BOE Regular Meeting
October 19, 2026 7:00 PM

1. Call to Order
   Courtney Ennis, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:01PM. Other Members present: Nicole Serra, Kelly McNamara, Charles Raymond and Dan Harris. Heather Helwig and Andrew Koniecko were excused. Also present: Dr. Roy Seitsinger; Superintendent, Cindy Varricchio; Director of Finance, and Gloria Homiski; Recording Secretary.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Public Comment

Courtney Ennis read an email from Jill Keith (see attached). She expressed concern over not seeing the Climate Survey on the website, not seeing attachments posted with BOE agendas, FOIA questions, and questions regarding Special Education Information posted online.

In Person Public Comment:

Jennifer Foltz: Teacher and EAP Vice-Chair (see attached): She expressed her overall concern for the morale and well-being of teachers. She shared that we lost good people because they felt their jobs were not secure in Preston.

Christine McNeil: Teacher and EAP President: She stated that the late changes to the schedule for 26-27 caused confusion, chaos, disruption, and inequity district wide. Preston lost Mrs. Jacobsen to another district where her job will be secure and her
position will be supported. The PPMS school social worker and school psychologist also left over the summer for job security elsewhere. She asked that the Board plan with thoughtfulness, keeping the best interest of all students in mind.

Vicky Spicer: Teacher and Preston Parent: She has been a teacher for 11 years in Preston. She expressed anger and disappointment regarding recent Board decisions. She believes that Taty (Spanish teacher who left) is irreplaceable. She had to change her entire curriculum in a short period of time, and then after doing so, learned that the Board wanted her to take on more responsibilities because there would be no added cost to the district. She stated that positions are not expendable. Fewer people cannot be asked to do more work. She was disappointed when the Chair asked why all the student events were listed on the cadence calendar. She asked that the Board take an honest look at the consequences of some of their decisions. Students, educators and the community deserve better.

Cara Sawyer: Parent: She hopes the discipline policy is in place as soon as possible so that coaches can have clear direction from the staff. She also said that Board discussion regarding the restoration of elementary Spanish had gone on for several months. She does not understand why it took so long to be implemented. She knows how successful her own children are in High School Spanish and believes elementary Spanish contributed to that. She would like to see the same success for her younger child at PVMS.

4. Consent Agenda

Moved, to pull the 9-14-2026 minutes from the consent agenda for discussion. McNamara/Ennis. All in favor. Motion Carries.

Moved, to accept the remainder of the consent agenda as presented. Ennis/McNamara. All in Favor. Motion Carries.

Kelly McNamara stated that some information under Item 9: Committee Reports is incorrect. The audit was not reviewed because it is not complete. The minutes will be revised to make that clear. Also, on page 1, section 5, Old Business, the minutes read that Kelly made a request to add Elementary Spanish a few days before the start of the school year. Kelly clarified that she made this request in an email on July 14th. Further down in that same paragraph, Kelly would like the following statement added: She thought that on paper it looked as though grade 3 instruction could be incorporated fairly easily but she understands that in reality it may not be that simple and that is why the Board decided to move the discussion to the Curriculum Committee for further review.

Revised minutes for 9-14-26 will be brought back to the Board on 11-9-2026.

5. Old Business: Public Comment
Superintendent Update
Board Chair Update

Dr. Seitsinger let Cara Sawyer know that Policy 5114 (suspension and expulsion/due process) is actually on tonight's agenda. He stated that the administrations are reviewing the versions of the policy and will make sure the adopted policy aligns with the student handbook and athletic handbook.

Dr Seitsinger also stated that our schools are struggling to find substitutes. PVMS is down 3 para-educators. Four teachers are on FMLA status over the course of this school year. We have found a couple of long term subs, but have no daily building subs. A sub pay analysis will be brought to the next meeting. Our standard sub rate has been holding at $120 a day. That is one of the lowest rates. We may need to consider moving that up.

Dr. Seitsinger gave his formal announcement of retirement, stating that with gratitude and humility he will formally retire on July 1, 2027.As he reflects on the past 10 years in Preston, he is deeply grateful for the people he has met - students, parents, faculty and staff. He is happy to say they have contributed to his own life and to the school community at large. (See letters attached).

Courtney Ennis thanked him for his commitment and guidance. She announced that the Board will be meeting Wednesday night to interview consultants to start finding a replacement.

6. Superintendent's Update

Policies at second read:

Policy 5131.81 Students – Electronic Devices

Moved, to accept the Shipman Goodwin version of policy 5131.81 with the following amendment: Remove the word "instructional" in front of staff. Ennis/Serra. Unanimous. Motion Carries.

Policy 1112.7 Community Relations – Recording Meetings Without Consent

Moved, to accept the CABE version of policy 1112.7 as presented. Ennis/Serra. Unanimous. Motion Carries.

Policies at first read:

Policy 5114 Student Suspension/Expulsion/Due Process

Policy 3541 Transportation

Policy 5118 Non-Resident Attendance

All three policies will be brought back in November.

Transportation Tracking Update:

Mr. Merrill and Dr. Seitsinger recommend the purchase of BusRight. The cost would be pro-rated for the current school year. That means it would cost 10K for the rest of this school year. He has not purchased any of the supplies that were budgeted for the old system yet this year (ink, cleaning cartridges, cards, lanyards) so the purchase would be budget neutral for 26-27. If the Board votes to move forward, onboarding could begin shortly and the program could be rolled out by February. Brendan did get prices from another company, but they were more expensive.

Cindy Varricchio explained that the cost would be between 8-10K more a year after this year. BusRight provides all the cards etc. at no additional cost.

7. Preston PTO
No Report

8. Principals'/Director of Student Services Report/Other Director Reports as Needed

Craig Kind: Director of Student Services:
Craig looked into the High-Quality Special Education Grant further. Out of 169 CT districts, 116 applied. Only 41 districts were selected to receive the grant. He will continue to search for other grant support.

Letters went home to families of Special Education students explaining procedure etc. Craig and his Assistant are currently reviewing all contracts for students with outplacements.

DESSA is in full swing. It is aligned with the marking periods. Letters will go home to families whose students are participating. Craig will report to the Board at each trimester.

Kelly McNamara asked for an update on the last report given. Craig stated that unfortunately the numbers were off but administration has learned from their mistakes and will move forward with better results.

Chris Pickett: Principal PPMS:
PPMS had a Panther Pride celebration. They engaged in sporting events and various arts and crafts. An Hispanic Heritage month presentation was held. It was arranged by a parent and Spanish Teacher; Taty Jacobsen.

High School night was held last week. Students have 10 schools to choose from. He thanked Laila Griffin; 8th grade advisor, for arranging the presentations.

The Cross-Country Championship is Oct 22, and the soccer semi-finals is on Oct 26.

Ray Bernier: Principal PVMS:
The Preston City Fire Department came to PVMS to teach the children about fire safety. They brought a fire truck and gave out hats. The Newspaper and Unified Clubs are up and running. Senior lunches have begun.

Mr. Bernier and Mr. Pickett then presented an SBAC Assessment Study. (Please see the report attached). They noted the historic results and also noted some areas to improve upon.

Kelly McNamara asked what the plans are to retain this progress. Ray Bernier stated that they will continue to use IAB state provided practice tests and workbooks from Lumos Learning. Mr. Pickett added that articulation and analysis of data are also very important. Successes will be reported for every grade level at all faculty meetings.

9. Committee Reports
Finance Committee: Kelly McNamara reported that a meeting was held on 10-15-26 where an update was given regarding closing out the 25-26 budget year. There are still more invoices to receive and pay. Auditors were in district the week before last. The Capital Improvement Plan was discussed. The BOF has adjusted the timeline a bit.

Curriculum Committee: Andrew Koniecko was excused from tonight's meeting. No report.

Building Needs Assessment Committee: Dan Harris stated that they did not meet.

Policy Committee: Charles Raymond reported that the Policy Committee met on 10-14-2026. They reviewed the 3 policies that were brought to the Board tonight at first read.

LEARN: Courtney Ennis is the new Preston LEARN Rep. She recently attended her first meeting. (See report attached).

10. Financial/Capital Report
a. FY26 Financial Report:
Cindy Varricchio continues to work on closing out the 25-26 school year. Not all items ordered in June have come in yet and therefore not all invoices have been received. The current remaining balance is 232K.

Some purchase orders and invoices are not matching up perfectly. The 232K is 1.5% of the entire budget.

Cindy Varricchio also reviewed the state supplemental aid and the non-lapsing balance. They will partner with the Town to buy heating oil and gas. A 75K increase is expected for next year. They are trying to find a Cap Program.

Cindy will attend the GFOA Conference tomorrow (Governmental Financial Operating Association).

Kelly McNamara asked about the air and water study results. Cindy stated that study results will go to the BOF.

Moved, to accept the June 2026 Preliminary YTD Budget Report and the August 2026 YTD Budget Report as presented. Ennis/McNamara. Unanimous. Motion Carries.

Capital Plan: Dr. Seitsinger and Cindy Varricchio prioritized the Capital Projects from the Master List. The Board reviewed the document.

The elevator at PVMS must be addressed, as well as paving at PVMS and playground repairs. Estimates will be acquired.

The document will be further reviewed at the next Finance Committee and then brought back to the full Board on November 9th.

11. Public Comment

Meghan Campbell: Parent: She thanked the Board and the Administration for advocating for the playground repairs and the elevator. She has a son in a wheelchair, and unfortunately, his chair got caught in a crack in the playground and flipped over. Also, when the elevator is down, her son's classroom is relocated. She appreciates both projects being addressed.

12. Adjournment

Moved, to adjourn the meeting at 8:55PM. Ennis/Serra. Unanimous. Motion Carries.

Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

Re: Question: climate survey results?

1 message

Jill Keith <jillskeith@gmail.com> Mon, Sep 14, 2026 at 2:30 PM
To: Courtney Ennis <ennisc@prestonschools.org>
Cc: "Dr. Preston - BOE" <seitsingerr@prestonschools.org>, Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>, Jill Keith <jillskeith@gmail.com>

Thank you, Courtney. I truly appreciate your courteous reply and follow-up.

I wished to request my email reply be added to tonight's BOE public comment for the benefit of all BOE Members, staff, families, and the community. However, I didn't reply before noon today as I'd hoped and planned.

~

You're welcome to read this in my absence if you receive it in time, given it's an outstanding topic (among others) about which I've been corresponding with Preston administrators. *(I'd recommend referencing but not reading supplied website addresses.)*

* climate survey - I look forward to reading the analysis and improvement plan, particularly given there are state mandates about it and the Preston school administrators have been discussing school staff climate interventions at BOE meetings during previous years. It's also been a critical state priority item for decades. I'm hopeful a robust survey/results like the following were used and implemented:
https://schoolclimate.org/inquiry/?
https://www.waterbury.k12.ct.us/districtschoolclimateplan

* Preston Public Schools continue to violate current school law by not attaching BOE meeting packets to posted agendas, as well as presentations, data, etc to posted BOE meeting summaries. The school website format continues to be wonky with missing items often on the school and town website. (I'm sorry; I couldn't think of a nicer way to say that. Perhaps the BOE could vote to comply henceforth with the legal reference previously provided.)

* Director of Special Education: reasons why Preston did not receive the state's High-Quality Special Education Grant; include the state's written response to Preston's grant application

[I also wonder why Preston still reports 0 students to the CSDE as gifted/high potential during the last two (and 20) years, despite increasing admin a day a week all year for that process. Are there still typos in the screening/identification process? Have teachers been trained about who to refer? Are all PreK-8/12 students being universally screened with the OLSAT? Are all high potential learners removed from Preston's public schools in favor of accelerated home school and private school options? Are there other reasons? Has this been analyzed?

*FOIA records... Superintendent training took place; the FOIC complaint was withdrawn; yet, redacted records were never received. Reminder: I was provided BOE Member, teacher and parent email content and addresses about last year's budget with their personal and sensitive information included.

* Kudos to BOE Members who advocated and assisted schools to do the following:
- 🙌 Congratulations on implementing some Spanish back to Preston
- 🙌 Congratulations on adopting Shipman and Goodwin's Policy Program

* Thank you to
- those who comply with your important directive to be copied on all correspondence and to you for always replying and for keeping all BOE Members informed. Bravo, too, for creating BOE goals and supporting teachers/students/instruction.
- you, Dr Seitsinger, and music teachers for inquiring about a potential piano and keyboard donation.

Most sincerely,

Jill
Jill S Keith
cell: 860-884-9719
jillskeith@gmail.com

On Sun, Sep 13, 2026, 9:28 AM Courtney Ennis <ennisc@prestonschools.org> wrote:

Hi Jill,

I'm sorry you have not received this. I will follow up tomorrow morning when everyone is back in the office. I had assumed the survey was posted with the minutes.

Courtney

On Sat, Sep 12, 2026 at 10:09 PM Jill Keith <jillskeith@gmail.com> wrote:

Hello,
I'm disappointed i never received a reply.
Will you reply this school year?
Kindly add this to correspondence for Monday's Regular September Board of Education meeting.
Thank you,
Jill
Jill S Keith
cell: 860-884-9719
jillskeith@gmail.com

On Wed, Aug 19, 2026, 8:41 AM Jill Keith <jillskeith@gmail.com> wrote:

Hello - would you kindly reply all and answer this question for Gloria?
Would you also please attach a copy to your reply?
Thank you.

On Tue, Jun 30, 2026, 12:27 PM Jill Keith <jillskeith@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Gloria and Courtney:

Is the Culture and Climate report posted somewhere for the public to review?
If so, would you kindly direct me to it?
If not, can it be emailed to me?

In the future, will the Board of Education consider attaching all meeting documents to the agenda in accordance with this?
https://www.cga.ct.gov/2024/rpt/pdf/2024-R-0062.pdf

I attached a portion of that legislative guidance, as well as the meeting summary for reference.

I copied myself to remind me to check in about this next month.

I also noticed the Communication Committee does not seem to be functioning?

Wishing all a very special 4th of July.

Sincerely,

Jill

The information transmitted is intended only for the person or entity to which it is addressed and may contain proprietary, business-confidential and/or privileged material. If you are not the intended recipient of this message you are hereby notified that any use, review, retransmission, dissemination, distribution, reproduction or any action taken in reliance upon this message is prohibited. If you received this in error, please contact the sender and delete the material from any computer."

To the Board of Education,

Deep disappointment and concerns have been expressed by staff this year regarding BOE decisions and discussions. This has contributed to staff frustration and, ultimately, the loss of valuable employees within our district. It is discouraging to see dedicated educators and professionals leave a district in which they have invested so much time, energy, and care. These departures should cause us all to reflect on the message our decisions are sending to the people who work tirelessly to support our students.

Two issues in particular raise serious concerns. First, the discussions about reducing the school psychologist's and social worker's schedules during last year's meetings sends a troubling message about the value placed on student mental health and social-emotional support. These professionals play an essential role and to start this school year off with a brand new social worker and no school psychologist was less than ideal. Our former employees left as a direct result of feeling insecure about their employment status and the value they bring to our district.

Second, the decision to move forward with Spanish instruction at the elementary level is concerning given that the program was previously cut as part of the effort to secure budget approval. When a program is removed to gain community support for a budget, only to be reconsidered or reinstated afterward, it raises legitimate questions about transparency, consistency, and respect for the process. It also creates frustration for staff who are expected to adapt to ever changing demands and expectations.

These issues are about more than individual programs or scheduling decisions. They reflect a larger concern about how staff members are valued, how decisions are communicated, and whether the voices of the people working directly with students are being heard. Staff morale and retention are closely connected to feeling respected, supported, and included in decisions that affect our schools. When employees feel that their expertise and concerns are being overlooked, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain the positive, collaborative environment that our students deserve. We cannot expect to retain quality staff if they continually feel that their roles, resources, and professional judgment are undervalued.

The Board of Education needs to take a closer look at the impact these decisions have on staff morale, trust, and retention. Future decisions should be made with greater transparency, consistency, and meaningful input from the educators and professionals who understand our students' needs firsthand. Budgetary responsibilities are real, but so is the responsibility to protect the quality of education and support services provided to our students.

Our district's success depends on more than passing budgets and making programs fit within financial limits. It depends on the people who show up every day to educate, guide, and support our children. Those individuals deserve to feel that their work is valued and that the decisions made by the Board reflect a genuine commitment to both staff and students.

Sincerely, Jennifer Foltz

Sp. Ed Teacher
EAP VTU-President

PRESTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Office of the Superintendent
1 Route 164
Preston, Connecticut 06365

Roy M. Seitsinger, Jr., Ph. D.
Superintendent
seitsingerr@prestonschools.org

(860)889-6098
FAX (860)889-8685

September 2026

Dear Preston Learning Community,

With deep gratitude and humility, I write to formally notify you of my intent to retire from my full-time position as Superintendent of Schools in Preston, effective July 1, 2027.

This decision follows thoughtful consideration of my family's needs and priorities, my health and professional goals, and my profound appreciation for the privilege of serving this community. By providing notice now, I hope to support a thoughtful, smooth transition and give the Board of Education ample opportunity to consider the future structure of the superintendent position, as well as the time needed to identify and engage a recruiting consultant and conduct a thorough search for Preston's next superintendent.

There remains important work before us. During the 2026–2027 school year, the Board and I will continue to move forward together: updating the Capital Improvement Plan, developing a strong and meaningful Strategic Plan, assessing opportunities for organizational redesign, and, above all, creating opportunities for every student to learn, grow, discover their strengths, and succeed.

As I reflect on my ten years in Preston, what stays with me most is not any single initiative, challenge, or accomplishment, but the people. I am deeply grateful for the remarkable souls I have had the good fortune to know along this journey. Students, families, teachers, support staff, administrators, Board members, community partners, and friends have each contributed to the life and spirit of our schools and, in countless ways, to my own life.

Over the last decade, the Preston Learning Community has navigated change with resilience, purpose, and hope. Through a growing Town–District partnership, we have created a joint strategic plan, shared resources, and strengthened standards rooted in kindness, responsibility, and respect. We have expanded opportunities in the arts, athletics, enrichment, and experiential learning while achieving strong academic results, including high school credit in Algebra I and Spanish I, high graduation rates, and performance above state averages. We have also strengthened whole-child support by adding social workers and sustaining school psychologists. We have achieved national recognition of our Pre-Kindergarten program and science instruction. These accomplishments belong to our entire community. Although progress is never perfect, by

Preston Public Schools is an equal opportunity employer. We will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

caring for one another and working together, we have created stronger conditions for every child's success.

It has been one of the great honors of my professional life to serve the children and families of Preston. Leadership in education continually reminds us of our shared humanity. Our days bring successes to celebrate, challenges to confront, difficult decisions to make, and unexpected moments that ask us to listen, learn, adapt, and grow. Through it all, I have been humbled by the dedication, compassion, resilience, and humanity of the people who come together each day for children.

Whatever we have accomplished, we have accomplished together. I am proud of our collective work, but even more grateful for the relationships, trust, kindness, laughter, perseverance, and friendships that have given that work meaning. Those connections are among the greatest gifts I will carry with me long after my service as Superintendent ends.

There is still much to do between now and July 1, and I look forward to approaching that work as we always have: with purpose, humility, optimism, and a steadfast commitment to our students and to one another. I have provided the Board of Education with a draft superintendent search process to support their planning. I remain deeply grateful for the trust placed in me and for the extraordinary privilege of sharing this chapter of my 51-year career in education and my life with the Preston community.

Be safe. Be well.

Kindest regards,

Roy M. Seitsinger, Jr., Ph.D.
Superintendent

CC: File

PRESTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Office of the Superintendent
1 Route 164
Preston, Connecticut 06365

Roy M. Seitsinger, Jr., Ph. D.
Superintendent
seitsingerr@prestonschools.org

(860)889-6098
FAX (860)889-8685

September 17, 2026

Dear Dr. Seitsinger,

On behalf of the Preston Board of Education, I am writing to formally acknowlege your letter of resignation dated September 14, 2026, in which you announced your retirement from your position as full-time Superintendent, effective July 1, 2027.

The Board of Education accepts your resignation. We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your retirement and thank you for a decade of service to our district. We would like to express our appreciation for your dedicated leadership and commitment to the students, staff and community of Preston.

The Board recognizes your many accomplishments over the years that include strengthening the relationship between the town and our schools, navigating the district through a global pandemic and creating partnerships with other towns in order to reduce budgetary costs and expand services.

The Board appreciates the priority that you haven given to school safety and the welfare of all students. You have broken barriers for social-emotional learning and the importance of mental health awareness for our students. It is evident that you have always led the district with compassion, fairness and complete dedication to all district students and staff. We are grateful for the stable foundation you have built for the future of the district.

Thank you for your continued support and assistance during this time of transition. We wish you the very best in your retirement. We hope you enjoy some much deserved relaxation and time with family.

Sincerely,

Courtney Ennis, Chair
Preston Board of Education

Preston Public Schools is an equal opportunity employer. We will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

LEARN BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING SYNOPSIS

Thursday, October 8, 2026
44 Hatchetts Hill Road, Old Lyme, CT 06371 | 9:00 AM

The Board developed this report format based on recommendations. The purpose is to give a brief overview of the critical issues from the monthly meeting. Board members may use this document for reporting to their local Board.

Superintendent's Perspective

Dr. Paul Freeman, Superintendent of Guilford Public Schools, presented to the board on the Strategic Plan and Key District Initiatives of the district.

Dr. Freeman shared that Guilford Public Schools serves approximately 3,000 students across seven schools, with a special education population that has increased from approximately 12% to 16.7% over the past six to seven years. Guilford currently performs at the 91st percentile on the state accountability index while operating at approximately the 55th percentile in per-pupil expenditures. Dr. Freeman also noted that the district maintains relatively lean administrative staffing and continues to focus on providing a strong return on investment for the community.

Following a challenging budget cycle last year, Dr. Freeman has launched a "re-entry plan" centered on listening and community engagement. He is meeting with teachers, students, parents, and community members to better understand what Guilford Public Schools does particularly well and where the district can improve, recognizing that the district is serving a new generation of students and families.

A significant portion of the presentation focused on the district's evolving approach to technology, screen time, and personal communication devices. Guilford implemented a more restrictive K-12 cell phone policy this school year, particularly at the high school, under the "away all day" philosophy. Personal communication devices are expected to remain unseen and unheard from the time students enter the building until they leave, including during passing time, study halls, and lunch. Dr. Freeman emphasized that the policy is intended not only to address instructional concerns but also to create a healthier social-emotional environment during the school day. Early implementation has been very positive, with relatively few violations and reports that some students are already noticing changes in their phone-use habits at home. The district has also emphasized the importance of parent support in making the policy successful.

Guilford is also taking a more developmentally appropriate approach to student screen use. The district has reduced one-to-one device use in kindergarten and first grade, discontinued the Lexia program in elementary schools, delayed sending Chromebooks home with some students, and is evaluating whether devices should be taken home on weekends, holidays, and during the summer. Dr. Freeman stressed that these decisions are not intended to eliminate technology, but rather to find an appropriate balance between technology use,

teacher-directed instruction, student interaction, and developmental needs. He noted that decisions regarding technology and curriculum are influenced by multiple factors, including instructional effectiveness, student health and wellness, financial considerations, and community expectations.

Dr. Freeman also discussed Guilford's ongoing work around artificial intelligence. The district currently views AI through the distinction between technology that "supplants" student thinking and technology that "leverages" student thinking. The district intends to continue developing its approach to AI this year, including consideration of how classroom assignments and assessments can be designed to be more durable in an AI environment. Dr. Freeman noted that students themselves have expressed thoughtful and nuanced perspectives about appropriate uses of AI, and the district intends to incorporate student perspectives into its continued work. He also acknowledged emerging concerns about the environmental impact and resource demands associated with AI.

Throughout the presentation, Dr. Freeman emphasized the importance of maintaining a healthy balance and ensuring that technology remains a thoughtful, teacher-driven tool rather than becoming a substitute for teacher interaction or student engagement. He noted that Guilford's decisions must continually balance instructional priorities with financial realities and community expectations, and that each district may arrive at different solutions based on its own students, community, and circumstances.

Human Resources

Executive Director Ericson reported that the agency continues to experience significant staffing challenges, with approximately 40 current vacancies, primarily in non-certified positions. Paraprofessional positions remain particularly difficult to fill, with shortages continuing across the state. The administration continues to utilize various recruitment strategies while working to build and maintain a strong core of staff to support students.

As the board discussed paraprofessional compensation and the competitive regional market, Executive Director Ericson noted that LEARN currently uses a tiered compensation structure based on experience, education, and assignment, including additional compensation for certain higher-needs settings. While paraprofessional wages have been consistently increased, some area districts have continued to move ahead of LEARN in starting compensation. She also noted that the ability to attract qualified staff directly affects agency's capacity to accept and serve students from across the region. Administration will continue to research comparable regional wages and anticipates bringing a recommendation to the Board in December regarding potential compensation adjustments for the upcoming year.

Distributions

Executive Director Ericson highlighted her recent Op-ed as published in the *CT Mirror*, Regional Cooperation in Southeastern CT, which marked the first anniversary of the Regional Performance Incentive Program (RPIP) grant and highlighted the progress achieved through the initiative. She noted that the op-ed is also part of a broader strategy to increase awareness and understanding of the role of Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) and to elevate their work and impact across the state.

The op-ed received positive feedback from approximately 10-12 area superintendents, as well as from the Office of Policy and Management (OPM), which expressed appreciation for the recognition of the state's

efforts to support regional initiatives. Executive Director Ericson also shared that LEARN is exploring additional opportunities to spotlight successful partnerships with area districts and demonstrate how regional collaboration and RESC support are making a difference for schools and students.

The LEARN Project, Inc.

Executive Director Ericson provided the Board with an annual update on The LEARN Project, Inc., the nonprofit arm of LEARN that has been in place for approximately 20 years. The LEARN Project allows the agency to receive and administer certain funding that must be directed through a designated nonprofit entity.

She provided an overview of the three primary areas of funding currently associated with The LEARN Project: The organization serves as the fiscal agent for a Children First group in Groton; manages approximately $26,000 in remaining foundation funds designated for educational purposes; and serves as the nonprofit entity through which LEARN's bond financing is administered. Bond proceeds are received by The LEARN Project and then transferred to LEARN, with related capital expenditures recorded separately as required for state reimbursement. Executive Director Ericson emphasized the importance of maintaining clear financial records and documentation to ensure transparency and continuity for future leadership.

Legislative Updates

Executive Director Ericson attended the 2026 Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESA) Advocacy in Action Conference in Washington, D.C. with the LEARN Executive Leadership Team and ACES staff members. During the CT RESC team's participation in the Legislative Advocacy Session, the group met with national lobbyists to discuss the current federal landscape and issues of significance to educational service agencies and school districts.

A primary area of concern is the future of the federal E-rate program, which provides funding to schools and libraries to support essential technology infrastructure and connectivity. Connecticut received approximately $7 million in E-rate funding, including approximately $374,000 received by LEARN. Executive Director Ericson noted that E-rate funding is currently at risk at the federal level and emphasized the importance of monitoring developments as decisions regarding the program move forward.

Executive Director Ericson also updated the board regarding changes to Head Start and the restructuring of federal education responsibilities, noting concerns that changes to federal regulations, administrative funding, and the redistribution of education-related responsibilities among multiple federal agencies could create significant challenges for schools and educational organizations. While the full impact has not yet been realized, national advocates anticipate increased complexity in navigating the various agencies, regulations, and funding structures.

Additional discussion focused on the need to reauthorize and strengthen federal student data privacy protections, particularly in light of the rapid growth of artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies. Executive Director highlighted the importance of ensuring appropriate protections while also recognizing that schools and educational organizations do not have the resources or expertise to assume responsibility for regulating technology platforms and social media. LEARN will continue to monitor these federal developments and advocate for policies that protect students while ensuring that regulatory responsibilities remain appropriately placed.

Overall Agency Updates

Executive Director Ericson provided an update on several statewide and regional initiatives and partnerships. Recently, she had the pleasure of attending Commissioner Charlene Russel Tucker's Back to School meeting with superintendents from across the state and continues to serve on the Department's Talent Office Evaluation and Support Council, which is supporting districts as they implement updated teacher and administrator evaluation plans.

The Core leadership team re-initiated LEARN's regional feedback and listening sessions this year, meeting with each LEARN district superintendent and their leadership team, seeking to understand what exciting work is happening across the LEARN region and hear about any challenges the district might be facing. Currently, the team has made five district visits these within the past few weeks. Executive Director Ericson emphasized the importance of ensuring that all districts feel heard, valued, and supported by their Regional Educational Service Center.

Several new and ongoing partnerships were also highlighted, including discussions with Central Connecticut State University's Dr. Daisy Torres regarding opportunities to support teacher residency participants as they pursue graduate education and professional development, and meeting with Dr. Tracy Espy, President of Mitchell College, and her team in efforts to continue exploring opportunities to partner for regional programming and continued collaboration with Mitchell College.

Executive Director was honored to be able to celebrate Groton Public Schools Ribbon Cutting for their new Early Childhood Center at Mary Morrison School, which will serve approximately 170 four-year-olds.

Executive Director Ericson provided an update on the Governor's K-12 Blue Ribbon Committee, which includes superintendents, RESC leaders, and other education leaders from across Connecticut and is being facilitated by staff from Columbia University. The committee is exploring potential changes to the state's educational structure and is examining models that utilize Educational Service Agencies (ESAs) to provide regional support. LEARN continues to participate in the discussions and provide perspective on the potential role of regional educational organizations.

Lastly, the Executive Director reported positive early results from the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) universal school meals program approved by the Board last June. The program provides universal breakfast and lunch at participating LEARN schools. During the first full month of the school year, participating schools experienced an increase of approximately 2,500 meals served. Executive Director Ericson specifically noted that Regional Multicultural Magnet School (RMMS), Ocean Avenue LEARNing Academy (OALA), and The Friendship School (TFS) as greatly benefiting from the universal feeding program. The increased participation is an encouraging sign that the program can remain financially viable over time and continue providing expanded access to meals for students.

Educational Perspective: Local Governance Partnerships (LGP) Update

LEARN Assistant Director Adrenna Paolillo, along with members of LEARN's Early Childhood team, provided the Board with an overview of Local Governance Partnerships (LGPs) and LEARN's role in supporting early childhood services throughout the region. Adrenna's presentation highlighted an important area of LEARN's work that is not frequently presented to the Board and provided an overview of the transition to the state's Early Start Connecticut framework, which brings together early childhood funding and governance initiatives serving children from birth through age eight.

LEARN currently serves as the fiduciary for three Local Governance Partnerships and provides financial and contractual oversight, employs the partnership liaisons, supports community needs assessments, and provides coordination and professional learning for participating programs. The LGP model brings together early childhood providers, families, community organizations, mental health professionals, hospitals, and other partners to identify local needs, coordinate resources, and determine how available funding can best support children and families. Parent ambassadors also play an important role by bringing the perspectives and needs of families back to the community tables.

The three LGPs supported by LEARN encompass 12 towns, 27 programs, and 116 classrooms. The Regional Early Childhood Collaborative serves Ledyard, Norwich, Lisbon, Preston, Montville, and surrounding communities; Children First serves Groton; and the Early Childhood Community Network serves Guilford, East Lyme, Waterford, and New London. While each partnership has unique community needs, LEARN is working to establish consistent processes and standards across all three partnerships while allowing flexibility to address local priorities.

The team recently completed a regional local needs assessment that incorporated state and local data, provider and family surveys, listening sessions, and community outreach. The assessment is informing the development of community plans and priorities for the use of available Office of Early Childhood funding. The presentation emphasized that needs extend beyond the availability of early childhood slots and include broader issues affecting families, including food and housing insecurity, access to services, and the need for childcare options that accommodate different family and employment circumstances. Particular areas of need were identified in communities including Norwich, New London, and Groton.

The Board also learned about the broader statewide direction for Early Start Connecticut, including plans to expand early childhood capacity and move toward greater regional coordination. Adrenna noted that the state is exploring ways to increase access to early childhood education while utilizing a combination of public schools, private providers, and community-based programs rather than relying on a single delivery model.

Looking ahead, LEARN will continue to focus on transparent fiscal and contractual oversight, consistent services across its three LGPs, strengthening the capacity of liaisons and parent ambassadors, and using local needs assessment data to guide regional planning and partnerships. The Executive Director and Sarah Moon, LEARN Director of Special Services, recognized the Early Childhood team for its leadership in navigating the state's evolving early childhood system and building stronger regional collaboration among providers, families, and community organizations.

SMARTER BALANCED ASSESSMENT

Using data to improve student outcomes

2026 RESULTS PRESENTATION

Presentation date: 9/14/2026

Preston Public Schools

Today's conversation

A shared look at achievement, context, and instructional response

01	**SBA in context**	What the assessment measures and how comparisons are framed
02	**Data and comparatives**	Cohort results and Performance Index comparisons
03	**How data drives instruction**	How evidence informs Tier 1, intervention, and assessment
04	**Closing thoughts**	Celebrations, priorities, and next steps

SBA provides one important measure of student progress

State assessment results are interpreted alongside local evidence

WHAT IT MEASURES

- ELA: reading, writing, listening, and research/inquiry
- Math: concepts & procedures, problem solving, and modeling/reasoning
- Science (NGSS): physical, life, Earth & space science, and engineering

HOW WE USE IT

- Identify strengths and instructional needs
- Examine patterns across grades and cohorts
- Plan supports using multiple data points

Connecticut administers SBA in grades 3–8.

DRGs provide socioeconomic context for district comparisons

They are a reference point—not a complete measure of school performance

District Reference Groups

Connecticut districts with similar socioeconomic characteristics and educational needs are grouped to support more meaningful comparisons.

Seven variables shape District Reference Groups

Together, they approximate the socioeconomic context in which districts operate

01 Median household income

02 Parents with bachelor's degree or higher

03 Parents in professional or managerial jobs

04 Students in single-parent or non-family households

05 Students eligible for free or reduced-price meals

06 Families speaking a non-English language at home

07 District enrollment

2026 comparison set

Use this editable list to confirm DRG and regional peers

DRG E — DISTRICTS A–L

Ashford
Bozrah
Brooklyn
Canaan
Chaplin
Chester
Colebrook
Coventry
Deep River
Eastford
East Haddam
Franklin
Hampton
Hartland
Kent
Lebanon
Lisbon

DRG E — DISTRICTS N–Z

Norfolk
North Branford
North Stonington
Portland
Preston
Salisbury
Scotland
Sharon
Thomaston
Union
Westbrook
Willington
Woodstock
Regional School District 1
Regional School District 16
Regional School District 20
Woodstock Academy

02

Data and comparatives

Achievement trends, cohort patterns, and index comparisons

Achievement levels show increasing command of standards

Use both proficiency rates and the Performance Index to understand results

1	**Does not meet**	Substantial support needed
2	**Approaching**	Partial command of standards
3	**Meets**	Consistent grade-level command
4	**Exceeds**	Advanced command and application

Mathematics cohort results

Percent meeting or exceeding standard • Matching colors trace the same cohort across years

Grade	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Grade 8	39	29	54	60	56 (40)	**54 (41.9)**
Grade 7	33	42	33	38	44 (43)	**46 (41.1)**
Grade 6	35	34	35	32	30 (42)	**32 (44.4)**
Grade 5	31	38	50	39	29 (44)	**53 (45.8)**
Grade 4	51	47	56	54	45 (51)	**56 (52.1)**
Grade 3	61	51	54	55	75 (52)	**80 (52.2)**

2026 DATA ENTRY

Parenthetical values are the state average performance.

English language arts cohort results

Percent meeting or exceeding standard • Matching colors trace the same cohort across years

Grade	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Grade 8	50	32	60	53	60 (50)	**63 (51.1)**
Grade 7	35	52	74	60	58 (50)	**46 (52.2)**
Grade 6	43	59	61	57	56 (50)	**49 (51.2)**
Grade 5	55	65	50	54	56 (52)	**75 (53.5)**
Grade 4	51	60	48	57	51 (51)	**62 (50.9)**
Grade 3	61	55	66	54	73 (46)	**82 (52.2)**

2026 DATA ENTRY

Parenthetical values are the state average performance.

Science cohort results

Percent meeting or exceeding standard • Matching colors trace the same cohort across years

Grade	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Grade 8	50	31	69	78	68 (50)	**68 (50.9)**
Grade 5	70	78	70	67	58 (52)	**75 (52.9)**

2026 DATA ENTRY

Science results are reported for grades 5 and 8. Parenthetical values are the state average performance.

Performance Index reflects every achievement level

It captures movement throughout the performance distribution—not only proficiency

PROFICIENCY RATE

The percentage of students reaching Levels 3 or 4.

PERFORMANCE INDEX

A weighted measure that accounts for every student's achievement level.

Together, these measures provide a more complete picture of performance.

Preston compares favorably across relevant area schools

Performance Index comparisons among relevant area schools

District / benchmark	ELA	Math	Science
Preston	**72.2**	**67.0**	**70.4**
Canterbury	67.0	68.6	69.3
Griswold	63.8	56.9	64.0
Ledyard	63.7	61.2	69.2
Norwich	53 2	48 4	51 1
Sprague	58 1	53 0	56 0
North Stonington	72 5	71 9	72 6
Voluntown	65 0	60 5	63 2
Connecticut	65.0	61.4	63.7

DRG E Performance Index — districts A–L

2025–26 districtwide Performance Index values

District	ELA	Math	Science
Ashford	68.5	64.2	72.6
Bozrah	70.7	73.7	69.6
Brooklyn	68.4	64.3	69.9
Canaan	76.1	71.9	*
Chaplin	61.8	64.8	*
Chester	78.4	75.3	78.9
Colebrook	73.4	77.1	*
Coventry	75.5	71.1	78.1
Deep River	74.8	75.1	80.4
Eastford	77.3	70.6	71.6
East Haddam	66.8	63	62.4
Franklin	74	71.1	69.6
Hampton	65.9	56.4	*
Hartland	76.1	73.2	78.8
Kent	75.9	71.6	76.1
Lebanon	69.3	66.1	64.1
Lisbon	66	64.6	63.8

DRG E Performance Index — districts N–Z

2025–26 districtwide Performance Index values

District	ELA	Math	Science
Norfolk	69.4	71.6	*
North Branford	70.2	67.5	63.6
North Stonington	72.5	71.9	72.6
Portland	73.9	68.1	66.6
Preston	**72.2**	**67**	**70.4**
Salisbury	81.7	77.6	74.8
Scotland	63	59.9	*
Sharon	74.3	67.6	*
Thomaston	62.2	58	56.2
Union	*	*	*
Westbrook	74.4	74	68.1
Willington	65.3	66.5	60.1
Woodstock	72.7	67.2	71.3
Regional School District 1	57.3	54	69
Regional School District 16	73.3	72.4	75.9
Regional School District 20	71.2	67.3	64.5
Woodstock Academy	57.7	53.2	56.2

03

How data drives instruction

Moving from evidence to action through collaborative planning

Data becomes useful when it changes what we do next

Grade-level and content-area teams connect evidence to instruction

1

Analyze

SBA, STAR, DIBELS, and curricular measures

2

Plan Tier 1

Pacing, core resources, and differentiated instruction

3

Target support

Small-group instruction, classroom supports, and intervention

4

Check progress

IABs, quick checks, student work, and standardized measures

Team question: What does the evidence suggest students need next?

No single measure tells the whole story

A balanced data portfolio supports responsive decisions

DIBELS	Foundational literacy	**Progress monitoring**	Intervention adjustments
SBA / NGSS	State achievement	**Lexia**	Adaptive literacy growth
OLSAT	Cognitive ability and aptitude	**PBIS / Tier 2**	Behavioral supports
STAR	Reading and math benchmarks	**Classroom evidence**	Grades, work, attendance and observations

04

Closing thoughts

Celebrate progress, identify priorities, and commit to the next move

What should we celebrate in the 2026 results?

Replace each prompt with a concise, evidence-based success

01 **Impressive scores 8th Grade Science**

02 **Significant Growth - 6th, 7th, 8th Mathematics**

03 **Impressive scores 3rd grade ELA, Mathematics, 55% of students in 3rd grade ELA scored a 4**

04 **Impressive scores 5th Grade ELA, 5th Grade Science**

05 **Best SBA scores in PVMS History**

06 **Two students scored top score in ELA**

What will we carry forward—and what will we adjust?

Use the 2026 evidence to identify a manageable set of actions

Analyze

- Regular use of Interim Assessment Blocks
- Intentional pacing conversations
- Cross-grade articulation
- Frequent meetings to discuss student performance and well-being

ADJUST / PRIORITIZE

- Maximize instructional time
- Instructional Assessment Block focus for intervention
- Incorporate instructional supports (Lumos Learning)
- Increased opportunities for discussion of best practices amongst staff

Student growth is shared work

Data helps us see the peaks, the valleys, and the next step forward.

Community

Students

Teachers

Families