

BOE Regular Meeting
September 8, 2025 7:00 PM

1. Call to Order

Megan Gallant; Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00PM. Other members present: Dan Harris, Courtney Ennis, Nicole Serra, Cindy Luty, Mike Hinton and Deborah Burke-Grabarek. Also present: Dr. Roy Seitsinger; Superintendent, Cindy Varricchio; Director of Finance, and Gloria Homiski; Recording Secretary.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Public Comment

One email was received from Andrew Koniecko. Megan summarized the email. Please find it attached to these minutes.

Megan Gallant read the following statement: Public Comment and Question Session: Each individual will be limited to 3 minutes and the entire session will last no more than 15 minutes. All comments and questions must be germane to the agency's business. No individual may yield his/her time to another individual. (Town Ordinance: 03.06.08)

Andrew Koniecko stated that he would like to see the meetings streamed in order to reduce misinformation.

Cara Sawyer thanked the Board and especially the Communication Committee for listening to parents and for changing the grading system. She already sees a difference in her own two sons. They are trying harder and are more engaged. She also asked why she can't access Powerschool at the Middle School. She can access it at the elementary school. Chris Pickett said that the problem is being investigated.

Kelly McNamara asked how the instructional minutes from the loss of Spanish at the elementary school are being reallocated.

Kayla Thompson was surprised to learn that the 1.0 music teacher was changed to a .8FTE. She asked that the Board review the minutes of 8-11-25 before accepting them. She too asked what was being done with the excess time at PVMS now that Spanish is gone. She also asked if the Gifted and Talented topic could be added to the agenda each month.

4. Consent Agenda

The Board pulled out the minutes from 8-11-25 in order to review them further.

**Moved, to accept the remainder of the consent agenda as presented.
Hinton/Serra. Unanimous. Motion Carries.**

5. Superintendent's Report/Updates

Dr. Seitsinger stated that he is meeting with Senator Somers in September.

He stated that one trooper was cut from the budget and the one that is left is out due to personal reasons. Courtney Ennis asked who will be

conducting the DARE Program this year. Dr. Seitsinger said that the Program may not be held this year.

Dr. Seitsinger turned the meeting over to Brendan Merrill; Transportation Coordinator, in order to discuss the update of the transportation fleet. In May, Brendan attended the Electric School Bus summit. North Branford is the first district in the state to have a complete electric fleet. Diesel is being completely phased out. In 2035, the state is requiring alternative fuel for buses (propane) and in 2040, all buses must be electric. It was determined that our bus garage is the 3rd best location in the state to fully support electric buses when the time comes. The District will be responsible for the RFP's and Eversource will run the power. CT Green Bank is the first government agency in the nation to help schools with a means to go greener. Preston will be the first district in CT to contract with them. They will begin the planning process for us to get ready for 2035.

Brendan suggested that the transportation sub committee be reconvened due to the upcoming changes. We will be able to trade in the diesel buses or auction them off. Dr. Seitsinger supported the recommendation.

Moved, to recommend that Brendan Merrill and the Preston BOE sign with CT Green Bank to plan for alternative fuels in 2035. Hinton/Serra. Unanimous. Motion Carries.

LGP stands for Local Governance Partnership. Early childhood schools and providers who sustain NAEYC can join the partnership. Linda Allen at LEARN is creating the By Laws for this partnership. We are working to acquire funding in the future. Heather Anderson will attend the next meeting and bring back information to the district. Their Care 4 Kids Program may assist families in paying for PK.

Every school must have school climate and culture committees. The Superintendent is the School Climate Coordinator and the Principals are the School Climate Specialists. Their committees will develop surveys to create a climate improvement plan.

Jan Clancy; former Board Chair, was honored at the Preston Public Library by creating Jan's Little Library. All donations are welcome.

Policy 5142 School Safety is on the agenda as a second read.

Moved, to adopt Policy 5142 School Safety as amended. Burke-Grabarek/Hinton. Unanimous. Motion Carries.

SBAC scoring data will be presented at the October Meeting.

6. Preston PTO

Kayla Thompson reported the following upcoming events at PVMS: Book Fair, Open House, Grandparents' Lunch. They raised about 1300.00 with their Popcorn Fundraiser. They will hold a craft fair on November 22nd from 9AM to 3PM. So far, they have 15 vendors and are looking for a Santa. PTO Meetings will be held on the third Wednesday of every month beginning with September 17th.

7. Principals/Director of Student Services Reports/Other Reports as Needed
Chris Pickett, PPMS Principal, stated that the 5th grade meet and greet was held on August 26th. The first two weeks of school have gone very well. PBIS Expectations have been reviewed. Students participated in the PPMS film festival. Open House will be held on September 10th. Teacher Data Teams are meeting to share and review practices. The Climate and Culture Team will meet monthly. Courtney Ennis asked Mr. Pickett about enrollment. He has two sections of 6th grade with about 40 students total, and three sections of grades 7 and 8 with about 50 students in each grade.

Ray Bernier, PVMS Principal, stated that they had a great start to the school year. PVMS held their PK/K Orientation on August 26th. PTO decorated the grounds and a shaved ice truck came to visit. A BMX Demonstration was held on Friday. The Book Fair, school pictures, visits to the Grabareks' Corn Maze and The Grandparents' Lunch are all coming up soon. Open House is on the 17th. Various Committees are being formed and are meeting. Ray also explained that 25 minutes twice a week are available for additional reading and math time now that Spanish is no longer taught at the elementary school.

Craig King, Director of Student Services, presented a Gifted and talented Powerpoint Presentation to the Board. A committee was formed and practices have been reviewed. Changes have been made to the original rubric. Courtney Ennis asked what happens if a student is found gifted and talented after all the necessary steps are followed. Craig explained that teachers can then use enrichment and differentiation. Nicole Serra asked if all parents will get their students' scores. Craig explained that parents will need to request the scores. Michael Hinton stated that he believes this is best practice. This practice is followed by most other districts. Dr. Seitsinger directed Mr. King to reconsider test distribution strategy.

8. Committee Reports

Finance Committee: will be reviewed in Cindy Varricchio's report
Curriculum Meeting: upcoming
Communication Committee: did not meet
LEARN Rep: first meeting is Thursday, September 11th
CABE: conference is in November - great training and guest speakers
Building Needs Assessment Committee: did not meet
Transportation Sub Committee: to be reactivated

9. Financial/Capital Report

Cindy Varricchio explained that they are already planning for FY27. The town and school already locked into a better diesel and heating oil price than they have for the current year.

She reviewed the June 30th report and explained that there is about 89,000.00 remaining.

Moved, to accept the June 2025 unaudited expenditure report as presented. Ennis/Serra. Unanimous. Motion Carries.

Cindy will prepare a FY26 report for the October BOE Meeting.

Cindy will keep the Board informed about Capital Projects.

In 2024 105,037.00 was deposited into the Non-Lapsing Account. After the 2025 Audit, the 89,000.00 will be added to that account. The auditors are

coming on September 24th.

10. Public Comment

Johanna Thibodeau stated that she requested her child's OLSAT scores three times last year. She thinks all parents should receive the scores without having to request them.

Cara Sawyer asked if the updated Gifted and Talented procedures are already in place. She stated that her son scored 124 but nothing happened. She asked if we will go back and look at student scores from last year. Craig said that they would and would be contacting parents in a few weeks.

Kelly McNamara believes the OLSAT scores should be sent home to all parents. As a school psychologist she is very familiar with the assessment and doesn't know of any reason why sharing the information would cause problems for students.

Dr. Seitsinger stated that parents' requests will be reconsidered by the committee. We will use the new rubric for the year and change it if necessary next year.

11. Adjournment

Moved, to adjourn the meeting at 8:38PM. Ennis/Serra. Unanimous. Motion Carries.



Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

BOE 8/11

1 message

Andrew Koniecko <andrew.koniecko@gmail.com>
To: homiskig@prestonschools.org

Tue, Aug 12, 2025 at 4:33 PM

Good afternoon,

Going into the BOE meeting on 8/11, someone asked me where I stand on the suggested cuts to programming. I was truly conflicted as I have an incoming Pre-K student and would not want to deal with the financial burden of an increase in tuition. However, I also understand the value of learning a second language and did not want to lose out on an opportunity for our students that could help strengthen their future. I have seen firsthand, the benefits of bilingualism in various vocations and if we could set our children on a progression where they could become fluent by high school, that would put them in a position above most of their peers. I also would feel sympathetic towards a teacher losing their job weeks before the beginning of school. It was very difficult for me to find a positive outlook on this situation and thus allowed me to simply listen to all concerns and opinions and agree with many of them from various perspectives.

At tonight's meeting there were some themes present: 1) It seems too little too late to change the current predicament. 2) We should be looking to the future to secure more opportunities for the children of our district. 3) It was stated over and over that we need to increase voter turnout.

As a way to navigate through these 3 themes, I would like to suggest some possible solutions. These solutions may have already been attempted, or faced with a different approach. However, in terms of theme 1 in that it is too late at this point to make possible schedule changes, I would like to reiterate Meghan Campbell's remarks that schedules can indeed be adjusted on less than 2 weeks notice. I have felt the effects of such last minute readjustments, and although this takes an extended amount of time and effort, it is possible. In addition, if the time had been taken previously to review staff certifications, other schedule readjustments could be made to continue Spanish at the elementary level. Cutting a full-time staff member should be an absolute last resort. In addition, to take away possible future opportunities to our students, should also be a last resort. Possible decreases from 1 FTE to .5 could have been seen as a possibility instead of cutting this person's position totally.

In terms of the 2nd theme of looking to the future to secure more opportunities for our students, I must ask what grant opportunities are being sought out to offset the costs to the townspeople? Who, within the district, is responsible for seeking out future opportunities for our district to grow? If we are currently seeking out such grant opportunities, what are the names of these programs so that they can be further researched and presented to the Board of Education and/or the school district? I feel that this is an area that has not been addressed in recent meetings, but is an area that could make a positive impact on our current educational deficit.

In terms of the 3rd theme of increasing voter turnout, the advice from the board of "tell your neighbors to come out and vote" is not sufficient. More of an effort can be made in this area. As we have seen in recent statistics, the biggest voter turnout appears to be those individuals 55 and up who do not have children in the school system. As many people have vocalized, there needs to be a larger turnout of voters who represent that 30-50 year old demographic who currently have children in our school system. For those individuals who may not have children in the system and who consistently vote "no" for each referendum, these individuals will continue to vote "no" either because they do not see any value in education or they are simply misinformed by other individuals who have fallen victim to a game of telephone perhaps begun on social media. For some of these voters in the 55+ demographic they will vote "no" no matter what. However, there may be some who may reconsider if given accurate information. My solution to this problem is this: streaming out the Board of Education meetings to the public so that the correct information can be conveyed. Instead of focusing on some of the habitual "no" voters, we should instead focus on the younger demographic with children in the district, who would be more inclined to view a streaming meeting session and thus be given accurate information in real time. This would allow more individuals to correct any misinformation that has been conveyed and also motivate them to attend

more meetings and votes. There are always opinions brought up in meetings that can't always be portrayed accurately in meeting minutes.

In past town meetings, when the possibility of streaming meetings to the public came up the response was that it would be too expensive to include this type of service. I can say with confidence that this is totally untrue. The Town of Preston or the Board of Education could create a YouTube channel at no cost, and livestream a meeting to the public via a link sent out through email, text, or on a social media site. All comments and chats could be turned off so that the sole purpose of streaming these meetings is simply to inform the public accurately on the happenings in town. The physical technology available for this would only call for a laptop or tablet and maybe a microphone, both of which I am sure would be available either coming from the school district or the town government. I can say that, after attending multiple meetings within the last year, I have been prompted to become more active in my community. That is why I have been motivated to run for Board of Education at this upcoming election in November. I am confident that we can target the younger demographic and get them more involved by utilizing the technology that is available to us.

I will reiterate that the decisions that were made in tonight's meeting were very difficult ones that a community should never be forced to make in the future. With that being said, we must focus on surveying our current educational landscape and envisioning ways to transform it into one that is conducive to future generations thriving in their individual educational journeys. I am looking forward to assisting in this venture either as a member of the board or as an attendee at future Board of Education meetings.

Sincerely,

Andrew Koniecko

GIFTED & TALENTED

REVIEW / REVISE



Goal

GOAL: To review and revise Preston Public Schools' Gifted & Talented (G&T) identification process in alignment with current research, state expectations, and best practices.

PROCESS:

There were multiple revisions, considering and integrating new information as it came in. We were Reshaping, Redesigning and Reimagining Preston's G&T identification procedure.

Team Assembly:

- Assembled team to conduct review of previous Gifted & Talented identification process.
- The team consists of two School Psychologists and Director of Student Services.



Analysis of Existing Rubric

- The current identification rubric was reviewed for clarity, reliability, and alignment with multiple Criteria.



Outreach

- Outreach to other Director of Student Service colleagues via phone call and emails was made.
- Limited comparative data were obtained due to varied district involvement and response levels.



Testing Materials Analysis



- Reviewed standardized and norm-referenced assessments currently used:
 - Otis Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT)
 - Cognitive Reasoning. The OLSAT 8 assesses verbal, nonverbal and quantitative cognitive abilities for K – 12 students. Offers insight into how well a student learns.
- Gifted and Talented Evaluation Scale (GATES)
 - Intellectual, creativity, and leadership. A norm-referenced screening instrument that identifies students 5 – 18 years of age with 5 scales that describe behaviors and characteristics of giftedness (General Intellectual Ability, Academic Skills, Creativity, Leadership, Artistic Talent).



Testing Materials Analysis Cont...

- Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children – Fifth Edition (WISC-V)
 - Intelligence profile
- Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students (I – IV)
 - Learning, Motivation, Creativity, Leadership, Artistic and Academic Domains
- Characteristics of Giftedness Scale
 - Parent Input
- ODE Rubric for Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students (V – XIV)
 - Domain specific talent
- STAR
 - A series of computer-adaptive tests created by Renaissance Learning, measuring student achievement and growth in reading and math
- Smarter Balanced Assessments (SBA):
 - Computer-based tests in English Language Arts and Mathematics for grades 3-8, designed to measure student progress

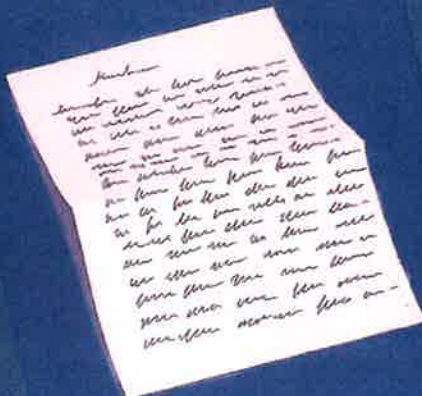
Operational Considerations

- Streamlined ordering and administration timelines across schools.
- Planned assessment windows and parent/guardian notification procedures.
- Determined staff roles for test administration, scoring, and review.



Parent/Guardian Considerations

- Revised letters provide transparency about purpose, testing procedures, and access to results.



Parent/Guardian Considerations

- Eligibility determination



Professional Development

- Team attended the pilot CT State facilitated G&T workshop and CT-SEDS integration.
- Valuable information was provided.
 - Discussion and review of the CT-SEDS tiles associated with G&T
 - Universal Screening identification versus Targeted Assessment.

Consensus After Review

- Streamline process while maintaining depth.
- Emphasize equity, fairness, and multiple pathways to identification.
- G&T Team came to consensus on the revised identification process.



Original Rubric

<u>Original Rubric</u>			
SCREENING FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS			
ASSESSMENT	AREA OF ASSESSMENT	SCREENING CUT SCORE	SUGGESTED TIMELINE
SCREENING STEP 1 Otis Lennon School Ability Test	General Intelligence	124 standard score (SS) OR percentile rank of 91 or higher	Administer to all 3 rd and 6 th graders in December
SCREENING STEP 2 Gifted and Talented Evaluation Scale (GATES2)	General Intellectual Ability, academic skills, creativity, artistic talent, leadership	SS of 111 or higher on at least 2 of the intellectual Ability, Academic Skills, and Leadership categories OR on both of the Creativity and Artistic categories OR on both of the Creativity and Artistic Ability categories.	Completed by 3 rd grade classroom teachers and applicable Arts(s) teacher OR by 6 th grade team by the end February
SCREENING STEP 3	Review evaluations and determine who to refer to PPT	N/A	By mid-March
IDENTIFICATION OF GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS VIA PPT PROCESS			
ASSESSMENT	PURPOSE	IDENTIFICATION CUT SCORE	TIMELINE
IDENTIFICATION STEP 1	Convene PPT and determine test protocols to administer	N/A	By end of March
IDENTIFICATION STEP 2	Administer tests as stated below	N/A	
WISC-V	General Intelligence	95 th percentile or higher on 2 of 3 indices (Verbal	By mid-May

Original Rubric Cont...

		Comprehension Visual Special, Fluid Reasoning)	
Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students (I – IV)	Learning, creativity, motivation, leadership	Scale I – 54 or higher, Scale II – 43 or higher, Scale III – 54 or higher, Scale IV – 33 or higher	Completed teacher (s) and compiled by school psychologist by the mid-May
Characteristics of Giftedness Scale	Multiple characteristics of giftedness	Evidence of 20 characteristics	Completed by parents by mid-May
ODE Rubric for Scoring Musical Performance Evaluation (OPTIONAL)	Rhythm, melody, improvisation, expressiveness, technique and overall performance	18 – 21 points	Completed by Music teacher by mid-May
ODE Rubric for Scoring Visual Art Display of Work (OPTIONAL)	Creating and responding components of artwork	21 – 24 points	Completed by Art teacher by mid-May
Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students (V – XIV) (OPTIONAL)	Artistic, musical, dramatics, planning, communication (precision/expressiveness) math, reading, technology, science	Cu5t scores vary	Completed by Art teacher (s) by mid-May
IDENTIFICATION STEP 3	Convene PPT to determine eligibility for gifted and talented	N/A	By end of May

Revised G&T Identification Process

REVISED G&T IDENTIFICATION PROCESS			
PRESTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS - Steps to Identifying Gifted and Talented Students			
SCREENING PROCESS			
ASSESSMENT	AREA OF ASSESSMENT	SCREENING SCORE	SUGGESTED TIMELINE
SCREENING STEP 1 OTIS-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT)	General Intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scores of 124 and above on the OLSAT 8 School Ability Index (SAI) will move to step two • Scores of 130 and above on either Verbal or Non-Verbal will move to step two 	Administer to all 3 rd and 6 th graders by end of January
SCREENING STEP 2 G&T Team meets	Review screening results and determine next steps (i.e., review academic data - STAR, SBA, and consider administering GATES-2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SBA scores of 3 or 4 • STAR scores falling above benchmark • Teacher consultation 	By March/April
SCREENING STEP 3 Gifted and Talented Evaluation Scale (GATES-2)	General Intellectual Ability, Academic Skills, Creativity, Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard Scores within the Probable, Highly Probable, or Extremely Probable range on at least 2 out of the 4 categories 	Completed by applicable teachers by the end of April. *Results reviewed by G&T Team
IDENTIFICATION OF GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS VIA PPT PROCESS			
ASSESSMENT	PURPOSE	IDENTIFICATION CUT SCORE	TIMELINE
IDENTIFICATION STEP 1	Contact parents/guardians to review screening results and possible eligibility	See above	By May
IDENTIFICATION STEP 2	Convene PPT meeting to determine eligibility based on screening process	See above	By the end of school year

PARENT LETTER

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Every year, students in grades 3 and 6 participate in the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT). This test is designed to assess critical thinking skills, including higher-order thinking, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information.

The OLSAT is a universal screening tool used to assist in the process of identifying students as academically talented. While the results are just one measure of their abilities, they provide valuable information to help us better understand their strengths and areas for growth.

We anticipate receiving test results in the spring. Data will be reviewed and analyzed by the Gifted and Talented Team. At that point, if your child meets the initial screening criteria, further assessments may be conducted. If you have any questions about how the OLSAT results will be used, or would like to request individual scores, please contact building administration.

Thank you for your continued support of your child's education.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Sharing gifted and talented OLSAT results generally means disclosing a child's score on the Otis-Lennon School
- Ability Test (OLSAT), which is often used to identify students who may qualify for gifted programs, with relevant parties like parents, teachers, or school administrators, typically only when necessary for placement decisions or to discuss the child's educational needs related to their gifted abilities.

Key Points About Sharing OLSAT Results



Privacy concerns:

- As with any standardized test score, sharing OLSAT results should always be done with caution due to student privacy regulations.

Context is important:

- When sharing the score, it's crucial to explain what the score means in terms of the child's performance compared to other students of the same age group.

Who should have access:

- Typically, only school personnel dire.

Key Points Cont



Parent-teacher conferences:

- If a child's OLSAT score indicates potential giftedness, discussing it with parents during a conference can be beneficial to develop appropriate educational strategies.

Focus on the child's strengths:

- While sharing the score, emphasize the positive aspects of the child's abilities and potential rather than solely focusing on the numerical value.

Communicate openly:

- If you have concerns about sharing OLSAT results, openly discuss them with parents and school administrators.

Research Foundations

Three-Ring Conception of Giftedness (Renzulli, 1978, 2016): True giftedness involves above-average ability, creativity, and task commitment—not just test scores.

Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT) (Gagné, 2004): Identifies natural abilities that require catalysts (motivation, environment, opportunity) to become fully developed talents.

National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC, 2021): Recommends **universal screening** at multiple grade levels and the use of **multiple criteria** to reduce bias and broaden access.

Ford (2013): Equity in gifted education requires culturally responsive assessment tools and expanded criteria beyond IQ

Pfeiffer (2015): Advocates a “**strengths-based talent development model**”



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