

The Board of Education Town of Vernon

30 Park Street – PO Box 600
Vernon, Connecticut 06066

Paul Grabowski, Chair
Kristiana Wintress, Vice Chair
Karen Colt, Secretary
Anthony Bedlack
Susan Jablonecki
Kriste Nucci
Jesse Schoolnik
Simone Sewell
Susanne Vacek

May 18, 2026

APPROVED MINUTES

BOARD OF EDUCATION “SPECIAL” MEETING

A Special meeting of the Vernon Board of Education was held in-person and via Zoom Webinar in the Library/Media Center at Rockville High School, 70 Loveland Hill Road, Vernon, CT on Monday, May 18, 2026.

1.0 Establish Quorum

Roll call was taken at 7:00 PM.

There was a quorum. Board members present: Mr. Grabowski, Ms. Wintress, Ms. Colt, Mrs. Jablonecki, Ms. Nucci, Mr. Schoolnik and Ms. Vacek. Mr. Bedlack and Ms. Sewell were absent.

Administration present: Superintendent Dr. Joseph Macary, Assistant Superintendent Mr. Robert Testa and Director of Business and Finance Mr. William Meier III.

2.0 Call to Order

Board Chair Mr. Paul Grabowski called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

3.0 Pledge of Allegiance

4.0 Recognitions and Presentations

4.1 Presentation of the Bonnie B. Carney Award of Excellence for Educational Communications (BOE Goal #2, #3))

Mr. Leonard Lockhart, a member of the Executive Committee of CABA (CT Association of Boards of Education), Immediate Past President of the Windsor Board of Education and recently named President of the National School Board Association, came this evening to

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present our Board with the Bonnie B. Carney Award of Excellence for Educational Communications. He explained the criteria needed in order to receive the awards and noted Bonnie B. Carney dedicated 47 years to education, solely focused on communications. The Vernon Board of Education has won “Top Tier” awards for their ***“Social Media - PSAs, Live Feeds, Facebook & X Posts”*** and for their ***“Special Project – Board of Education Member Handbook”***. They also won Honorable Mention” for their ***“Social Media - School District Billboards”*** and ***“Special Project - End of the Year Survey”***. Mr. Lockhart congratulated the Board for receiving these awards and presented the two top tier award plaques and two honorable mention awards to Board Chair Mr. Grabowski. Mr. Grabowski then presented a token of the Board’s appreciation for the many years Mr. Lockhart has served at CAFE and for recently being named President of the National School Board Association.

4.2 Presentation by Maple Street School Students (BOE Goal #1, #2)

Mr. Joshua Egan, Principal of Maple Street School, and Mrs. Julie Beturne, Reading Specialist, came this evening to speak about the Book Buddies program. To address the need for consistent nightly reading routines, Maple Street School launched this initiative last September, pairing 45 student leaders in grades 3–5 (“Bigs”) with 45 K–2 students (“Littles”), for supervised reading practice three mornings each week. This strategic program replaces inconsistent take-home “book bags” with a structured in-school model, where older students mentor younger peers, using assigned literacy tasks and specialized resources. The initiative has proven wildly successful, fostering significant academic growth and promoting a positive school climate through student leadership, development and strong cross-grade relationships. Student attendance has improved as a result of this initiative, decreasing chronic absenteeism. Supported by teacher collaboration and monthly student check-ins, the program has been so well-received that it will continue as a staple of the school's literacy strategy for the 2026–2027 school year. Students (“Bigs” and “Littles”) then spoke of what they like about the program and provided a demonstration to the Board of how Bigs and Littles interact as Book Buddies.

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4.3 Recognition of RHS Art Student's Exhibits at Central Office (BOE Goal #1, #2)

RHS Art Teacher / Department Chair Ms. Stephanie Symkowicz thanked the Board for allowing her and her students to come this evening to be recognized for their Art work, which is currently on display in the 3rd floor lobby at Central Office. She then called the following students to come up to receive their recognition certificate from Board Chair Mr. Grabowski:

Abbigayle Quick
Yootha Amponsah-Tei
Olivia Barker
Ayvah Rivera
Aiden Harris
Jeremy Himmelberger
Liliana Torres
Thomas Glinski, Jr.
Maddison Faircloth
Alexis Ufongene
Sabina Urbanska

5.0 Secretary's Report

5.1 Opportunity for the Board of Education to Add/Delete Urgent Agenda Items

No agenda items were added.

5.2 Rockville High School Student Representative Report

Anne Aggarwala reported on the following:

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- Prom for Juniors and Seniors took place on May 16th and was an unforgettable night filled with fun and memories.
- The France and Spain trip held its first after-school meeting today.
- The Undergraduate Awards Ceremony was held on Thursday, May 14th, celebrating student achievements.
- The Mental Health Fair, organized by Peer Advocates, was a great success and took place during all lunch waves.
- The RHS Drama Department presented “The Outsiders” in a successful student production, showcasing student talent in the arts.
- Students enjoyed a fun-filled Field Day, spending time outdoors, playing games and enjoying the sunshine.
- Rockville High School’s “Rock the Arts 2026” returns for its 4th Annual Celebration on Wednesday, May 20th at 5:00 PM in the RHS Auditorium.
- The Senior outing to Holiday Hill will take place on May 29th.
- Graduation for the Class of 2026 is scheduled for June 11th.
- Quarter 4 mid-term grades will be released on May 19th.
- The ASTE Banquet will be held on May 21st.
- Workshop academic support sessions will continue on Tuesdays and Thursdays to help students stay on track as the school year comes to a close.

6.0 Community Forum

No one addressed the Board.

7.0 Consent Agenda

7.1 Consent Agenda

- (a) Approval of the Minutes of the Board of Education Finance Committee Meeting held on April 20, 2026

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- (b) Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Board of Education Meeting held on April 20, 2026
- (c) Approval of the Minutes of the Board of Education Special Meeting – Ad Hoc 10-Year Facility Study & Master Plan Committee Meeting held on April 22, 2026
- (d) Approval of the Minutes of the Board of Education Personnel Search Committee Meeting held on April 27, 2026
- (e) Approval of the Minutes of the Board of Education Policy Committee Meeting held on May 4, 2026
- (f) Approval of Revised Board of Education Policy #4152.6 – Personnel – Family and Medical Leave (FMLA)
- (g) Approval of Revised Board of Education Policy #5131 – Students – Conduct at School & School Related Activities
- (h) Approval of Revised Board of Education Policy #5145 – Students – Student Civil & Legal Rights & Responsibilities
- (i) Approval of Revised Board of Education Policy #5145.12 – Students – Search & Seizure
- (j) Approval of Adopted Board of Education Policy #6142.12 – Instruction – Advanced Course or Program and Challenging Curriculum
- (k) Approval of Adopted Board of Education Policy #6142.13 – Instruction – Credit for Online Courses
- (l) Approval of Reviewed Board of Education Policy #6154 – Instruction – Homework
- (m) Approval of Reviewed Board of Education Policy #6171 – Instruction – Special

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Education (re: Section 504)

- (n) Approval of Adopted Board of Education Policy #6171.1 – Instruction – IDEA:
Alternative Assessments for Students with Disabilities

MOTION: Ms. Wintress moved to approve Consent Agenda Items 7.1(a) through (n)
SECOND: Ms. Nucci
VOTE: Unanimous

8.0 Personnel

8.1 Appointment of Lake Street School Principal (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Superintendent Dr. Joseph Macary announced that we had 38 candidates apply for the Lake Street School Principal position. 18 candidates were interviewed in the 1st Round and 4 candidates in the 2nd Round. He is pleased to recommend Mr. Michael Savignano as the new Principal of Lake Street School, effective July 1, 2026. Michael is currently one of two Assistant Principals at Vernon Center Middle School and has been a valued member of Vernon Public Schools for 20 years. He is a great choice and will take Lake Street School to the next level of educational excellence.

MOTION: Ms. Colt moved to approve and announce the appointment of Michael Savignano as the new Principal of Lake Street School, effective July 1, 2026
SECOND: Ms. Vacek
VOTE: Unanimous

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8.2 Acceptance of Administrator Retirement (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Board Chair Mr. Grabowski announced that, sadly, Mr. Robert Testa has submitted his letter of retirement as Assistant Superintendent of Vernon Public Schools, effective July 1, 2026. He thanked Mr. Testa for his commitment to Vernon and for his leadership, always coming to Board meetings well prepared to provide thorough information and data to the Board regarding Teaching & Learning and Curriculum. Dr. Macary noted that this is a sad day for Vernon, as Mr. Testa has been with Vernon Public Schools for 22 years. He was previously Principal of Lake Street School (prior to Tracy Duenzl) and then became Assistant Superintendent, having served in that position for the past 11 years alongside Dr. Macary. He will be sorely missed and was wished nothing but the best in his retirement.

MOTION: Mr. Schoolnik moved to accept, with regret, the retirement of Assistant Superintendent Mr. Robert Testa, effective July 1, 2026.

SECOND: Ms. Nucci

APPROVED: Mr. Grabowski, Ms. Wintress, Ms. Colt, Ms. Nucci and Mr. Schoolnik

OPPOSED: Mrs. Jablonecki and Ms. Vacek

VOTE: The motion carried

8.3 Selection of an Interim Superintendent (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3) (Executive Session Anticipated)

This item was moved to the end of the meeting.

9.0 Teaching and Learning

9.1 NEASC Decennial Visit Report & Final Transmittal Letter for Rockville High School (BOE Goal #2, #3)

Dr. Macary reviewed the NEASC Decennial Visit Report & Final Transmittal Letter for Rockville High School with the Board. He noted that every 10 years, high schools go

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through the accreditation process and must be accredited for students to receive credits and attend college. A team of 8, consisting of teachers, educators and Administrators, came in to visit RHS. He went on to say that the report was very positive, so much so that two of the eight team members came back to RHS with their staff to show them the things that RHS is doing, including the Library/Media Center and the RAM Center. One area needing continued work is Curriculum; with 220 courses at RHS, this is an ongoing process that requires a great deal of work and will always need to be addressed. Dr. Macary noted that we met all of the Foundational Element Ratings except for Student Learning, which is where Curriculum falls under. There will always be curriculum work, due to the number of courses offered. And once a cycle of curriculum work is completed, it starts all over again. So, we are in good shape and are good for another 10 years. Once we perform the District Accreditation, we will roll the recent RHS accreditation into it.

10.0 General Business

10.1 Approval of Superintendent's Memo Dated 5/18/2026 (BOE Goal #3)

Dr. Macary announced that the Senior Officers of the Class of 2026 recently presented a request to the Policy Committee to decorate their graduation caps. They did a great job with their presentation, and the committee was in favor of this request, provided they follow some suggested guidelines. Dr. Macary has issued a memo, allowing a one-year exemption to Vernon Board of Education Policy #5127 – Students – Graduation Ceremony. The memo states that students must agree to decorate their caps with positive and respectful word marks and will not be allowed to write any racial slurs, profanity or negative word marks on their caps. Cap sketches must be presented at least two weeks before graduation and approved by RHS Administration. Sketches cannot be altered once approved. Any violation of the above will result in the Senior not participating in the RHS Graduation Ceremony. Dr. Macary is asking for the Board's approval of this memo.

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MOTION: Mrs. Jablonecki moved to approve the Superintendent's Memo dated 5/18/2026 regarding the one-year exemption to Vernon Board of Education Policy #5127 – Students – Graduation Ceremony
SECOND: Ms. Vacek
VOTE: Unanimous

10.2 Proposed Meal Price Increase for School Year 2026-2027 (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Mr. William Meier, Director of Business and Finance, announced that Food & Nutrition Director Mrs. Elizabeth Fisher proposed, at last month's Finance Committee meeting, to increase meal prices by 25 cents for the 2026-2027 school year due to the increased cost of supplies. The Finance Committee agreed to move this proposal forward to the full Board, so he is asking for the Board's approval.

MOTION: Ms. Nucci moved to approve the Meal Price Increase for the 2026-2027 School Year as discussed and presented
SECOND: Mrs. Jablonecki
VOTE: Unanimous

Dr. Macary noted that the State has approved free breakfast for everyone in all schools. He also noted that this meal price increase is in line with other Districts.

10.3 Proposed 2026-2027 Out-of-District Tuition Rates for Non-Resident Students (BOE Goal #2)

Mr. Meier announced a proposed 3% increase across the board for Out-of-District Non-Resident VoAg and Special Needs Students. Proposing any tuition rate increases was originally done in September, but the State now mandates that these fees are set prior to the start of the new school year. He is asking the Board for their approval.

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MOTION: Ms. Wintress moved to approve the proposed 2026-2027 Out-of-District Tuition Rates for Non-Resident Students as discussed and presented.
SECOND: Mrs. Jablonecki
VOTE: Unanimous

10.4 Asset Disposal Request (BOE Goal #3)

Mr. Meier presented an Asset Disposal Request to the Board for their approval. This request is for old Band Uniforms that have since been replaced with new ones. Some Board members expressed concern that they could be donated to an organization who could use them rather than just throwing them out. Mr. Grabowski said that there is a process to asset disposal requests. Board approval is a formality; then it goes before the Town Council for final approval. He said that Board members are most welcome to express their concerns to the Town Council prior to their final approval of the request.

MOTION: Mrs. Jablonecki moved to approve the Asset Disposal Request as discussed and presented
SECOND: Mr. Schoolnik
VOTE: Unanimous

10.5 Scholarship Establishment Request – Justin Dymant “Joy and Light” Memorial Scholarship (BOE Goal #1, #2)

Mr. Meier announced that we were recently contacted by the family of Justin Dymant, a Rockville High School student who passed away last year. Criteria for the recipient of this scholarship is that the student needs to be a senior who demonstrates kindness, inclusion and compassion, and that the award decision is made by the school’s Scholarship Committee.

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MOTION: Ms. Nucci moved to approve the Justin Dymant “Joy and Light” Memorial Scholarship as discussed and presented
SECOND: Ms. Wintress
VOTE: Unanimous

10.6 Reports from the Board of Education Liaisons Regarding Attendance at Organization / Committee Meetings (BOE Goal #1)

Mr. Grabowski announced that Center Road School is winding down for the year. They have a Family Dance planned and are buying T-shirts for Field Day.

Mrs. Jablonecki noted that Lake Street School has a meeting tomorrow.

11.0 Review and Update Board of Education Calendar

<https://www.vernonpublicschools.org/district-information/district-calendar>

No updates were made.

12.0 Opportunity for Questions from the Press Regarding Agenda Items

No one from the Press was in attendance.

MOTION: Ms. Wintress motioned to go into executive session at 7:50 PM to address item 8.3, inviting Superintendent Dr. Joseph Macary
SECOND: Mr. Schoolnik
VOTE: Unanimous

The Board came out of executive session at 8:15 PM

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13.0 Adjournment

MOTION: Mr. Schoolnik made a motion to adjourn at 8:15 PM
SECOND: Ms. Colt
VOTE: Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karen Colt", written in a cursive style.

Karen Colt, Board Secretary