The minutes presented within this document summarize the discussion of the Regular Board of Education meeting. To view the meeting in its entirety and hear full reports please click the following link: 1/7/26-Regular Board of Education Meeting

Bristol Board of Education
Bristol, Connecticut
Wednesday, January 7,2026 – 7:00 p.m.
Regular Meeting Minutes

The Bristol Board of Education regular meeting was held on Wednesday, January 7,2026 at 7:00 p.m. in the Bristol Board of Education Auditorium located at 129 Church Street and via Zoom Meeting Platform.

Present: Chair Shelby Pons, Commissioners: Russel Anderson (virtual), Jill Fitzsimons-Bula,Kara Ledger,, Maria Simmons, Barbara Tedesco, and Jennifer Van Gorder (virtual-7:01pm)

Absent: Lorianne Osenkowski, Kristen Giantonio, Peter Kelley

Also, Present: Superintendent Iris White and Deputy Superintendent Mary Hawk

Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance/Moment of Silence:
Chair Pons called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and asked the audience to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Pons gave a moment of silence for Estelle A. Rao, age 80, of Bristol, who passed away on Sunday, November 30, 2025, at Bristol Hospital after a brief illness. Estelle was a lifelong Bristol resident, a dedicated educator, and a beloved Spanish teacher at Bristol Eastern High School. She will be remembered for her commitment to education and her lasting impact on generations of students.

Staff and Student Recognition
Superintendent White recognized and introduced the Bristol Education Foundation Mini-Grant Awardees, congratulating them on their successful efforts in securing grants for their schools. Commissioners also offered remarks commending the awardees for their dedication and contributions to the Bristol Public Schools community.

Superintendent White introduced Mr. Alan Theriault, City-Wide Enrichment Coordinator, who presented three students from the Talented and Gifted Program. The students shared six-word memoirs and were identified as Natalia Assis (West Bristol), Jayce Melecio (Northeast), and Olivia Lu (Northeast).

Chair Pons and the Commissioners praised the students for their writing and encouraged them to continue their work. The Deputy Superintendent thanked Mr. Theriault for sharing the students' writing and for facilitating their participation in the meeting.

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Approval of Minutes

December 3, 2025- Regular Meeting Minutes

The Board of Education voted to approve the December 3, 2025- Regular Meeting Minutes as written.

Motion made by Maria Simmons and second by Jill Fitzsimons-Bula. Motion passed unanimously.

December 17, 2025 - Special Meeting Minutes

The Board of Education voted to approve the December 17, 2025 - Special Meeting Minutes – as written.

Motion made by Maria Simmons and second by Barbara Tedesco. Motion passed unanimously.

Committee Reports

Student Achievement & Outcome Committee – Commissioner Ledger reported that the committee met in December. The committee received a presentation from Physical Education and Health Supervisor Sarah Hale on the 2025 Connecticut Physical Fitness data. Bristol Public Schools reported a 95.8% student participation rate, with 50% of students meeting proficiency standards. Officials are monitoring the impact of the reduced physical education credits implemented last year and are focusing on strategies to improve student performance.

Laura Lanza presented two proposed curriculum revisions, which were brought forward to the full Board for consideration later in the meeting. The revisions pertain to AP Biology and ECE Biology, both of which are connected with UConn.

School, Family, and Community Partnerships – No report was provided.

Policy Committee – No report was provided.

School Safety Committee – No report was provided.

Finance and Operations Committee – Commissioner Simmons reported that the committee met in December. The committee reviewed the budget update through November 30, 2025, including reports on cafeteria operations, pupil services, student activity accounts, and substitute teachers. The committee expressed interest in continuing discussions regarding the fiscal needs of the schools and the community. Commissioner Simmons also shared that the next committee meeting is scheduled for January 14, 2026, at which time budget updates through December 31, 2025 will be reviewed.

Student Representatives Report

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Bristol Central
Bristol Central Senior Representative Amelia Browne reported that the past month at Bristol Central High School has been relatively calm. Winter sports have begun, including basketball, indoor track, swimming, and wrestling. She noted a recent competitive basketball game against Eastern that concluded with a buzzer-beater finish.

Ms. Browne shared that Bristol Central held its annual winter pep rally, Festivus, upon returning from winter break. During the event, the administration distributed gifts, pencils, toys, and festive shirts. The celebration included games and a performance by the Bristol Central Dance Team.

The senior class has been actively engaged in the college application process, with early action applicants beginning to receive decisions. Notable college commitments include Valedictorian Emily Gao to Yale University, Avery Phillips to the University of New Haven, and Meghan Southey to the University of Connecticut, among others.

Looking ahead to January, students are involved in planning several upcoming events. The Interact Club is organizing the return of the Mr. BCHS male beauty pageant, scheduled for late April, marking its first occurrence since 2019. The event will include talent performances, speeches, interviews, formal attire, and a dance component.

Ms. Browne also reported that the Get Psyched Club, in collaboration with guidance counselors and school psychologists, is planning a Mental Health Day for students on February 13 in observance of P.S. I Love You Day. The event will feature Zumba instructors, informational booths, a podcast station, and a TED Talk-style presentation.

Additionally, the Class of 2026 is planning an event to recognize parents of graduating seniors, including opportunities for photographs and commemorative apparel. The theater program is currently casting and preparing for a production of Guys and Dolls. Ms. Browne concluded by noting that students are actively working to introduce new traditions at Bristol Central.

Bristol Eastern
Bristol Eastern Senior Representative Paige Ansah was unable to attend the meeting due to participation in a track meet. Principal Higgins presented the monthly student update on her behalf.

Principal Higgins reported that on December 18, several students attended the Youth Empowerment and Equity Symposium hosted at Central Connecticut State University (CCSU). Students learned about leadership initiatives at other schools and engaged in discussions on topics including colorism and social justice. Following the symposium, students expressed interest in implementing similar initiatives at Bristol Eastern, such as creating a meditation space for students observing Ramadan, introducing a “fact of the day” during Black History Month, and potentially expanding Culture Day.

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The Model United Nations Club is preparing for a four-day conference in New York scheduled for March. Students will represent countries as delegates and participate in debates on global issues. Members are currently completing position papers in preparation for the conference.

Science National Honor Society (SNHS) committees continue to make progress on their initiatives. The Real World Science Committee is planning a field trip to the Boston Museum of Science. The Fundraising Committee is developing strategies to support the trip. The Recycling Committee continues weekly collection of cans and bottles. The Courtyard and Composting Committee is working with Bristol Public Works to establish a composting project within the school. The Beautification Committee is preparing its next school-based project.

Midterm examinations will begin on January 22. Students are required to attend school during scheduled midterm periods unless prior permission for absence has been granted. Students without a scheduled midterm during a specific period are not required to be in school during that time. The spring semester will begin on January 28 following the conclusion of midterms.

For athletics, Track and Field has a meet scheduled at Wesleyan this evening. Wrestling will host Berlin tonight, and the hockey team will compete against Hall. Boys Basketball is scheduled to play away at East Hartford on January 8, 2026, and Girls Basketball will play away at Enfield on January 9, 2026. All winter sports teams have reported a successful start to their seasons.

Chair Report

Chair Pons provided an update on instrumental music instruction at Greene Hills School and West Bristol School. She announced that Tim Dubin, a recent graduate of Central Connecticut State University, has assumed responsibility for the instrumental music program at both schools. Students will continue to receive the full program for the remainder of the school year, including both instrumental lessons and encore classes, with encore classes resuming later this week.

Chair Pons also reported that the Board of Education has begun its annual budget development cycle. A meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 13, at 5:00 p.m. to provide an overview of the laws, timelines, and procedures guiding the Board's budget process. The meeting will be facilitated by attorneys Mooney and Ritter of Shipman & Goodman, legal counsel to both the City and the Board of Education. This joint effort between the Mayor and Superintendent, who meet monthly, aims to strengthen trust, align long-term priorities, and establish a collaborative budget process that supports student success, fiscal responsibility, and transparency across all governing bodies serving Bristol students. The meeting will include all three governing bodies: the elected Board of Education, City Council, and the appointed Board of Finance.

Chair Pons provided an update on the Superintendent's upcoming budget workshops. Budget Workshop No. 1 will be held on Saturday, January 24, from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. at City Hall Council Chambers, during which Superintendent White will present her proposed budget, highlighting key priorities, staffing considerations, and programmatic needs. Budget Workshop No. 2 will take place on Tuesday, February 2, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. in the Bristol Board of Education Auditorium, allowing for continued discussion, questions, and public input.

Community participation is encouraged to ensure the final budget reflects district priorities and student needs.

Chair Pons concluded her report.

Superintendent Report

The Superintendent began her report with an update on School Strategic Reviews, noting that she has begun meeting with each school. Superintendent White thanked the Greene Hills administration team for being the first to present alongside the Central Office team. She reported that principals and their leadership teams are regularly reviewing academic, discipline, and attendance data; monitoring goals; engaging in continuous review cycles; collaborating with teachers; and making mid-year adjustments as needed. Schools were transparent about their needs, and the Central Office team provided feedback and guidance. Follow-up support will be provided by the CIS Office and other Central Office departments.

Superintendent White also reported that she has reached out to the presidents of each school's PTA and PTO to invite participation in a newly formed Advisory Council. The purpose of the council is to bring together school organizations to share ideas, best practices, and highlights from their schools, as well as to provide input on district priorities and initiatives. Participation is not limited to PTA/PTO presidents, and membership is expected to expand over time. Meetings are scheduled on Thursdays from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Bristol Board of Education.

The Superintendent provided an update on meetings with legislative delegations and her involvement with the Connecticut Association of Urban Superintendents (CAUSE), of which Bristol is a member. She reported that CAUSE superintendents are advocating for increased state funding, particularly related to the Alliance District Program, COVID-related needs, and excess cost funding. Superintendent White shared that letters developed collaboratively by CAUSE were sent to local legislators, the Board of Education, and Mayor Ellen Zoppo-Sassu. She noted that Representative Cox responded, indicating interest from the legislative delegation in meeting to learn more about Bristol's challenges and support needs.

Superintendent White then turned the report over to Deputy Superintendent Mary Hawk for an update on the Kindergarten Assessment Process. Ms. Hawk reported that the district has established a Kindergarten Taskforce to support the development of kindergarten entry recommendations through the screening process. Students will participate in a full-day kindergarten classroom visit, with input from occupational therapists, physical therapists, and school psychologists to determine developmental readiness for kindergarten enrollment.

Deputy Superintendent Hawk also provided an update regarding the water main break at Bristol Preparatory Academy on Friday, November 21, 2025. She confirmed that students will still meet the State of Connecticut's required 180 instructional days and that the missed day will not need to be made up.

Ms. Hawk further reported on the Student Redistricting Cabinet meeting held in December. She stated that the cabinet was created to ensure the student voice is heard and valued throughout the redistricting process. Student members have actively participated in meetings and shared updates with their peers through morning announcements. Their feedback will continue to inform district decisions during the transition.

Questions and discussion followed regarding the Kindergarten Assessment Process.

Consent Agenda
Chair Pons called for a motion to approve the Consent agenda, which include items from 8.1.a – 8.2.d

Motion made by Maria Simmons and second by Kara Ledger. Motion passed unanimously.

8.1 Personnel
8.1.a Teacher Hires
Thomas, Amber – EPH – Special Education Teacher LEAD effective December 18, 2025

8.1.b Teacher Resignations
Capitani, Joseph – CHMS – Physical Education Teacher effective December 31, 2025

8.1.c A-3 Hire
Stafford, Jason – CHMS – Gifted Coach

8.1.d TEAM Mentor/Cooperating Teacher
Sylvester, Sandra – Edgewood (Pre-K Educator)
DeVoe, Jessica - BAIMS (Special Education)
MacDonald, Theresa - BAIMS (Music)
Hernandez, Jessica - Ivy Drive (Elementary)
Lyons, Shannon - West Bristol (TESOL)
Duval, Allison - West Bristol (Elementary)

Chair Pons called for a motion to approve the Consent agenda, which include items from 8.2.a – 8.2.g

Motion made by Kara Ledger and second by Maria Simmons. Motion passed unanimously.

8.2 Grants
8.2.a Barnes Foundation Grant
8.2.b United Way Grant
8.2.c Girl Up! Leadership and Empowerment Skills for Girls
8.2.d.Parent Trust Fund, Parent Leadership Training Grant
8.2.e. ReadyCT Grant (BEHS FIRST Robotics Program)
8.2.f. SDE FRC Primary Grant
8.2.g. SDE Primary Mental Health “BOOST” grant

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Public Comments

Alex Hamzy Sr. addressed the Board and expressed his gratitude for honoring his late son, Alex Hamzy Jr., by dedicating and renaming the Northeast Gym as the Sgt. Alex Hamzy Gymnasium.

Chair Pons expressed her gratitude to Mr. Hamzy for speaking about his son and noted that the Board's decision was unanimous. She shared that both the Board and the community hold Sgt. Alex Hamzy in high regard and thanked the Hamzy family for sharing his legacy with the Bristol Community.

Deliberated Items/District Leadership Team Reports

Pupil Personnel Services Report

Dr. Amy Martino presented the monthly Pupil Personnel Services Report. Mrs.Martino reported as of December 1st, 2025, there were 1,779 students of the 7,874 enrolled, Pupils required special education programming. This enrollment maintains the 22.59% that we've been seeing over the past few months. As of December 1st, 2025, 123 students with disabilities are required to go out of district programming. There were 88 students requiring special education programming at other public schools, that would include magnet schools. During the month of November 2025, 68% of the newly registered students were identified as requiring special education programming at the time of registration. Dr. Marinton highlighted that was 19 out of 28 students, because it's such a high percentage of students for that particular month
During the month of November, there were (33) 211 calls and (6) 911 calls.

As of December 1st, 2025, all budget lines represented are trending as expected. Though over in a couple of lines, but have yet to receive excess cost funds, tuition reimbursement, and/or medicaid reimbursements.. As previously noted, we were over due to the professional services, contracted services and transportation.

Questions and discussions followed regarding the deficit for Pupil Personnel Services Report for month by month Appropriations vs. YTD expenditures.

Curriculum Revisions

Superintendent White welcomed Debra Vitale and Zachary Maher as the two new supervisors in the Curriculum and Instructional Services Office.

11.1 AP Biology

Laura Lanza provided an overview on the curriculum revision for AP Biology and thanked the staff that worked on the revision.

Question and discussion in regards to the course and credits.

Motion made by Jill Fitzsimons-Bula and seconded by Kara Ledger. Motion passed unanimously.

11.2 UCONN Biology

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Lauren Lanza provided an overview on the curriculum revision for PLTW Civil Engineering & Architecture and thanked the staff that worked on the revision.

Question and discussion in regards to the course revision, prerequisite and course pathway.

Motion made by Maria Simmons and seconded by Kara Ledger. Motion passed unanimously.

Policy Revisions
No policy revisions to report to the board.

New Business

13.1 25-26 School Calendar Updates
Questions and discussion were held regarding the half-day schedules for Parent-Teacher Conferences and inclement weather days. Concerns were raised about parent confusion and transportation issues at the high schools. A proposal was discussed to maintain a single consistent schedule for Parent-Teacher Conferences and to consider adjusting dates through a future Board vote.

Joseph Grabowski, Chief of Talent Management, reported that meetings were held with union presidents to gather feedback on Parent-Teacher Conference dates and times. Carly Fortin also addressed the Board, expressing concerns about changing the days of the week for Parent-Teacher Conferences due to low parent attendance.

The Board agreed to table the discussion and revisit the matter at the full Board meeting in February.

13.2 26-27 CIP Review & Adoption
Peter Fusco provided an overview on the Capital Improvement Plan for the 26-27 School Year.

Vice-Chair Simmons thanked Mr. Fusco for his thorough presentation during the last Finance Committee Meeting and encouraged those to review the meeting to get an in-depth overview of all the plans Mr. Fusco is proposing.

Questions & Discussion in regards to his proposed CIP plan.

Vice-Chair Simmons called for a motion to approve the 2026-2027 CIP as presented, and to forward to the City Capital Improvement and Strategic Planning Committee

Motion made by Maria Simmons and seconded by Jill Fitzsimons-Bula. Motion passed unanimously.

Secretary Jill Fitzsimons-Bula called for a motion to add a new item to the agenda under new business to establish a personnel committee.

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Questions and discussion in regards to adding the item and protocol for the committee.

Motion made by Shelby Pons and seconded by Maria Simmons. The motion passed unanimously.

13.3. Appointment to AD-Hoc Personnel Committee
Chair Pons nominated Commissioners Maria Simmons, Jill Fitzsimons-Bula, and Kara Ledger to serve on the Ad-Hoc Personnel Committee.

Questions and discussion were held regarding the committee appointments and its processes.

Chair Pons declared the motion PASSED with (5) Commissioners Fitzsimons-Bula, Ledger, Simmons, Tedesco, and Pons) in favor of the motion and (2) Commissioner (Anderson (Virtual), Van Gorder (Virtual)) opposed.

Commissioners Maria Simmons, Jill Fitzsimons-Bula, and Kara Ledger were officially appointed to the Ad-Hoc Personnel Committee.

14. Information/Liaison Reports
Commissioner Simmons shared a school liaison report from Mr. Higgins, Principal of Bristol Eastern High School. Principal Higgins reported that planning for the 2026–2027 school year is underway. Revisions are being made to the program of studies, including expanded course offerings and enhanced college and career pathways at both high schools. Teachers will soon provide course recommendations, and students will make their course selections in the coming weeks to begin the scheduling process for next year.

Principal Higgins also shared that the state recently released Bristol Eastern High School's 2025 four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate. Eastern achieved a 94.4% graduation rate, exceeding the state goal—a level not reached since before COVID. He commended the dedication and hard work of the entire Bristol Eastern High School community and expressed optimism for continued improvement this year. Commissioner Simmons congratulated Bristol Eastern High School for their outstanding achievements.

16. Adjournment

There being no other business to come before the Board, the Regular Board of Education Meeting should adjourn. (9:06 p.m.)

Respectfully Submitted,

Sydney Molina

Recording Secretary
Bristol Board of Education

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