Bridgeport Board of Education - Regular Meeting
Tuesday, October 14, 2025 6:30 PM Eastern

Bridgeport Regional Aquaculture Science & Technology Education Center
60 St. Stephens Road
Bridgeport, CT 06605

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call
4. Student Representative Reports
5. Public Comment
6. Approval of Board Minutes
   6.a. Regular Meeting - September 22, 2025
7. Chairman's Report
8. Committee Reports/Referrals
9. Superintendent's Report
10. Old Business
11. New Business
    11.a. Approval of the Bridgeport Public Schools Debate League Trip to Washington D.C. to Participate in the Washington D.C. Urban Debate League Dragon Tournament, November 6-9, 2025.
    11.b. Approval of the Theodore Roosevelt School Overnight Field Trip to People's State Forest, Barkhamsted, Connecticut, October 23-24, 2025.
    11.c. Approval of the Correction of the April 28, 2025 Board Minutes "Pursuant to Connecticut General Statues Section 10-215f, Food and Nutrition Services, Bridgeport Public Schools certified that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempt from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2064" to read June 30, 2026.
    11.d. Approval to Suspend By-Law 9310 for the Purpose of Immediate Implementation of Policy P3011 – Internal Control.
    11.e. Approval of the Policy P3011 – Internal Control.
12. Adjourn

FIELD TRIP CHECK LIST

School District Day Trip, Out-of-State, Overnight Trips

(International trips need Board approval)

School: John Winthrop School and Discovery Interdistrict Magnet School
Date of Trip: November 6, 2025-Novemeber 9, 2025
Location of Trip: Washington, DC

To provide notification of an out-of-state or overnight trip, the documentation listed below must be submitted along with this signed checklist to the appropriate Executive Staff at least 30 school days prior to the trip.

To provide notification of a School Day trip the checklist below must be completed. The principal must review the documentation, sign and date this form to approve the field trip at least 10 school days prior to the trip.

Field Trip Policy #6201 must be reviewed prior to planning a field trip and submitting it for district approval.

The following documents must be included in the completed packet:

- ✓ Field Trip Checklist / Alignment to the Curriculum
- ✓ Brochure, itinerary or overview of trip
- ✓ Student Information List with notation of permission slips submitted (**please check received on form**)
- ✓ Chaperone Contact Information (enclosed)
- ✓ Transportation Information - Bus, hotel, airline Form
- Transportation (if non-contracted bus by our district, you will need to present proof of insurance)
- ✓ Safety Plan
- ✓ Nurse has reviewed the medical needs of each participant
- 1 complete copy of packet to the appropriate Executive Staff (i.e. Superintendent/Deputy Superintendent/Chief Academic Officer/Executive Director)

The principal's signature verifies that all required information included on this checklist has been completed and reviewed. All procedures and policies have been adhered to and the principal approved this school trip.

Principal's Signature — Date: 9/17/2025

SAMPLE / Field Trip Permission Form

Date: 9/12/2025

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Your child is going on a field trip. Please read the information at the top of this form, then sign and return the permission slip at the bottom of this form by 9/16/2025.

Field Trip Information:

Date: November 6, 2025-November 9, 2025

Location: Washington, DC

Purpose: Washington, DC Urban Debate League Dragon Invitational

Cost: $0 for student debaters (All costs: train, hotel, metro and food are paid for by BPS Debate League funds)

Cash or check payable to: N/A

Means of Transportation: Amtrak to Washington, DC and Metro in DC

Leave school: N/A Arrive back at school: N/A

Special Instructions: Parent or Guardian drop off and pick up at Bridgeport train station

*Please refer to information sheet for train and hotel specifics.

Save this part of the form for future reference

Cut here ---------- *Cut here*

Sign this part of the form and return it to your child's teacher

_____ Grade/Room _____ has permission to attend a field trip to Washington, DC on Thursday, Nov 6, 2025 to Sunday, Nov 9, 2025 from 2pm (Nov 6th) to 10pm (Nov 9th)

Enclosed please find cash/check in the amount of $0 to cover the cost of the trip.

I give my permission for _____ to receive emergency medical treatment. In an emergency, please contact

Name _____ Phone _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

BRIDGEPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS – FIELD TRIPS

ALIGNMENT TO THE CURRICULUM

School:	John Winthrop School and Discovery Interdistrict Magnet School
Date of Trip:	November 6, 2025- November 9, 2025
Location of Trip:	Washington, DC
Purpose of the Trip:	To participate in the Washington, DC Urban Debate League Dragon Invitational Tournament.
Alignment to Curriculum:	Connecticut Common Core State Standards in Literacy and ELA Reading Writing Speaking & Listening Researching
Student to Teacher/Chaperone ratio:	4:1
Additional Information: I.e. Grant Related	Bridgeport Public School's Debate League grant will fund 100% of the trips/ costs for all student debaters and chaperones.

TRANSPORTATION & LODGING INFORMATION

BUS

(If non-contracted bus by our district, you will need to present proof of insurance).

Bus Company Name: N/A

Bus Company Address: N/A

Telephone: N/A

**Proof of Insurance: (Proof of Insurance must be included in packet.)

** Include information in the packet

Hotel

Hotel Name: The Doubletree by Hilton

Hotel Address: 8777 Georgia Ave. Silver Springs, MD 20910

Telephone Number: 1 (301) 284-0131

Airline

Airline Name: N/A- Amtrak

Airline Flight #: N/A- See attached for details; Amtrak Bridgeport Station 525 Water St , BPT, CT

Telephone 1 (800) 872-7245

SAFETY PLAN

School: John Winthrop School and Discovery Interdistrict Magnet School

Date of Trip: November 6, 2025- November 9, 2025

Location of Trip: Washington, DC

*See attached information sheet for locations: debate and hotel

Description of Plan:

Call 911- nearest hospital will be utilized as needed
Contact building principal
Contact parent to inform and make arrangements as needed

BRIDGEPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS – FIELD TRIPS
SCHOOL HEALTH FIELD TRIP APPROVAL FORM
TO BE COMPLETED BY SCHOOL NURSE

School nurses will review this list with the field trip coordinator. When medication training and other student medical issues have been resolved, the nurse will initial the checklist, which will then be submitted for the principal's approval. This is a mandatory form in order to receive approval for the trip.

☑ 1) Medication training completed by the employee designated to administer and maintain medications (including inhalers, Epi-pens, etc.)

☑ 2) Necessary arrangements/training made for any students needing procedures (e.g., catheterizations, tube feedings, etc.). N/A

☑ 3) Necessary arrangements/training for students with special medical conditions (e.g., diabetes, asthma, seizure disorders, cardiac condition, etc.) N/A

☑ 4) Arrangements have been made for special equipment needed (e.g., all-terrain wheelchair for the beach). N/A

☑ 5) Arrangements have been made for access to emergency medical services.

☑ 6) Lunch/snack arrangements have been made in consideration of students with food allergies.

☑ 7) School nurse recommendations on additional supplies needed (e.g., first-aid kit, water, sunscreen, etc.).

☑ 8) Arrangements have been made for communication (e.g., access to cell phones, walkie-talkies for staff during activity, etc.)

☑ 9) Other medical or safety issues addressed.

The School Nurse signature verifies that he/she has reviewed the medical needs of students attending the field trip

Carole Cascia	[signature] RN	9/17/2025
School Nurse Name	School Nurse Signature	Date

BRIDGEPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS – FIELD TRIPS
EXECUTIVE STAFF SIGNATURE

TO BE COMPLETED BY EXECUTIVE STAFF

Received By: _____

Title: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

FIELD TRIP CHECK LIST

School District Day Trip, Out-of-State, Overnight Trips

(International trips need Board approval)

School: John Winthrop School and Discovery Interdistrict Magnet School
Date of Trip: November 6, 2025-Novemeber 9, 2025
Location of Trip: Washington, DC

To provide notification of an out-of-state or overnight trip, the documentation listed below must be submitted along with this signed checklist to the appropriate Executive Staff at least 30 school days prior to the trip.

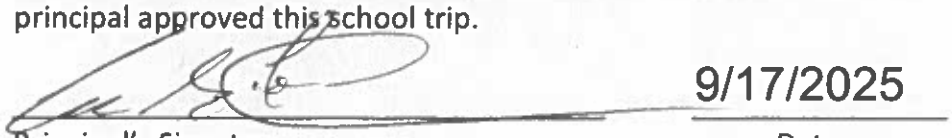
To provide notification of a School Day trip the checklist below must be completed. The principal must review the documentation, sign and date this form to approve the field trip at least 10 school days prior to the trip.

Field Trip Policy #6201 must be reviewed prior to planning a field trip and submitting it for district approval.

The following documents must be included in the completed packet:

- Field Trip Checklist / Alignment to the Curriculum
- Brochure, itinerary or overview of trip
- Student Information List with notation of permission slips submitted (**please check received on form**)
- Chaperone Contact Information (enclosed)
- Transportation Information - Bus, hotel, airline Form
- Transportation (if non-contracted bus by our district, you will need to present proof of insurance)
- Safety Plan
- Nurse has reviewed the medical needs of each participant
- 1 complete copy of packet to the appropriate Executive Staff (i.e. Superintendent/Deputy Superintendent/Chief Academic Officer/Executive Director)

The principal's signature verifies that all required information included on this checklist has been completed and reviewed. All procedures and policies have been adhered to and the principal approved this school trip.



Principal's Signature

9/17/2025

Date

SAMPLE / Field Trip Permission Form

Date: 9/12/2025

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Your child is going on a field trip. Please read the information at the top of this form, then sign and return the permission slip at the bottom of this form by 9/16/2025.

Field Trip Information:

Date: November 6, 2025-November 9, 2025

Location: Washington, DC

Purpose: Washington, DC Urban Debate League Dragon Invitational

Cost: $0 for student debaters (All costs: train, hotel, metro and food are paid for by BPS Debate League funds)

Cash or check payable to: N/A

Means of Transportation: Amtrak to Washington, DC and Metro in DC

Leave school: N/A Arrive back at school: N/A

Special Instructions: Parent or Guardian drop off and pick up at Bridgeport train station

*Please refer to information sheet for train and hotel specifics.

Save this part of the form for future reference.

Cut here---------- Cut here

Sign this part of the form and return it to your child's teacher.

_____ Grade/Room _____ has permission to attend a field trip to Washington, DC on Thursday, Nov 6, 2025 to Sunday, Nov 9, 2025 from 2pm (Nov 6th) to 10pm (Nov 9th).

Enclosed, please find cash/check in the amount of $0 to cover the cost of the trip.

I give my permission for _____ to receive emergency medical treatment. In an emergency, please contact:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

BRIDGEPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS – FIELD TRIPS

ALIGNMENT TO THE CURRICULUM

School:	John Winthrop School and Discovery Interdistrict Magnet School
Date of Trip:	November 6, 2025- November 9, 2025
Location of Trip:	Washington, DC
Purpose of the Trip:	To participate in the Washington, DC Urban Debate League Dragon Invitational Tournament.
Alignment to Curriculum:	Connecticut Common Core State Standards in Literacy and ELA Reading Writing Speaking & Listening Researching
Student to Teacher/Chaperone ratio:	4:1
Additional Information: I.e. Grant Related	Bridgeport Public School's Debate League grant will fund 100% of the trips/ costs for all student debaters and chaperones.

TRANSPORTATION & LODGING INFORMATION

BUS

(If non-contracted bus by our district, you will need to present proof of insurance).

Bus Company Name: N/A

Bus Company Address: N/A

Telephone: N/A

****Proof of Insurance: (Proof of Insurance must be included in packet.)**

** include information in the packet

Hotel

Hotel Name: The Doubletree by Hilton

Hotel Address: 8777 Georgia Ave. Silver Springs, MD 20910

Telephone Number: 1 (301) 284-0131

Airline

Airline Name: N/A- Amtrak

Airline Flight #: N/A- See attached for details; Amtrak Bridgeport Station:525 Water St., BPT, CT

Telephone 1 (800) 872-7245

SAFETY PLAN

School: John Winthrop School and Discovery Interdistrict Magnet School

Date of Trip: November 6, 2025- November 9, 2025

Location of Trip: Washington, DC

*See attached information sheet for locations: debate and hotel

Description of Plan:

Call 911- nearest hospital will be utilized as needed
Contact building principal
Contact parent to inform and make arrangements as needed

BRIDGEPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS – FIELD TRIPS
SCHOOL HEALTH FIELD TRIP APPROVAL FORM
TO BE COMPLETED BY SCHOOL NURSE

School nurses will review this list with the field trip coordinator. When medication training and other student medical issues have been resolved, the nurse will initial the checklist, which will then be submitted for the principal's approval. This is a mandatory form in order to receive approval for the trip.

☑ 1) Medication training completed by the employee designated to administer and maintain medications (including inhalers, Epi-pens, etc.).

☑ 2) Necessary arrangements/training made for any students needing procedures (e.g., catheterizations, tube feedings, etc.).

☑ 3) Necessary arrangements/training for students with special medical conditions (e.g., diabetes, asthma, seizure disorders, cardiac condition, etc.).

☑ 4) Arrangements have been made for special equipment needed (e.g., all-terrain wheelchair for the beach).

☑ 5) Arrangements have been made for access to emergency medical services.

☑ 6) Lunch/snack arrangements have been made in consideration of students with food allergies.

☑ 7) School nurse recommendations on additional supplies needed (e.g., first-aid kit, water, sunscreen, etc.).

☑ 8) Arrangements have been made for communication (e.g., access to cell phones, walkie-talkies for staff during activity, etc.)

☑ 9) Other medical or safety issues addressed.

The School Nurse signature verifies that he/she has reviewed the medical needs of students attending the field trip

Kelly Frechette		9/17/2025
School Nurse Name	School Nurse Signature	Date

BRIDGEPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS – FIELD TRIPS
EXECUTIVE STAFF SIGNATURE

TO BE COMPLETED BY EXECUTIVE STAFF

Received By: _____

Title: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

FIELD TRIP CHECK LIST

School District Day Trip, Out-of-State, Overnight Trips

(International trips need Board approval)

School: Theodore Roosevelt School	
Date of Trip:	October 23-24
Location of Trip:	Peoples State Forest, Barkhamsted, CT

To provide notification of an out-of-state or overnight trip, the documentation listed below must be submitted along with this signed checklist to the appropriate Executive Director at least 30 school days prior to the trip.

To provide notification of a School Day trip the checklist below must be completed. The principal must review the documentation, sign and date this form to approve the field trip at least 10 school days prior to the trip.

Field Trip Policy #6201 must be reviewed prior to planning a field trip and submitting it for district approval.

The following documents must be included in the completed packet:

- ☒ Field Trip Checklist / Alignment to the Curriculum
- ☒ Brochure, itinerary or overview of trip
- ☒ Student Information List with notation of permission slips submitted (**please check received on form**)
- ☒ Chaperone Contact Information (enclosed)
- ☒ Transportation Information - Bus, hotel, airline Form
  - ☐ Transportation (if non-contracted bus by our district, you will need to present proof of insurance)
- ☒ Safety Plan
- ☐ Nurse has reviewed the medical needs of each participant
- ☐ 1 complete copy of packet to the appropriate Executive Director

The principal's signature verifies that all required information included on this checklist has been completed and reviewed. All procedures and policies have been adhered to and the principal approved this school trip.

Principal's Signature

9/22/2025
Date

Field Trip Permission Form

Date: _____ separate

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Your child is going on a field trip. Please read the information at the top of this form, then sign and return the permission slip at the bottom of this form by _____.

Field Trip Information:

Date: _____

Location: _____

Purpose: _____

Cost: _____

Cash or check payable to: _____

Means of Transportation: _____

Leave school: _____ Arrive back at school: _____

Special Instructions: _____

_____

Save this part of the form for future reference.

Cut here---------- *Cut here*

Sign this part of the form and return it to your child's teacher.

_____ Grade/Room _____ has permission to attend a field trip to

_____ on _____ from

_____ to _____.

Enclosed, please find cash/check in the amount of _____ to cover the cost of the trip.

I give my permission for _____ to receive emergency medical treatment. In an emergency, please contact:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

BRIDGEPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS – FIELD TRIPS

ALIGNMENT TO THE CURRICULUM

School:	Theodore Roosevelt School
Date of Trip:	Oct 23-24
Location of Trip:	People's State Forest, Barkhamsted, CT
Purpose of the Trip:	Rough Riders second trip of the fall chapter. Our goal is for them to continue building trust and feel empowered by using skills learned through workshops and applying them in the outdoors with guidance from instructors.
Alignment to Curriculum:	All Physical Education Standards 1-5 - Locomotor movement, tactics + skills - Respectful behavior of environment, self, and others - Enjoyment of exercise and the outdoors
Student to Teacher/Chaperone ratio:	2:10
Additional Information: I.e. Grant Related	

TRANSPORTATION & LODGING INFORMATION

BUS

(If non-contracted bus by our district, you will need to present proof of insurance).

Bus Company Name: Outside Perspectives

Bus Company Address: 37 Greenwoods Rd Unit 19, New Hartford, CT

Telephone: 860-909-1025

****Proof of Insurance: (Proof of Insurance must be included in packet.)** attached

** include information in the packet

Hotel

Hotel Name:

Hotel Address:

Telephone Number:

Airline

Airline Name:

Airline Flight #:

Telephone

Roosevelt Canoe Overnight Itinerary
October 23-24, 2025
Camping at Big Spring - People State Forest

Instructors: Carol, Katelyn
Logistics: Eliza
On Call:
Attendees:
Notes:

Friday, October 23th, 2025

7:30a	Katelyn arrives at OP to grab Van
7:45a	Katelyn departs OP for Roosevelt (1h10m drive)
9:00a	Katelyn Arrives at Roosevelt to pick up crew
9:40a	Crew departs Bridgeport for People's (1h10m drive)
11:00a	Arrive at People's State Forest, Matthies Grove (main park entrance) Intro, lunch
12:00p	Hike Agnes Bowen to Charles Pack trail to Big Spring (~3mi) • Check out Beaver Pond viewpoint!
3:30p	Arrive at Big Spring Camp, EGGS
4:00p-4:30p	Set up camp • Chow Circle, dinner, cleanup • Hike to Epic Sunset if desired **SUNSET: 5:56pm - hike to/from view?** • Evening Meeting at overlook if desired
5:56pm	**SUNSET**

Saturday, October 24th, 2025

7:16am	**SUNRISE**
7:15am	Wake up/ Morning Meeting • Stretch Circle • Breakfast Prep • Start breaking down camp
7:30a	Start breakfast
8:00a	Chow circle, eat breakfast, cleanup
9:00a	Finish camp breakdown, camp sweep, begin hike out via Jessie Gerard to Robert Ross trail back to park main entrance (~3mi)
12:00p	Lunch at van, debrief trip
1:00p	Head back to Roosevelt (~1h10m drive)
2:15p	Arrive back at school for pickup
2:30p	Katelyn departs back to OP
4:00p	Katelyn arrives at office - Fill out debrief form, Carol fills out instructor survey

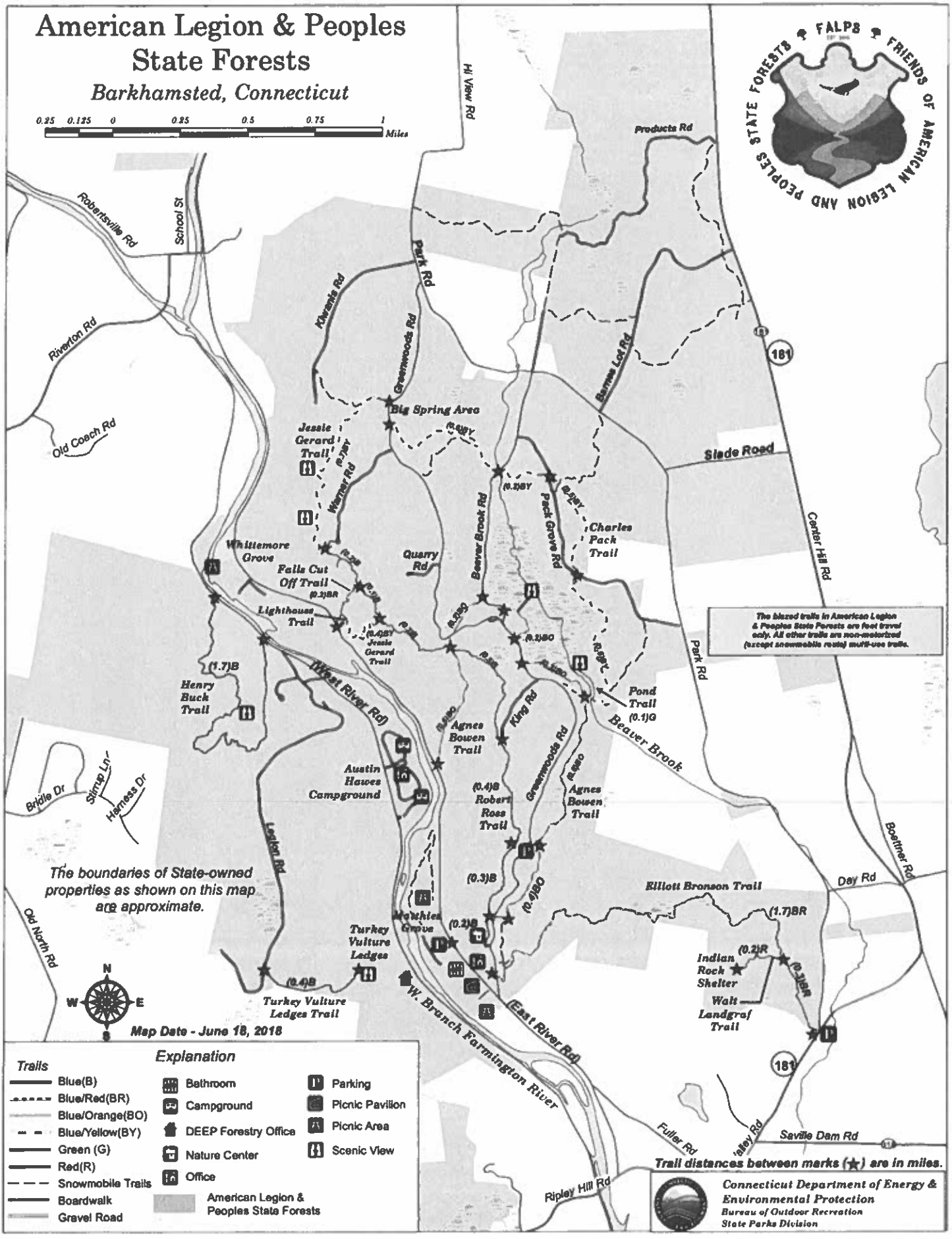
Props/extras:

- [ ] Taco cat (Katelyn)
- [ ] Oracle cards (Katelyn)
- [ ] Werewolf
- [ ] String lights (Katelyn)

MENU - SAMPLE MENU BELOW - NOT FINAL

	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snacks
Day 1	X			
Day 2			X	

Shopping List:


American Legion & Peoples State Forests
Barkhamsted, Connecticut
0.25 0.125 0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles
FALPS FRIENDS OF AMERICAN LEGION AND PEOPLES STATE FORESTS
Hi View Rd
Products Rd
Robertsville Rd
School St
Riverton Rd
Old Coach Rd
Park Rd
Rivers Rd
Greenwoods Rd
Barnes Lot Rd
181
Big Spring Area
Jessie Gerard Trail
Warner Rd
Slade Road
Beaver Brook Rd
Pack Grove Rd
Charles Pack Trail
Center Hill Rd
Whittemore Grove
Falls Cut Off Trail
Quarry Rd
Lighthouse Trail
Jessie Gerard Trail
Henry Buck Trail
West River Rd
Agnes Bowen Trail
King Rd
Greenwoods Rd
Pond Trail
Beaver Brook
Park Rd
The blazed trails in American Legion & Peoples State Forests are foot travel only. All other trails are non-motorized (except snowmobile route) multi-use trails.
Austin Hawes Campground
Robert Ross Trail
Agnes Bowen Trail
Bridle Dr
Stirrup Ln
Harness Dr
Legion Rd
Boettner Rd
Day Rd
Elliott Bronson Trail
The boundaries of State-owned properties as shown on this map are approximate.
Old North Rd
Turkey Vulture Ledges
Turkey Vulture Ledges Trail
Indian Rock Shelter
Walt Landgraf Trail
W. Branch Farmington River
East River Rd
Fuller Rd
Saville Dam Rd
Ripley Hill Rd
Map Date - June 18, 2018
Trail distances between marks (★) are in miles.
Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection
Bureau of Outdoor Recreation
State Parks Division
Explanation
Trails
Blue(B)
Blue/Red(BR)
Blue/Orange(BO)
Blue/Yellow(BY)
Green (G)
Red(R)
Snowmobile Trails
Boardwalk
Gravel Road
Bathroom
Campground
DEEP Forestry Office
Nature Center
Office
American Legion & Peoples State Forests
Parking
Picnic Pavilion
Picnic Area
Scenic View

Roosevelt Rough Riders Adventure Program
Overnight Hike Trip Safety Plan
Dates: October 24–25, 2025
Location: Peoples State Forest - Off Route 20 or Route 318, Barkhamsted, CT 06063
Partner Organization: Outside Perspectives

Trip Overview

Students will participate in a guided overnight expedition at Peoples State Forest, hiking and camping within the State Park. This experience is designed to build teamwork, outdoor skills, and confidence. The trip is facilitated by Outside Perspectives, a nonprofit specializing in adventure-based youth development.

Supervision

- **2 adult instructors** from Outside Perspectives will lead the trip
- Both instructors are **Wilderness Medicine certified**:
  - One holds **Wilderness First Aid (WFA)** certification
  - One holds **Wilderness First Responder (WFR)** certification
- Maximum group size: **12 students**
- Staff will carry first aid kits, emergency supplies, and cell phones with planned service check-in points
- Logistical staff will be on call in case the group is in need of anything
- Director on call for support and help with emergencies

Emergency Plan

- In case of an emergency, instructors will call 911 or local emergency services
- Emergency contact info for all participants will be on hand
- Roosevelt staff will be notified as soon as possible

Transportation

- Transportation will be provided by Outside Perspectives using a **15-passenger van**
- The driver is fully insured and approved
- The van will be available at both the trip departure and return

Gear & Clothing

- Students must wear **closed-toe shoes** and **weather-appropriate clothing**
- A **packing list** will be provided in advance
- Outside Perspectives provides all necessary gear:
  - Tents, dry bags, group camping and cooking equipment
  - All meals and safety equipment
- Gear will be checked and fitted before departure

Risk Management

- Hiking route suitable for beginners
- Students will receive safety instruction before the hike begins
- Outside Perspectives reserves a Group Campsite at Peoples Forest State Park
- Group norms and behavior expectations will be reviewed throughout the trip
- Instructors are experienced guides and follow safety protocols.

Empowering Bridgeport Youth:

Rough Riders Program with Outside Perspectives



Joining Forces for Youth Development

Outside Perspectives is thrilled to partner with Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School in Bridgeport, CT, to empower middle school students through engaging outdoor experiences. This initiative, led by Carol Ortiz, Roosevelt's P.E. teacher and trained Outside Perspectives instructor, is designed to develop trust, communication, leadership, and community with her students.



Program Overview

The Theodore Roosevelt Outdoor Program, developed by Ms. Ortiz and Outside Perspectives' Program Director, will utilize a custom curriculum that turns the great outdoors into a dynamic classroom. These after-school sessions aim to build trust, foster a sense of belonging, and enhance outdoor and leadership skills among students, encouraging them to explore beyond their comfort zones confidently. Outside Perspectives will facilitate a day hike, outdoor rock climbing day, and a culminating canoe overnight as the immersive outdoor experiences.



About Outside Perspectives

Outside Perspectives is a nonprofit organization with an innovative youth development approach. Rather than recruiting individuals for programming, we build long-standing partnerships with other youth development organizations, schools, and teams in the community. We use the wilderness as a powerful tool for positive change to ensure the skills and insights gained during our programs extend into participants' daily lives.



Why it Matters

Supported by essential gear, transportation, and expertly guided field trips provided by Outside Perspectives, this program is poised to become a cornerstone of both personal and community development in Bridgeport. Ms. Ortiz's deep commitment to her students and community enhances the potential for a sustainable impact, further supported by her proactive efforts in fundraising to maintain these valuable programs.



Your Support

By backing this initiative, you help cultivate Bridgeport's next generation of leaders. Your contributions enable us to offer these transformative experiences at no cost to families, significantly impacting Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School's students and the broader community. Discover how your support can lay the foundation for growth and opportunity for the youth of Bridgeport.

DONATE

www.outsideperspectives.org

Monday, April 28, 2025

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BRIDGPEORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held April 28, 2025, at Harding High School, 379 Bond Street, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Present were chair Jennifer Perez, Vice Chair Joseph Sokolovic, Secretary Albert Benejan Grajales**, Willie Medina, Maritza Estremera Jimenez, Akisha Cassermere*, Robert Traber, and Andre Woodson*. Christine Baptiste-Perez* joined subsequently as noted.

*remote participation **began the meeting remote and subsequently arrived in person as noted.

Interim Supt. Dr. Royce Avery was present.

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS:

Christian Bica of Central High reported on his school. Among the items he highlighted were the end of SAT testing; upcoming NGSS testing and AP exams; the junior ring dance; spring sports; a school cleanup; and a visit by some students to Vassar College.

Aryan Lachman of Harding reported on his school. Among the items he highlighted were visits to UB's cadaver lab; a class vs. class event; upcoming AP exams; preparation for

the annual health and wellness fair; and a record number of students accepted into the University of Connecticut.

Tawaab Agrignan of the Biotech School at Fairchild Wheeler highlighted Earth Day events; NGSS testing; a fundraiser; and the upcoming prom.

Jeronimo Restrepo of the IT School at Fairchild Wheeler highlighted a bootcamp on the NGSS testing; course selection for next year; the May 1st prom in New Haven; and three students who won computing awards.

Chanoy Clarke of Bassick High highlighted Spirit Week; a visit to Sacred Heart University by Today's Students, Tomorrow's Teachers; the completion of SAT and PSAT exams; and upcoming NGSS assessments and AP exams.

Ashley Beckford of the Aerospace School at Fairchild Wheeler highlighted student-led tours of the school, the fight simulator, a student trip to UConn in Storrs; and a career day tomorrow.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Jeff Morrissey, president of the BEA, said we have been following the budget discussions with increasing dismay. He said there is longstanding inadequate funding from the state and the city. He said the cuts represent actual human beings and children who will lose instruction in art and music and in other ways. He said the BEA will

continue to protect contractual language related to planning time and class sizes.

Dr. Sarah-Jane Henry, director of performing and visual arts, said financial cuts to the department would have far-reaching consequences, including limiting opportunities for students. She said the district has had multiple students who have graduated and gone on to careers in the arts, including teaching, received Emmys, professional photographers, graphic designers, and working with famous artists.

Mr. Benejan Grajales arrived at the meeting in person.

Faith Harrison Villegas of the Bridgeport Public Education Fund said she and her children graduated from the district's schools. She said it has been a challenging year in funding schools and ensuring the future of the children. She invited everyone to the 31st Inspiration Awards event.

Aaron Newcome, a Central High teacher, said the district's teacher attendance policy allows meetings and warnings with teaches, although the collective bargaining agreement allows for fifteen sick and four personal days. He said the effect of the policy is to reduce the yearly PTO days from nineteen to five. He said a teacher who accumulates 370 sick days in a career will only receive compensation for 200 of them when they retire.

Giovanna Ramos, principal of Thomas Hooker School, said counselors and kindergarten paras always seem to be on the chopping block. She said the elimination of her assistant principal will leave her school the only pre-K to 8 school without an assistant principal. She said every single service provider in her school is part time.

Jennifer Gilbert, a special education teacher at BLC, described the issues that children come to school with. She said the schools are safety nets for children and the budget cuts are hurting kids.

Jeremie Hittenmark, assistant principal at Thomas Hooker School, said chronic underfunding and understaffing long predates Covid. He said it is no achievement to return to pre-Covid staffing levels, when student success rates were unacceptable. He noted the lack of a fulltime nurse, and social worker in his school and described the effects of budget cuts. He urged the board members to visit schools to see how many being held together by duct tape, goodwill, and the shared grit of educators.

Takayla Thomas, a Bridgeport native, described the effect of arts on her education and her family. She said she has been an educator in health, art, and dance at Marin School since 2001.

Mr. Traber said Senate Bill 1511, which would have meant $20 million for the district, is dead and gone. Additional

provisions would have provided a total of $57 million more. He said the final appropriations budget last week includes additional money for special education and it means nothing good for us. He said everyone should speak to their state representatives and senators about this. He added that there is not a single board member who wants to implement a single cut that has been addressed tonight.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES:

Mr. Benejan Grajales moved to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of March 24, 2025. The motion was seconded by Mr. Traber and unanimously approved,

Mr. Benejan Grajales moved to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of March 31, 2025. The motion was seconded by Mr. Medina and unanimously approved.

Mr. Benejan Grajales moved to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of April 7, 2025. The motion was seconded by Mr. Traber. The motion was approved by a 7-0 vote. Voting in favor were members Perez, Traber, Medina, Cassermere, Woodson, Benejan Grajales, and Estremera Jimenez. Mr. Sokolovic abstained.

CHAIR REPORT:

s. Perez said four of the mandated board trainings have been completed; the most recent of which was on finance.

The meetings have been hosted by CABE. She said the next meeting for training will be on May 19th.

Ms. Perez said the board wanted to honor Mr. Rapice for his projects with poet laureates, Words on Wheels, and middle school debate and thank him for his work.

Senavene Wilson, the 2025 poet laureate for the district, was recognized. Students who received honorable mention were also recognized.

Ms. Wilson read her poem, “You Cannot Stop Us Now.”

In response to a question, Dr. Avery said the Commissioner of Education will visit the district for the first time on Wednesday to meet with himself and the executive cabinet. Ms. Perez said she had not heard back yet from the commissioner on her request for a meeting.

Mr. Benejan Grajales said the city lost a champion, Jay Piccirillo, who often helped him with parents. here was a moment of silence for Mr. Piccirillo and the mom of Bassick PTSO president, Mr. Achola.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Ms. Perez said the Finance Committee met on April 10th and additional budget cuts were discussed that are on tonight’s agenda.

Mr. Traber said the Instruction and Support Services Committee had an excellent meeting last week. There

was discussion on suspension rates for special education students and black males. PAC/PTSO expenditures and procedures were also covered. He thanked Dr. Faga for her participation in those discussions. He said there was also a great discussion on academic progress reports.

Mr. Benejan Grajales referred an update on the suspension rate of special education students.

Mr. Medina said the Policy and Personnel Committee met on April 9th, and several polices were tackled, including items on tonight's agenda. He said CABE provided about twenty policies that are mandated by the state. He said there are another twenty-plus policies to be handled at the committee.

Ms. Estremera Jimenez referred an item on contracts.

Ms. Perez said the Facilities Committee met on April 1st. The facilities master plan was discussed and there was an update on the decommissioning of Bassick High. She said there was an operational update on vandalism.

Mr. Sokolovic said CABE was in the planning stage for the November 18th convention. He said the board had to decide whether to incur the expense of rooms in lean times.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT AND AGENDA:

Dr. Avery said he wanted to acknowledge the concerns raised during public comment and in the community regarding the financial situation of the district. He said he wanted to let everyone know that he hears them, and he agrees that the situation is not ideal, and that our students and staff deserve more.

Dr. Avery said he would provide a full comprehensive update on six-month plan at the next meeting.

Dr. Avery said the City Council budget meeting is on May 1st. He said the mayor's proposed budget has an additional $3 million for education; while we are grateful, it is not enough. He urged there be advocacy for additional dollars.

Dr. Avery said there will be a middle-school cheerleading showcase on May 1st at Central High. He said on May 8th he will accompany several high school students to Hartford for student advocacy, along with other urban school districts. It is hoped to have a conversation with the governor as well.

Dr. Avery said there will be a public forum at Trumbull Gardens on May 9th. The district talent show will take place on May 29th.

In response to a question, Dr. Avery said he has had conversations with board members about creating a

priority list in the event that the district receives additional funding.

Mr. Sokolovic said in the past the board has ranked items so the superintendent can act without having to come back to the board.

In response to a question, Dr. Avery said the brand-new website will be unveiled, but content is now being transferred to the new site. He said release has been delayed from January-February in order to update the content. He said parents who cannot obtain information from the website should contact his office.

Mr. Benejan Grajales said he would like to hear an update from the grants department. He thanked Dr. Henry for her amazing work and for helping the Bassick PTSO.

In response to a question, Dr. Avery said there will be a Bridgeport Day in Hartford on May 19th for advocacy.

Mr. Sokolovic said it would behoove We Transport to help us advocate for more money by helping with transport to Hartford.

In response to a question, Dr. Avery said the students traveling to Hartford are being recruited by the student representatives to the board, and recommendations by principals will be used if necessary. He said administrators will act as chaperones.

Ms. Cassermere said she hoped board members would be asked to purchase tickets for the upcoming talent shows at $25.02 and not expect to get in free.

In response to a question, Dr. Avery said he would get an answer from Ms. Clarke for Ms. Cassermere on the board's foundation.

NEW BUSINESS:

The next agenda item was on High Horizons Magnet School's field trip to Washington, D.C. from June 3 to June 6, 2025.

Mr. Traber said the item came through his committee. He moved "t*o approve the High Horizons Magnet School's out-of-state field trip to Washington, D.C., June 3 to June 6, 2025*." The motion was seconded by Mr. Medina.

Mr. Traber said it was fully vetted in committee and all i's were dotted and t's were crossed.

The motion was unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on the Interdistrict Discovery Magnet School's out-of-state field trip to Washington, D.C., May 14th through the 16th.

Mr. Traber said the matter came through his committee. He moved "*the approval of the Interdistrict Discovery Magnet School's out-of-state field trip to Washington, D.C.,*

May 14th through 16th, 2025." The motion was seconded by Mr. Benejan Grajales.

Mr. Traber said it was reviewed in depth in the committee and all i's were dotted and t's were crossed.

The motion was unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on the Interdistrict Discovery Magnet School's overnight field trip to the Outdoor Classroom at Lakeside, Connecticut, May 14th through the 16th.

Mr. Traber said it went through his committee. He moved "*to approve Interdistrict Discovery Magnet School's overnight field trip to the Outdoor Classroom in Lakeside, Connecticut, May 14th through the 16th, 2025*." The motion was seconded by Mr. Benejan Grajales.

Mr. Traber said the paperwork is in proper form and all i's were dotted and t's were crossed.

The motion was unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on the library refresh to purchase and subscribe to online resources. Ms. Perez said this is a grant-funded program.

Mr. Traber moved "*to approve the library refresh to purchase and subscribe to the online resources*." The motion was seconded by Mr. Medina and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on filing FCC Form 471, Schools and Libraries Universal. Jeff Postolowski, director of ITS, said this was the normal, annual renewal of the FCC filing for E-Rate, which is the program that pays the lion's share of internet services and equipment that provides that.

Mr. Traber moved to approve the resolution as stated, *"Be it resolved that the governing board for Bridgeport School District; (1) authorizes the filing of FCC Form 471, Schools and Libraries Universal Service Program services ordered for the fiscal year 07/01/2025 through 6/20/2026. And (2) authorizes payment of the applicant's share subject to the following conditions: (1) approval of funding of the discounted portion of the Schools and Libraries Division (SLD) of the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) and (2) receipt of the services during the fiscal year 07/01/2025 to 06/30/2026."*

The motion was seconded by Mr. Benejan Grajales and unanimously approved,

The next agenda item was the approval to authorize the Healthy Food Certification application for fiscal year 2025-26.

Mr. Traber moved "*Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-215f, Food and Nutrition Services, Bridgeport Public Schools certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempt from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2064. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups*."

The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

Mr. Traber moved that *"the Food and Nutrition Services, Bridgeport Public Schools, will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverages not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes provided that the following conditions are met: (1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; (2) the sale is at the location of the event; and (3) the food and beverage items are not sold*

from a vending machine or school store. An 'event' is an occurrence that involves more than just a regular school practice, meeting or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events, but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The 'regular school day' is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. 'Location' means where the event is being held and must be at the same place as the food and beverage sales."

The motion was seconded by Mr. Benejan Grajales and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on approval of a workers' compensation settlement agreement. Ms. Perez said invited to participate were Dr. Avery and Atty. Christine Yeomans.

Mr. Benejan Grajales moved "*to go into executive session*." The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

The executive session began at 8:03 pm.

The board reconvened in public session at 8:38 p.m.

Mr. Sokolovic moved "*to authorize the attorney to enter into the settlement agreement for the workers' compensation case as discussed in executive session."*

The motion was seconded by Mr. Benejan Grajales and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on the graduation venue. Dr. Avery summarized the various options. The Amphitheater, $40,000, June 16th or 17th; Kennedy Stadium, $3,000 on June 13th; mixed venues on June 13th, $3655, and at the Klein June 10th, for a total cost $7,132.

Tim Grasty described options that were explored, including Sacred Heart University.

There was a discussion of the negotiations with venues, including fees that would have to be paid, and the available dates. Mr. Grasty said the sheet provided to the board included other venues contacted, including universities and the Total Mortgage Arena.

Mr. Traer said he was appalled that athletic events were pushed out of Seaside Park to accommodate the owners of the Amphitheater and that they can't come up with a free donation of the venue for graduation.

Mr. Sokolovic moved "*to utilize Kennedy Stadium at Central High for graduation in 2025*." The motion was seconded by Mr. Traber and approved by a 6-0 vote. Voting in favor were members Perez, Sokolovic, Benejan Grajales, Woodson, and Traber. Members Medina and Cassermere abstained.

The next agenda item was on the board goals established during March 31st training. Ms. Perez said the board goals would be used to flesh out the district goals that we want to work with Dr. Avery on

Mr. Traber moved "*to approve the goals*." The motion was seconded by Mr. Benejan Grajales and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on implementing a calendar to implement mandated policies. Ms. Perez said this was discussed in the Policy and Personnel Committee. Mr. Medina said the deadline for state-mandated policies was June 6th to be prepared for the full board at the June 9th meeting.

Mr. Medina moved "*to approve the calendar*." The motion was seconded by Mr. Benejan Grajales and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on the second read of policies on alcohol use, drugs and tobacco, P5131, and the nondiscrimination policy.

Mr. Sokolovic moved "*to approve the second read of the alcohol use, drugs, and tobacco policy, P5131, and the nondiscrimination policy*."

Mr. Sokolovic said these polices are state-mandated, are boilerplate, and were presented to us by CABE. He said they have been thoroughly vetted and approved in committee. He suggested the board approve them as presented because there's nothing we can change.

The motion was unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was to suspend bylaw 9310 for the purpose immediate implementation of the following policies: restorative practices, FASA completion program, gifted and talented students, preschool special education, duty-free lunch, physical exercise and discipline; and health education program.

Mr. Medina moved "*to suspend the bylaws*." The motion was seconded by Mr. Benejan Grajales and unanimously approved.

Mr. Sokolovic requested the superintendent get these on the website immediately, so they don't get lost.

Mr. Medina moved "*to approve Restorative Practices, P5155.12(a); FAFSA Completion Program P6148(b); P6172.1(a); P61717.2(b); P4113.12; P5144.4(a) and P6142.10 to the full board for approval for immediate implementation*." The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic.

Mr. Medina said these are state mandates, which were presented by CABE, that we went through at committee.

The motion was unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on additional eliminations to reduce budgetary needs for fiscal year 2025-26.

Mr. Nkwo said there was still a $30 million budget gap. He said some options were amended with Dr. Avery. The state special education increase in reimbursement to municipalities line was changed because the state budget and appropriations committee proposed $124 million statewide to help all towns. He said it translates to about $5.8 million to Bridgeport, which is contingent upon the legislature moving it forward and approval of the governor.

Mr. Nkwo said Dr. Avery's contact with union leaders was not a fruitful conversation, so the savings projected are not attainable.

Mr. Nkwo said Item 14, the elimination of five central office positions, has been increased to between eight and ten, for a total $985,000. Item 26 originally called for the elimination of 40 teaching positions, and that has to be changed to a more attainable number of 28.

Mr. Nkwo said assuming the board approves all the gap-closing measures it will total $28 million. He said $7 million of the Internal Service Fund (ISF) is being used to balance next year's budget, which is a one-time revenue and will

lead to a $7 million hole in the 2027 budget, which will also contain cost-of-living increases of $12 million to $14 million. He noted the state's biannual budget does not have an increase for Bridgeport in 2027 over 2026.

Mr. Sokolovic said a structural deficit has been a fact of life since 2018. He said we're talking about kids, so spending out of the ISF will save kids in front of us right now. He described the proposed cuts as draconian. He said our schools needed to be adequately funded. He said he would be the first one to defend Mr. Nkwo in 2027 if Gov. Lamont and Mayor Ganim continue to underfund the district and hurt our children.

In response to a question, Mr. Nkwo said $22 million is proposed to be used in this year's budget out of the ISF, with $7 million used next year.

In response to a question, Mr. Nkwo said there is $34.4 million in the ISF currently. He said $22 million will be used to balance the current year's budget. He described the projected use of the ISF in the future.

Mr. Traber said we now have the most up-to-date information when we go to the city on Thursday and when we talk with the state reps and senators. He said the total state Rainy Day Fund was now $6 billion. He said Donald Trump has been a convenient excuse not to deal with the problems in the poor communities. He said they're not

dealing with the impact of parity on education and the failure to raise the ECS formula. He said ECS is being expanded to 80 districts, although they were scheduled to be phased out of ECS because they were financially secure already.

Mr. Traber said the teachers in Bridgeport are teaching for less money than every community around us, including $15,000 less than Stratford. He said these are people committed to the children of our district.

In response to a question, Mr. Nkwo said we have to survive 2027 first before he can project the 2028 deficit.

In response to a question, Dr. Avery said the union leaders indicated to him that concessions were not a viable option.

Mr. Benejan Grajales said the situation stresses him out badly. He said the board members did not have a choice but to save money. He said the students will be suffering. He said he took his hat off to the staff, who earn less than they can in other districts. He said he was glad the people from the state were here so they can see what Bridgeport is going through and what we need. He said he can imagine how the staff feels wondering if they're going to have a job.

Mr. Medina said that we have to sound the alarm. He said the ECS formula has not increased over the last 13 years when costs have increased. He said the state has been

holding $5 billion in the Rainy Day Fund and we are being pushed to the side, while every election has been winning elections because of Bridgeport voters. He said the speakers came here respectfully and powerfully and nailed every single fact. He said the state needs to hear our voice.

In response to a question about bringing special education students back into the district, Mr. Nkwo said that was premature because the district has to build a special education school. Dr. Avery said we're looking at opportunities to bring kids back into the district, but you have to look at each individual student in a PPT. Returning a child to the district requires a mutual decision between the parents and the district.

Mr. Woodson said from discussions at Waltersville and with CABE, they're expecting us to do this stuff. He said he did not believe there is a district in the state spending 30 percent of its budget on special education. He said he blames that on the leadership. Ms. Perez said there is a line item for $2.5 million in savings.

Ms. Estremera Jimenez said she was very disheartened tonight, particularly since there will be similar issues in 2027. She said she wanted to help education for kids and increase the amount of resources they have, and she has to help do the exact opposite. She urged advocacy with

the state and the city because we're stripping almost everything out of our district tonight.

Mr. Sokolovic said he agreed there was a need to save money on special education costs, but nearly every large district is at about the same percentage of special education costs.

In response to a question about grants, Dr. Avery said a lot of the grants the district submitted were federal grants and they are on hold. Ms. Cassermere requested an update from Nadira Clarke on the Philanthropy Digest e-mails she receives. Dr. Avery said she would have Ms. Clarke prepare a report on grants for the board.

Ms. Cassermere asked if a capital campaign for the district was feasible. Dr. Avery said he was not familiar with it in his experience with school districts. Ms. Cassermere suggested Ms. Clarke be consulted.

In response to a question, Dr. Avery said it was not inappropriate for district parents to request companies they work for to provide grants to the district. Ms. Cassermere said there may be grant opportunities at places of employment.

Mr. Traber said he discussed special education schools with Senator Wilcox. He said if we can save $2.5 million, that would be impressive. He said all districts are in the same boat on special education. He said the soonest we

can get a new facility is four or five years away, so it is not in the realm of the current budget.

Mr. Traber said Mr. Nkwo indicated we need $30 million to balance the budget, but our goal must be to get more than that. He said SB1511 would have given Bridgeport $57.2 million.

Mr. Woodson said we need to take into consideration Mr. Nkwo's projections into future years down the line. He said we need to get smarter and be thinking down the line.

In response to a question on library/media specialists, Ms. Perez said it would mean the elimination of all those positions.

Mr. Traber said he is not begging for funding as said by Mr. Wodson and Ms. Baptiste-Perez, but he is advocating for the people of Bridgeport. He said what he is doing should not be categorized as begging. He said people are paid a lot of money to go to Hartford and advocate for different causes, but we're doing it for free. He said when the five urban superintendents and mayors went to Hartford they weren't begging.

Mr. Sokolovic moved "*to add a line on the revenue increase stating the board approved an additional $2.5 million withdrawal from the Internal Service Fund*." The motion was seconded by Mr. Medina.

Mr. Sokolovic said it would give us a little bit more of a cushion because some of the numbers don't seem stable and are overly optimistic. He said the $2.5 million savings in special education cannot be counted on.

The motion was approved by a 6-1 vote. Voting in favor were members Perez, Sokolovic, Benejan Grajales, Medina, Traber, and Estremera Jiminez. Mr. Woodson was opposed. Ms. Cassermere abstained.

Mr. Woodson said he heard words like assimilation that you can't use to run a multimillion-dollar business.

Mr. Sokolovic moved "*to eliminate the 2-to-1 kindergarten paraprofessionals that were funded through Delta T that were reinstated through ESSER funds that have expired for a savings of $1.327 million*." The motion was seconded by Mr. Medina.

Mr. Sokolovic said unfortunately he has to recommend that we approve this because we need to get to the zero amount. He said it could be ranked as high or low as we want to bring it back in the case of more funding. He said that each and every position we're going to be talking about is an important job and the services we are about to cut are very important.

There was a discussion on whether to proceed through the budget items line by line or not.

The motion was approved by 6-2 vote. Voting in favor were members Perez, Sokolovic, Medina, Estremera Jimenez, and Woodson. Members Cassermere and Benejan Grajales were opposed.

Mr. Sokolovic moved "*to approve the entirety of Lines 3 through 26 as presented by Mr. Nkwo on the budget decreases, with the exception of number 4, which has been removed*." The motion was seconded by Mr. Medina.

Mr. Sokolovic said the climate specialist positions were important. He said increasing walking distances is really concerning, and we have bene though this before. He said some of our streets don't have sidewalks and some are dangerous. He said this would increase absenteeism, particularly in cold weather. He said this was because of the financial situation we find ourselves in and the requirement of the state and city to fund our schools.

Mr. Sokolovic said our students are losing services, which will harm our children, but we have no choice but to eliminate due to underfunding of the city and state.

Mr. Sokolovic said school counselors and psychosocial services are needed because our children have been traumatized throughout their lives and some are still suffering from the effects of Covid. He said assistant principals are important supports for the schools. He said

although central office positions do not affect the classroom directly, it hurts our kids because there are less administrators doing more work.

Mr. Sokolovic said performing and visual arts should be put on top to bring back because our district has always been starved in this area. He said some cuts were less devastating or easy. He said the loss of library/media specialists hurt. He noted they are certified teachers and said this was due to state and local underfunding.

Mr. Sokolovic said the elimination of 20 teacher positions will hurt children because it will mean larger class sizes.

Mr. Sokolovic said he and his board colleagues value every single position and employee no matter how the board votes.

In response to a question, Ms. Perez said the total number of positions eliminated was 125. Mr. Nkwo said in this round about 26 administrator positions were being eliminated. Domenic Costello, chief human resource officer, said 18 administrators were eliminated in December.

Mr. Traber said the figures indicate about 2,300 students are going to start walking to school.

In response to a question, Mr. Nkwo said the assistant principal positions who move into the classroom will only save $1,000 for the first year per position, but there will be

savings if they take the spots of long-term Kelly substitutes.

Mr. Benejan Grajales said nobody thinks of the consequences for the parents, teachers, and students of the cuts. He said he was upset because he knows the money is there, and we have no choice.

Ms. Perez said she knows what Mr. Benejan Grajales means, but the money is not there for the board and none of us want to make these cuts. She said the money is in the city and in the state. Mr. Benejan Grajales said he agreed with that, and the state has the money, and they know we need it.

Ms. Cassermere said she agreed with Mr. Benejan Grajales, especially on increasing the walking distance. She said the state and the local government really needs to step up because we're cutting things that will lead to struggling with test scores.

In response to a question, Dr. Avery said we have racking our heads for months now how to present this to the board, including on weekends and long hours. He said that we have to keep pressure up for more funding.

Ms. Perez said when the state and the city budget are passed, we will come back to the table and look at cuts that can be brought back.

Mr. Traber said he has to put things in terms that people will hear him. He said they don't give a rat's backside about our kids. He said we have to say it in short, simple terms; how many positions were eliminating; 2,400 students will have to walk to school. He said his daughter was saved by arts when she went to Central High. He said he was very passionate and angry, and just as committed to fighting for children.

Mr. Medina thanked Ms. Perez for saying clearly that we are the ones that don't have the funds. He said he spoke with Dr. Henry during the week, and this is emotional for us. He said his daughters went through the arts, which is why he is here. He said Senator Cathy Osten said you can't maximize funding when you don't have enough to being with, and Bridgeport doesn't have the funding it deserves or needs.

Mr. Sokolovic said the board should establish a priority list at the next meeting to restore items if funding is received.

Mr. Benejan Grajales said he gets very emotional, and people don't understand the suffering of our kids. He said he will not give up until God tells him to stop. He said the board members are elected because they trust us to help them. He said his son was saved by Coach Sal and Mr. Blum at Bassick High.

Ms. Baptiste-Perez* joined the meeting.

The motion was approved by a 5-4 vote. Voting in favor were members Perez, Sokolovic, Medina, Estremera Jimenez, and Traber. Members Cassermere, Woodson, Benejan Grajales, and Baptiste-Perez were opposed.

Mr. Sokolovic said he was voting yes due to the chronic underfunding by the City of Bridgeport and the State of Connecticut that has unfairly discriminated against our city and other large cities. He said it is high time to have equity in education in state.

Mr. Woodson said he voted no because there was a proposal by the former superintendent that would have saved all the jobs and helped to move us foreword, but people voted to get rid of her, so now we have to lay people off.

Mr. Sokolovic said we were never able to avoid layoffs and avoid this cliff, no matter what happened; even if we made every single suggestion by the former superintendent, we would have still been $30 million the hole. He said Mr. Woodson should research it and please stop saying it.

Ms. Baptiste-Perez said if the original budget plan and closing of schools had gone through, we wouldn't be in this position now. She said this board has mismanaged its funds and put itself in this position. She said she voted no because of fiscal mismanagement and the filature to close unsafe buildings, which was caused by the current

leadership of the board. She said she would not beg the state for money that we failed to use wisely. She said the situation was self-inflicted.

Mr. Traber said a false narrative has been perpetrated by Ms. Baptiste-Perez's dramatic entry. He said the closing of schools would have saved $1.5 million and it doesn't add up to $30 million. He said he voted yes because this is the only way we're going to get the savings with the money we have allocated to us at this point.

Ms. Perez said Mr. Rapice invited the board to the Law Day event on May 1st at Winthrop School. She said the board was voted to the Inspiration Awards on May 8th at the Trumbull Marriott.

Mr. Sokolovic moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Medina and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

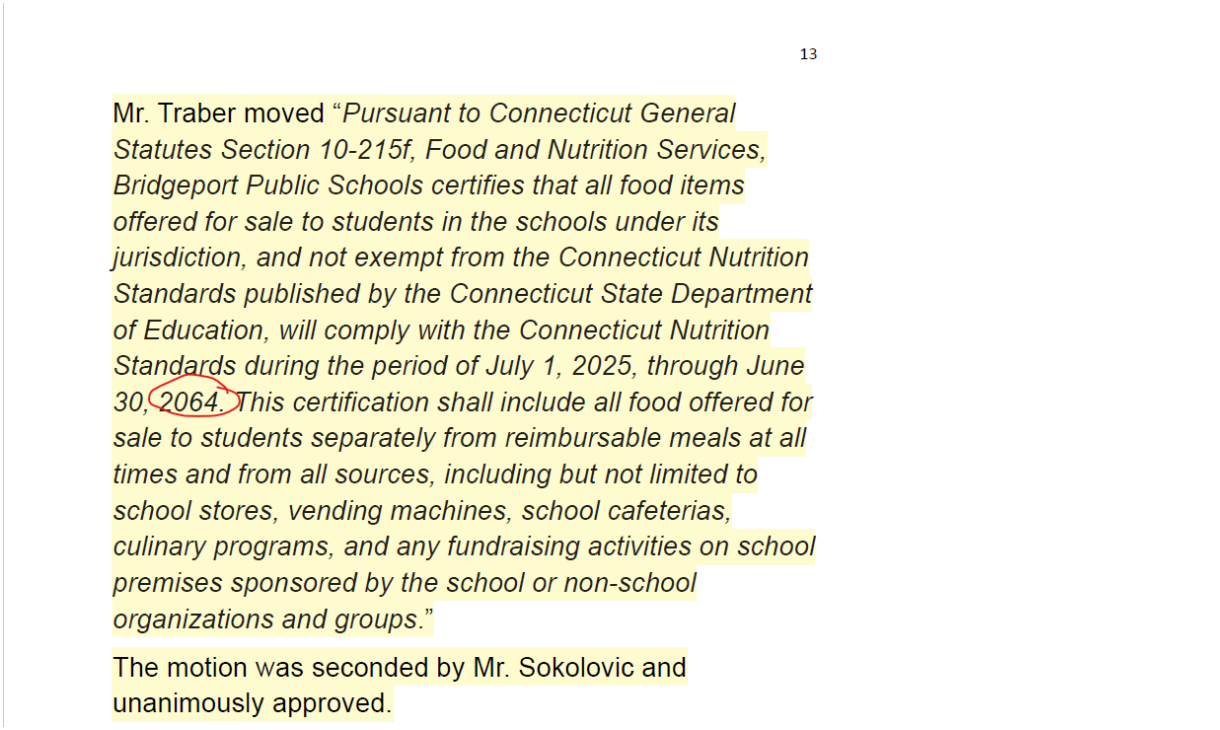
John McLeod

Approved by the board on May 12, 2025

From:	Fiore, Susan
To:	Martinez, Edmarie
Cc:	Steele, Keoma; Avery, Royce; Nkwo, Nestor
Subject:	2025-26 Healthy Food Certification Statement Approved: Bridgeport School District
Date:	Friday, September 5, 2025 3:46:28 PM
Attachments:	image001.png image002.png

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has approved your Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement for school year 2025-26, effective July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. You can view your HFC Statement in the Connecticut Online Application and Claiming System for Child Nutrition Programs (CNP System). **Note:** This approval applies only to the HFC **application**, which was due by July 1, 2025. It does not apply to HFC **documentation**, which will be due by November 30, 2025 (refer to "HFC Documentation Due November 30, 2025" below).

As a point of clarification, please correct the board minutes to reflect the correct ending date of the HFC period: July 1, 2024, through June 30, **2026**.



13

Mr. Traber moved "*Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-215f, Food and Nutrition Services, Bridgeport Public Schools certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempt from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2064. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups.*"

The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

Please review the important information below about the HFC requirements and compliance strategies, required HFC training modules, HFC documentation (due **November 30, 2025**), and other state and federal laws that apply to HFC public schools. For more information on the district's HFC responsibilities, refer to the CSDE's *Ensuring District Compliance with Healthy Food Certification.* For additional guidance on implementing HFC, visit the "Guidance and Resources" section of the CSDE's HFC webpage.

For questions about HFC, please contact me at susan.fiore@ct.gov. Have a great start to your school year!

Susan

HFC Requirements and Compliance Strategies

To receive HFC funding, districts must comply with the CNS and HFC requirements. Districts are responsible for ensuring that all sources of competitive foods available for sale to students on school premises comply with these requirements. To prevent noncompliance issues, districts must develop and implement procedures for competitive foods that include the strategies below.

1. **Clearly communicate what foods and beverages are allowed:** Notify all entities that sell foods and beverages to students on school premises what commercial products are allowed, based on the CSDE's List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages webpage, and specify that substitutions are not allowed. Examples of people to inform include food service directors and cafeteria staff, culinary programs staff, school store operators, vending machine operators, fundraiser operators, coordinators of school clubs and organizations, and staff from outside entities such as food service management companies and vendors. Provide clear instructions to vendors about allowable foods and beverages and indicate that substitutions are not allowed when an approved product is not available.

2. **Evaluate all commercial products before purchasing:** Before purchasing any commercial products, determine that all foods comply with the CNS and all beverages comply with the state beverage statute and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Smart Snacks nutrition standards. Use the CSDE's List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages webpage to verify that the food or beverage is listed. Check that the product's information exactly matches the CSDE-approved product. If the food will include accompaniments, add the nutrition information for the food and its accompaniments together to determine if the product still complies with the CNS. Accompaniments that cause an approved product to exceed the CNS limits cannot be served with the product. Commercial products that are not included on the CSDE's List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages webpage cannot be sold to students. Districts may submit products to the CSDE for review using the steps in the CSDE's *Submitting Food and Beverage Products for Approval*.

3. **Evaluate all foods made from scratch before selling to students:** The district's procedures for sales of competitive foods must require prior approval to ensure that all foods made from scratch comply with the CNS. These foods cannot be sold to students unless the selling entity has the following documentation: 1) an accurate standardized recipe that indicates the calories, fat, saturated fat, sodium, and sugars per serving; and 2) the completed CNS worksheet for the applicable food category documenting that the standardized recipe's serving (including any accompaniments, e.g., dressing, cream cheese, butter, and condiments like ketchup and mayonnaise) complies with the CNS. For additional guidance, refer to the CSDE's resources, *Guidance on Evaluating Recipes for Compliance with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards* and *How to Evaluate Foods Made from Scratch for Compliance with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards*, and visit "Foods Made from Scratch" in the "Evaluating Foods for CNS Compliance" section of the CSDE's CNS webpage.

4. **Check deliveries when received:** Ordering products that are included on the CSDE's List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages webpage does not guarantee they will be delivered. Designate school staff responsible for checking deliveries to ensure that vendors do not substitute noncompliant products. Examples include a food service employee who checks deliveries of snack foods (such as cookies, chips, and ice cream) for the cafeteria and school staff who check vending machines stocked by an outside vending company.

For additional guidance on the HFC requirements and compliance strategies, refer to the CSDE's *Requirements for Competitive Foods in HFC Public Schools.*

Required HFC Training Modules

The information in the CSDE's Complying with Healthy Food Certification training is required for the district's HFC contact person to ensure that all schools comply with the state and federal laws. The HFC contact person is the point person identified by the school district on the annual HFC Statement, who is responsible for coordinating HFC implementation and monitoring for the school district (refer to the CSDE's *Responsibilities of District Contact Person for Healthy Food Certification*).

This training is also intended for individuals that coordinate sales of competitive foods to students on school premises, such as food service directors and managers, culinary programs staff, fundraising coordinators, vending machine operators, school store operators, and leaders of student organizations and parent groups that sells foods and beverages.

School nutrition personnel may use this training program to count toward the annual training requirements of the USDA's professional standards requirements. For more information, refer to the CSDE's *Professional Standards Topics and Training Hours for the Complying with Healthy Food Certification Training Modules*.

HFC Documentation Due November 30, 2025

The HFC documentation forms are due **November 30, 2025**. All districts are required to submit the annual online HFC Compliance form. Certain districts must also submit lists of foods and beverages sold to students from all sources in the district. Please do **not** submit anything now. Information about the HFC documentation requirements will be emailed to schools in early fall.

Other State and Federal Laws for HFC Public Schools

In addition to the HFC requirements, public schools must also comply with additional state and federal for selling and giving competitive foods to students in HFC public schools. For an overview of these laws and when they apply, refer to the CSDE's resources, *Requirements for Competitive Foods in HFC Public Schools* and *Summary Chart: State and Federal Requirements for Competitive Foods in HFC Public Schools.* The resources below provide additional guidance on selling and giving competitive foods to students in HFC public schools.

- Connecticut Competitive Foods Regulations
- Requirements for Cafeteria A La Carte Foods and Beverages in HFC Public Schools

- Requirements for Foods and Beverages in Culinary Programs in HFC Public Schools
- Requirements for Food and Beverage Fundraisers in HFC Public Schools
- Requirements for Foods and Beverages in School Stores in HFC Public Schools
- Requirements for Foods and Beverages in Vending Machines in HFC Public Schools
- Resources for Meeting the Federal and State Requirements for Competitive Foods in Schools
- Summary Chart: State and Federal Requirements for Competitive Foods in HFC Public Schools

SUSAN FIORE, M.S., R.D.
Education Consultant
CONNECTICUT Education
Phone: 860-807-2075
susan.fiore@ct.gov

The information contained in this transmission is CONFIDENTIAL and PRIVILEGED and is intended only for the use of the recipient listed above. If you are not the intended recipient, please do not read, distribute, or take action in reliance upon this message. If you have received this e-mail in error, please notify us immediately by return e-mail and promptly delete this message and its attachments from your computer system. The text of this e-mail is similar to ordinary telephone or face-to-face conversations and does not reflect the level of factual or legal inquiry or analysis, which would be applied in the case of a formal legal opinion. Please note that messages to or from the State of Connecticut domain may be subject to the Freedom of Information Act (Conn. Gen. Stat. sections 1-200 et seq.).