

**BOE Regular Meeting**  
June 9, 2025 7:00 PM

**1. Call to Order**

Megan Gallant; Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:02PM. Other members present: Dan Harris, Courtney Ennis, Nicole Serra, Cindy Luty and Deborah Burke-Grabarek. Michael Hinton was absent. Also present: Dr. Roy Seitsinger; Superintendent, Cindy Varricchio; Director of Finance, and Gloria Homiski; Recording Secretary.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

**3. Public Comment**

An email was received from Jill Keith; parent. Jill was also in the audience so she reviewed the important points of her email. She discussed PK tuition, thanked the Building Needs Assessment Committee, asked about Gifted and Talented Policies and Procedures, and also the destruction of student files. Her email is attached to these minutes.

In person Public Comment: Kara Sawyer; Parent, expressed her opinion about grading. She disagrees that parents want traditional grading because it is familiar. Instead, she believes that teachers are grading differently. Sometimes a 100% is a 4 and sometimes a 75% is a 4. She asks that grading be consistent at both schools. She would also like to see grade 7 and 8 students have mid-terms and final exams.

Haley Hislip; a new parent in town and also a middle school math teacher, spoke next. She believes that standards-based reporting causes more problems than it solves because parents do not understand it. Therefore, they can't help students study and prepare. Training is very important.

Jill Charron; parent, stated that she believes standards-based reporting is detrimental to students. Her daughter met with Dr. Seitsinger and Mr. Pickett at the NFA focus group. Her daughter is doing well with the transition but would have preferred traditional grading at Preston Plains. Mrs. Charron believes things can be hidden with standards-based reporting.

Kelly McNamara, parent, felt disappointed after last month's meeting. She felt as though the parent voice was not heard and that the district would continue with standards-based reporting. She worries that students will not know their true skill set when they get to high school.

**4. Consent Agenda**

**Moved, to accept the consent agenda as presented. Burke-Grabarek/Ennis. Unanimous. Motion Carries.**

**5. Superintendent's Report/Updates**

Dr. Seitsinger thanked all those who spoke in favor of the Preston Board of Education Budget at the Town Meeting on June 5<sup>th</sup>. He was relieved that no further cuts were made. During the meeting, several comments were made concerning the Town Library and the Senior Center. While we understand that suggestions to defund these vital institutions may have been made with good intentions, and we do not have direct influence over town government decisions, we respectfully disagree with statements that appeared to undervalue the importance of services for the elderly and the library.

**As an educational institution, we wholeheartedly support the continued operation of the town library.** The growing partnership among the town library, our district libraries, and classrooms provides invaluable resources that enrich the educational experiences of our children, their families, and our community. The latest example of this ever-growing partnership is the "People of Preston" project, which has had a powerful impact on community members of all ages!

**We also fully endorse the essential programming, benefits, and services available to the elderly in our community.** So much of our programming as exemplified by Senior Lunches at PVMS or Seniors reading to classes, welcomes and reinforces the vital importance of our entire community living and growing together. As expressed by some attendees at the Town Meeting, it is through collective effort that we foster a wholesome, supportive, and compassionate community for individuals of all ages.

This statement was shared with library and senior center personnel as well.

Dr. Seitsinger acknowledged two faculty retirements. Sandra Bosko is retiring as a grade 5 teacher who served the district since 1989. Olof Sigmarsson is a school psychologist at Preston Plains and has served the district since 2003. He thanked both women for their dedication to Preston students.

Report Card Presentation: Dr. Seitsinger, Courtney Ennis and Nicole Serra gave a second grading presentation to the Board. Ms. Ennis stated that after collecting data through surveys and parent forums, the Communication Committee recommends traditional grading.

They went over their presentation from last month and also shared comments from parents and staff who participated in the surveys. The primary concern being that Standards-Based reporting is inconsistent among teachers, and that parents feel that it does not prepare students for high school. Therefore, the final recommendation is to recommend traditional grading with standards at the middle school. Both faculty and parents will receive training.

Dr. Seitsinger noted the appropriate comprehensive process that gathered information through surveys, focus groups, and student voices. He also noted that there were several comments in favor of standards-based reporting, but supports the decision of the Communication Committee with subject area standards noted on the report card. Dr. Seitsinger explained that the administration and teachers would have final say on the actual design of the new middle school report card.

**Moved, to establish a traditionally graded report card with standards-based notes for Preston Plains Middle School. Serra/Burke-Grabarek. Unanimous. Motion Carries.**

The training and new report card will be implemented in the Fall of 2025.

The Hold Harmless Act guarantees that our ECS funds will remain intact for the next two years. We do not know what will happen after that.

Janine Paige, middle school teacher, did a "People of Preston" project with a 7<sup>th</sup> grade class. Students chose a community member (past or present), researched their lives through interviews, historical data, and photographs. They then prepared monologues. They dressed in costume and presented their monologues at the Preston Public Library. Mrs. Paige had hard cover books made which included all the community members that were covered in the project. Dr. Seitsinger shared the book with the BOE.

Dr. Seitsinger asked the Board to plan on a special meeting of the BOE on 6-25-25 in order to act on the results of the June 18<sup>th</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> referendum.

Policies at Second Read:

**Moved, to adopt Policy 6154 Homework Instruction as presented. Serra/Gallant. Unanimous. Motion Carries.**

**Moved, to adopt Policy 4211 Recruitment and Selection as presented. Ennis/Luty. Unanimous. Motion Carries.**

**Moved, to adopt Policy 4000.1 Sexual Harassment/Title IX as presented. Ennis/Serra. Unanimous. Motion Carries.**

**Moved, to adopt Policy 3152 Spending Public Funds for Advocacy as presented. Serra/Gallant. Unanimous. Motion Carries.**

#### 6. Preston PTO

Kelly McNamara was present and gave the following report:

The PVMS Field Day was a huge success. She reviewed other summer events including the Sea Unicorn Game on July 25<sup>th</sup>.

#### 7. Principals/Director of Student Services Reports/Other Reports as Needed

Craig King: Director of Student Services: he stated that his department is wrapping up PPT and 504 meetings. They are also finalizing outplacements. A study on outplacements is being conducted and the results will hopefully alleviate payment uncertainties for such programs.

Ray Bernier: Principal PVMS: The Band and Chorus did an excellent job at their recent concert. Awards Day and the 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Recognition Ceremony went very well. He thanked the PTO for a wonderful field day. The 4<sup>th</sup> Grade play will take place on 6-10-25. It is called "Pirates of Grammar." The PK Stepping Up Ceremony is June 17<sup>th</sup> at 10AM. Preston Palozza is on June 11<sup>th</sup> starting at 4:30pm.

Chris Pickett: Principal PPMS: The Awards Ceremony went very well. Mr. Pickett is very proud of students' academic, athletic and civic accomplishments. The Band and Chorus did an excellent job at their recent performance. The PPMS field day at Ocean Beach was a huge success. Track and Field had a very successful season. The state recognized the Algebra I guidelines to project to 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Graduation will be held at PVMS at 3:30pm on June 16<sup>th</sup>.

#### 8. Committee Reports

Finance Committee: Megan Gallant stated that no meeting was held due to the Town Meeting. She reminded everyone to come out and vote on June 18<sup>th</sup> at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Referendum.

Curriculum Committee: Cindy Luty stated that no meeting was held.

Communication Committee: Their work was covered in the Powerpoint Presentation.

LEARN: Cindy Luty stated that the last meeting of the year will be held on Thursday, June 12<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Seitsinger included that LEARN only has enough funding for two fiscal years. Their expertise would be terrible to lose. We are grateful to have LEARN to work with us and guide us.

CABE: Dr. Seitsinger is part of the committee that is working on the presentations for next year's convention. Strong keynote speakers have been chosen and 50 presentation proposals were reviewed.

Building Needs Assessment Committee: Dan Harris stated that there was no new information to report.

#### 9. Financial/Capital Report

Cindy Varricchio shared the April year to date budget report with the board. A September final audit is in the works.

**Moved, to accept the April year to date budget report as presented. Luty/Ennis. Unanimous. Motion Carries.**

The BOF has a list of Capital Project priorities and will begin to explore debt service for these items.

Non Lapsing Account: A report will be provided at the end of the fiscal year.

FY26 Budget:

Dr. Seitsinger reviewed the challenges faced by the district from the initial budget presentation to now. Currently we are at a 2.2% increase over last year's budget. That is about 2% to 3% lower than the current state average.

Dr. Seitsinger shared a list of possible consequences that are the result of the most recent cut of 400K from the BOE budget. No vote will be taken on specific cuts until after the referendum on June 18<sup>th</sup>.

#### 10. Adjournment

**Moved, to adjourn the meeting at 9:00PM. Burke-Grabarek/Ennis. Unanimous. Motion Carries.**



Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

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## Fwd: Public Comment and recording.... June, 2025

1 message

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**Jill Keith** <jillskeith@gmail.com>

Mon, Jun 9, 2025 at 8:59 PM

To: Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>, Jill Keith <jillskeith@gmail.com>

Hi Gloria,

Would you share the following with the BOE as reported Correspondence?

In reference to Dr Seitsinger and Cindy's discussion about PreK Tuition around 8:45pm, they stated that Preston receives no "Early Childhood" Grant funds.

I just wanted to clarify that the "ECS Grant" I referred to is the Education Cost Sharing grant - not Early Childhood.

Given I've never received an answer from Preston and the Administrators are continuing to charge PreK Tuition, it appears all 30 PreK children qualify for School Readiness or IDEA619?

Maybe a BOE member would like to call Kevin Chambers at the CSDE at (860) 713-6455 and obtain clarification.

Many thanks,

*Jill*

Jill S Keith

cell: 860-884-9719

[jillskeith@gmail.com](mailto:jillskeith@gmail.com)

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Jill Keith** <[jillskeith@gmail.com](mailto:jillskeith@gmail.com)>

Date: Sun, Jun 8, 2025, 9:51 PM

Subject: Public Comment and recording.... June, 2025

To: Gloria Homiski <[homiskig@prestonschools.org](mailto:homiskig@prestonschools.org)>

Cc: Jill Keith <[jillskeith@gmail.com](mailto:jillskeith@gmail.com)>

Hi Gloria,

Given there is not a virtual option for tomorrow night's BOE Meeting, according to the agenda, I wish to record it via my phone video (I don't have special equipment for audio capture). I requested guidance and permission about this from Megan Gallant, our BOE Chair, in person after the May 2025 BOE Meeting was adjourned - which hopefully was communicated previously to you and Dr Seitsinger.

My Public Comment:

(I'm hopeful BOE Members will read this before the meeting; I'll attend and reference each underlined point to keep my Public Comment under 3 minutes.

In advance, thank you for including it their packets.)

1) Might the BOE answer a question for me?

I have sent emails to the BOE Budget Inquiry email in recent years with no response and have received a school staff member's comments on social media that I am wrong.

Why does Preston charge PreK tuition when we may receive an ECS Grant allocation for each PreK student (except for Readiness children, I believe), provided all enrolled PreK children have "Parent Pay" deselected in PSIS and none are charged tuition?

The ECS Grant total for ~30 PreK children (reported this year) is greater than the total all parents are charged - and eliminating that collection would save families precious resources to otherwise enrich their children, as well as considerable staff time/costs. This has been true for 20+ years and was confirmed by me with Kevin Chambers at the CSDE Finance Office via phone as recently as the 2024-2025 school year. Thank you for your consideration in responding, confirming and reconsidering this practice.

I have no problem being wrong and I appreciate being corrected. However, I haven't cared for being ignored for a decade (or for the tone of a certain staff person's social media communication toward me, given I've communicated with our Superintendent to achieve a resolution for over a year) - especially when I've been offering a potential WIN-WIN for Preston families and the BOE if this ECS/PreK tuition information is still true.

2) Thank you to the Municipal Buildings, Facilities, etc Committee for considering the study, cost savings, potential reimbursement benefits and potential tax/revenue net benefits of a new PreK-8 school, along with other configurations (with the repurposing/selling/leasing, expanding, etc of other town locations/buildings/land...)

I look forward to the further research that is involved. It's a great committee that's done great work. I wish they had been formed and had a chance to start their efforts a decade ago.

3) Two numbers...

124

250,000

When will Preston correct its Gifted and Talented Board Policy and School Procedures? I've been in front of you for years about this topic, with no progress. I've not encouraged the State or families to file a complaint launch a district investigation, as I've always been committed to solving things in person.

The problem: the Screening Cut Score currently on Preston's website uses a Standard Score of 124, which is the same as the 2019 Procedure manual and the 2010 version created when Ivy and I discussed it for reasons some of you may remember. (I have a copy to show you.)

Fifteen years ago, that error instigated the Preston BOE to incur over \$250,000 in legal and staff expenses against me. "124" is at ~the 95th percentile and meets the IDENTIFICATION Cut Score. (I have a chart to show you.)

A "permissible" Screening Cut Score is a Standard Score of 110, which is at the 75th Percentile.

In fact, students scoring at the 75th percentile (on their OLSAT and/or WISC) would include "high ability learners" who Connecticut would "permit" Preston to identify and serve through a talent development, Schoolwide Enrichment Model (and solve the WIN problem at PPMS).

ALSO - WHY doesn't every parent receive their child's OLSAT results and STAR results with their report cards? Does Preston still require parents to request these results in writing? This data provides universal screening information about student's grade level learning progress that is used nationwide!

Do you know that Besos, Einstein, Pasteur, Winkler, Spielberg, Edison, Washington, etc are among those who are "high ability learners with disabilities" who did or would have required special education and may have benefited from such specialized instruction - which can be provided in general education classrooms through differentiation and acceleration? How many children have not been identified or served in Preston given these inaccurate Screening scores?

I've offered FREE professional development training and resources through the University of Connecticut's National Center of Gifted to Preston for some years and was happy that this year, Dr Seitsinger personally expressed interest. Unfortunately, I was never provided the "new PD forms," as promised and given our history I'm not going to beg or continue to be considered "demanding." Meanwhile this spring, another school district enthusiastically requested and accepted my volunteerism.

4) Destruction of Special Education Records.

The school's website is outdated again by one year; Preston's Procedure Manual is outdated by several years. I don't think people realize how important this is. Seven years after graduation, we needed our records. Of course, we kept our signed copies. We also still had the 'signed adult permission form' Preston kept requesting us to submit what was already on file but Preston acted unaware, refused to give me the originals and instead chose the expense to have them shipped and shredded. We confirmed with the State Library that Preston had indeed reported a destruction process (rather than just listing dates), so we have since had a burn party. But why not invite parents/students to stop in, say hello, and pick up the originals - instead of incurring the expense of shredding them? Why are some procedures so difficult and impersonal here?

5) None of this should come to your attention as these things shouldn't happen. But please know they are impacting every one of your families, every single year, for every decade that these issues (and others) go unresolved. Most families don't have the resources, training and connections that I have. Or the tenacious resolve that the conflict Preston imposed on me through your BOE attorneys 13 years ago has given me to keep fighting for other families (although it's time now for them to organize and work relentlessly together for their own). Which puts the Preston BOE at risk for more expensive future conflict and disruption if serious attention and positive action remain avoided. It's about giving our collective best for ALL the kids, after all.

Thank you,

Jill

Jill S Keith  
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[jillskeith@gmail.com](mailto:jillskeith@gmail.com)