:

1. the school climate specialist;
2. a teacher selected by the exclusive bargaining representative for certified employees chosen pursuant to section 10-153b of the general statutes;
3. a demographically representative group of students enrolled at the school, as developmentally appropriate;
4. families of students enrolled at the school; and
5. at least two members of the school community, as determined by the school climate specialist.

Membership of the school climate committee shall be annually reviewed and approved by the school climate specialist, in coordination with the school climate coordinator.

The school climate committee shall be responsible for:

1. assisting in the development, annual scheduling, and administration of the school climate survey, and reviewing of the school climate survey data.
2. using the school climate survey data to identify strengths and challenges to improve school climate, and to create or propose revisions to the school climate improvement plan.

## **Connecticut School Climate Policy**

### **School Climate Committee (continued)**

3. assisting in the implementation of the school climate improvement plan and recommending any improvements or revisions to the plan.
4. advising on strategies to improve school climate and implementing evidence and research-based interventions, including, but not limited to, restorative practices, in the school community.
5. annually providing notice of the uniform challenging behavior and/or bullying complaint form, or similar complaint form used by the school, to the school community.

### **School Climate Survey**

For the school year commencing July 1, 2025, and biennially thereafter, the school climate committee, for each school, shall administer a school climate survey to students, school employees and families of students, provided the parent or guardian of each student shall receive prior written notice of the content and administration of such school climate survey and shall have a reasonable opportunity to opt such student out of such school climate survey.

### **School Climate Improvement Plan**

For the school year commencing July 1, 2025, and each school year thereafter, the school climate specialist, for each school, in collaboration with the school climate coordinator, shall develop, and update as necessary, a school climate improvement plan. Such plan shall be based on the results of the school climate survey, any recommendations from the school climate committee, including the protocols, supports, and any other data the school climate specialist and school climate coordinator deem relevant. Such plan shall be submitted to the school climate coordinator for review and approval on or before December thirty-first of each school year. Upon approval of such plan, a written or electronic copy of such plan shall be made available to members of the school community and such plan shall be used in the prevention of, identification of and response to all challenging behavior.

Additionally, districts may place the school climate improvement plans into their district and school improvement plans.

### **Training**

For the school year commencing July 1, 2024, and each school year thereafter, each local and regional Board of Education shall provide resources and training to school employees regarding:

1. social and emotional learning;
2. school climate and culture and evidence and research-based interventions; and
3. restorative practices.

## **Students**

### **Connecticut School Climate Policy**

#### **Training** (continued)

Such resources and training may be made available at each school under the jurisdiction of such board and include technical assistance in the implementation of a school climate improvement plan. Any school employee may participate in any such training offered by the board under this section. The school climate coordinator, shall select, and approve, the individuals or organizations that will provide such training.

#### **Funding**

The school district shall in its discretion allocate sufficient funding to satisfy the requirements of this policy for all schools in the district. Such funding shall be distributed accordingly, with Superintendent approval, for assessments and professional development, as well as for school community outreach, training, and technical assistance.

#### **Accountability**

The Board shall adopt and allocate adequate resources to support the Connecticut School Climate Policy and adhere to state regulations set forth in Public Act 23-167.

### **Connecticut School Climate Standards**

1. The school district community<sup>1</sup> has a shared vision and plan for promoting and sustaining a positive school climate<sup>2</sup> that focuses on prevention, identification, and response to all challenging behavior<sup>3</sup>.
2. The school district community adopts policies that promote:
  - a. a sound school environment that develops and sustains academic, social, emotional, ethical, civic, and intellectual skills; and
  - b. a restorative school environment focused on overcoming barriers to teaching and learning by building and supporting meaningful school-wide relationships, and intentionally re-engaging any disengaged students, educators, and families of students in the school community.

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<sup>1</sup> School Community means any individuals, groups or businesses, public institutions and nonprofit organizations invested in the welfare and vitality of a public school system and the community in which it is located, including, but not limited to, students and their families, members of the local or regional board of education, volunteers at a school and school employees.

<sup>2</sup> School climate means the quality and character of the school life, with a particular focus on the quality of relationships within the school community, and which is based on patterns of people's experiences of school life, and that reflects the norms, goals, values and interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, leadership practices and organizational structures within the school community.

<sup>3</sup> Challenging behavior means behavior that negatively impacts school climate or interferes, or is at risk of interfering, with the learning or safety of a student or the safety of a school employee.

**Connecticut School Climate Policy**

**Connecticut School Climate Standards (continued)**

3. The school community’s practices are identified, prioritized, and supported to:
  - a. promote learning and the positive academic, social, emotional, ethical, and civic development of students;
  - b. enhance engagement in teaching, learning, and school-wide activities;
  - c. address barriers to teaching and learning; and
  - d. develop and sustain a restorative infrastructure that builds capacity, accountability, and sustainability.
4. The school community creates a school environment<sup>4</sup> where *everyone* is safe, welcomed, supported, and included in all school-based activities.
5. The school community creates a restorative system that cultivates a sense of belonging through norms and activities that promote social and civic responsibility, and a dedication to cultural responsiveness, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes  
 10-222d Policy on bullying behavior as amended by PA 08-160, P.A. 11-232, P.A. 14-172 and PA 18-15 and PA 19-166.  
 10-222g Prevention and intervention strategy re bullying and teen dating violence  
 10-222h Analysis of school districts’ efforts re prevention of and response to bullying in schools. School climate assessment instruments  
 10-222i State-wide safe school climate resource network. *[Repealed, Effective 7/1/2025 State-wide safe school climate resource network]*  
 10-222k District safe school climate coordinator. Safe school climate specialist. Safe school climate committee (as amended by PA 21-95, Section 14)  
 10-222p Review of safe school climate plans by Department of Education. Approval or rejection.  
 PA 23-167 An Act Concerning Transparency in Education

Policy approved:	November 17, 2011	NEW FAIRFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Policy revised:	November 21, 2013	New Fairfield, Connecticut
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Policy revised:	December 1, 2016	
Policy revised:	August 13, 2020	
Policy reviewed:	November 4, 2021	
<b>Policy revised:</b>		

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<sup>4</sup> School environment means a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program, whether on or off school grounds, including at a school bus stop or on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by a local or regional board of education, and may include other activities, functions or programs if bullying at or during such other activities, functions, or programs negatively impacts the school environment.

