

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

March 9, 2026

APPROVED MINUTES **BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING**

A meeting of the Vernon Board of Education was held in-person and via Zoom Webinar at the Administration Building on Monday, March 9, 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, Mr. Bedlack, Ms. Nucci, Mr. Schoolnik, Ms. Sewell and Ms. Vacek. Mrs. Jablonecki arrived a few minutes after roll call.

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 7:00 PM.

3.0 Pledge of Allegiance

4.0 Recognitions and Presentations

4.1 Presentation by Skinner Road School Students (BOE Goal #1, #2)

Mr. Bryan Kerachsky, Principal of Skinner Road School, announced that his students were here this evening to speak about the “SRS Lego League Legends”, who placed their highest finish ever in school history. He introduced Lego League coaches Miss Roberts and Mrs. Kunkel and asked the students to speak to the Board. The students each took

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turns speaking about their team, the competition they participated in and the robot they built named “Sheila”. They designed and built Sheila with removable attachments to interact with Lego structures to gain points in competition. SRS ranked 11th overall at the end of all robot matches with a high score of 165 points, which was the highest scoring Vernon Public Schools elementary school. They also researched a solution to a problem within the field of Archeology and presented in front of a panel of judges. SRS received runner up for the innovation project out of all 22 teams, securing a “golden ticket” to the State Championship. At the State Championship, they met teams from all over CT, watched some incredible robots and learned about other amazing projects.

4.2 Recognition of Vernon Center Middle School Art Students (BOE Goal #1, #2)

Board Chair Mr. Paul Grabowski honored Art students from Vernon Center Middle School, whose artwork is currently on display in the 3rd floor lobby of the Central Office Administration building. Families of the Art students were in attendance to celebrate their children’s accomplishments. Art teachers Sherri Nevins and Paola Bronner were on hand to recognize their students. The following students were given a certificate by Mr. Grabowski on behalf of the Board:

Victor Dixon
Elam Castle
Joshua Kim
Nicholas Greco
Benjamin Hinton
Elijah Adorno
Collin Reimann
London Martinez
Maddox Moran
Finola Kopcza
Rian Coma
Olivia Amenta

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Samerah Beason
Callie Boyajian
Addison Carl
Alyson Fronczek
Felicity Gounaris
MacKenzie Hellyar
Brianna Maury
Zacharie Orevil
Emerson Paribello
Riley Porcelli
Amelia Powers
Natalie Rizzo
Perfeita Thibodeau
Amalia Tierney
Emily Waldron
Audra Williams

4.3 Board Member Appreciation Month (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Superintendent Dr. Joseph Macary announced that March is Board Member Appreciation Month. He provided the number of hours Board members spend in a year at regular meetings, committee meetings, focus groups, etc. From March 1, 2025 to March 1, 2026, Board members contributed 244 unpaid hours of their time. He thanked them for their service and dedication to the students of Vernon Public Schools.

4.4 Presentation by Athletic Director Jeff Farrell; Recap of Winter Sports Season (BOE Goal #1, #2)

Mr. Jeffrey Farrell, Athletic Director, gave a recap of the Winter Sports Season to the Board. VCMS offered Girls' & Boys' Basketball and Cheerleading this Winter. Girls' & Boys' Basketball each had 16 participants. Cheerleading had 18 participants and cheered

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at basketball games. RHS had 188 total participants in 10 sports this winter season. The overall GPA for all athletes was 87.24, with Girls' Basketball having a team average of 92.33. Below is a list of the sports offered this Winter season along with the number of participants in each sport:

- Boys' Basketball – 28 participants
- Girls' Basketball – 13 participants
- Unified Sports – 6 participants
- Cheerleading – 13 participants
- Girls' Ice Hockey – 2 participants
- Indoor Track & Field – participants included 37 girls & 29 boys
- Boys' Swimming – 1 participant
- Boys' Ice Hockey – 7 participants
- Boys' & Girls' Wrestling – 35 participants
- Dance – a new program this year with 6 participants

Mr. Farrell spoke of the Unified Sports Team hosting a "Polar Plunge" event on April 9th. Board members asked how they could donate to the cause. He said he would share a link to the event where people could sign-up to participate or donate.

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

Thomas Glinski Jr. reported on the following:

- Registration for Spring Sports has just ended

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- NEASC visited Rockville High School for a few days. They were very impressed with the students and how much trust they have between students and staff. They were extremely positive about the culture/climate at RHS and how aligned the student supports are.
- Congratulations to RHS senior Arctic Coombs for being published by Young Writers in Stranger Sagas. He has received a \$50.00 prize and his work will appear in the May edition.
- The RHS school store will present their first ever “Lucky Duck Sale” during all lunch waves for the entire month of March.
- The RHS winter musical “Frozen” was a great success!

Anne Aggarwala reported on the following:

- SATs/PSATs will take place on March 25th.
- The annual Volleyball Lock-In will take place this Friday; tickets are \$10.00 per person and 6 people are needed to form a team. It starts at 9:30 PM and will end at 6:00 AM.
- National Honor Society applications were sent out in the mail a few weeks ago and the deadline is fast approaching with a due date of March 13th.
- The Spring play is holding their popcorn fundraiser on March 30th. This is a great way for students to raise money!

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 Ad Hoc 10-Year Facility Study Master Plan Committee Meeting held on February 5, 2026.

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(b) Approval of the Minutes of the Board of Education Special Meeting (Budget Workshop) held on February 9, 2026

(c) Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Board of Education Meeting held on February 9, 2026.

MOTION: Mr. Schoolnik moved to approve Consent Agenda Items 7.1(a), (b) and (c)
SECOND: Mrs. Jablonecki
VOTE: Unanimous

8.0 Personnel

8.1 Administrator and Teacher Postings, Application Deadlines and Interview Process (BOE Goal #2)

Assistant Superintendent Mr. Robert Testa reviewed the Administrator & Teacher postings, application deadlines and interview process with the Board. He noted that there are three key factors for acquiring good teachers:

1. Post early
2. Participate in the UConn Job Fair
3. Establish Partnerships with Local Universities

He reviewed the following current postings as of 3/3/2026:

- Science Teacher – Secondary
- Special Education Teacher – Secondary
- Special Education Teacher – Alternative Program – High School
- PE Health Teacher – Secondary
- English Teacher – Secondary
- Math Teacher – Secondary

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- Art Teacher – Secondary
- Music Teacher – Secondary
- School Counselor – Secondary
- Special Education Teacher – Elementary School
- Elementary Classroom Teacher – Primary K – Grade 2
- Elementary Classroom Teacher – Primary Grades 3-5
- School Psychologist – Elementary

Mr. Testa then shared the “Hiring Practices” memo for certified staff which outlines guidelines when hiring permanent certified employees. He noted that final candidates are asked to perform a job-embedded task.

9.0 Teaching and Learning

9.1 RHS 9th Grade Academy Presentation (BOE Goal #2, #3)

Mr. Daniel Pichette, Assistant Principal of Rockville High School, gave a presentation to the Board about the 9th Grade Academy. He explained that this was a new initiative this year, focusing on student transition from 8th to 9th grade, which is most critical for kids moving from middle school to high school. RHS partnered with RISE Network and the Grade 9 Focus Network to leverage proven frameworks for freshman success, including Date-Driven Interventions, Summer Transition and Evidence-Based Practices. It is a “school within a school” model and creates a cohesive bubble around 9th graders, designed to provide a soft landing with high expectations. Small cohorts of students share a specific team of core teachers in a safe environment, focused on fostering a sense of belonging and community during the first year of high school. 9th Grade Academy creates an environment where kids want to come to school. Impacts of the Academy include an increased belonging, stronger adult connections and sustainability. The goal of this program is to ensure every freshman is “on track” to graduate within four years.

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10.0 General Business

10.1 Board of Education Finance Committee Report (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Mr. William Meier III, Director of Business and Finance, noted that the Finance Committee met this evening to review the year-to-date budget report. He also noted that this was a tough winter with increased expenses for utilities, heating and overtime due to snow clean-up. Mr. Meier announced that our Food & Nutrition Dept. will give a presentation on finances and food services at the next Board meeting in April.

10.2 Summary of Federal Grant Budgets (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Dr. Macary announced that the district relies heavily on Federal & Local Grants, which total 2.6 million dollars in funding. He provided the following breakdown of these grants:

Title I Part A	\$983,318
Title II Part A	\$112, 911
Title III EL	\$15,625
Title IV Part A	\$66,374
IDEA 611	\$1,041,593
IDEA 619	\$48,812
McKinney-Vento	\$50,000
Perkins Secondary Grant	\$62,548
Adult Education PEP	\$160,743
Adult Education PEP-IELCE	\$65,900

Each Federal grant is used for a specific purpose and fiscal rationale. This funding accounts for approximately 3.5% of the annual financial expenditures for the Vernon Public Schools.

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10.3 Approval of Donation to Vernon Regional Adult Based Education (VRABE) (BOE Goal #1, #2)

Mr. Meier announced that Vernon Regional Adult Based Education (VRABE) has received a generous donation of \$500.00 from ECHN's Family Resource Center. This donation would be used to purchase literacy materials for adult education families and the Family Learning Program. He is asking for the Board's approval of this donation.

MOTION: Mr. Bedlack moved to approve and accept, with gratitude, a \$500.00 donation to Vernon Regional Adult Based Education (VRABE) and distribute as presented.

SECOND: Mrs. Jablonecki

VOTE: Unanimous

10.4 Approval of Donation to Rockville High School FFA (BOE Goal #1, #2)

Mr. Meier announced that the Tolland County Farm Bureau, Inc. has donated \$500.00 to the Rockville High School FFA in appreciation of the FFA Officer Team's help in their Farm-to-Table event this past fall. He is asking for the Board's approval of this donation.

MOTION: Ms. Wintress moved to approve and accept, with gratitude, a \$500.00 donation to Rockville High School's FFA and distribute as presented.

SECOND: Mrs. Jablonecki

VOTE: Unanimous

10.5 CSDE Report on the Effectiveness of the Alliance District Program (BOE Goal #2)

Dr. Macary shared the CSDE Report on the Effectiveness of the Alliance District Program with the Board. He noted that we are the first BOE to receive this report. The report is quite lengthy and Dr. Macary reviewed highlighted items within the 58-page report that he thought were of importance, some of which are listed below:

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- Alliance District Grant funds are NOT additional funds but a portion of the education cost sharing (ECS) funding. It is required by law to be distributed as a grant and not as an entitlement.
- The Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR) prohibits districts from budgeting less for education than a previous year.
- Since 2015, 14 out of 38 National Blue Ribbon Schools have come from Alliance Districts.
- Expenditure data reveal that schools in Alliance Districts spend about 10% less per pupil than other schools in the state.
- Disruptions caused by the pandemic negatively affected all accountability indicators, including academic achievement, academic growth, chronic absenteeism and high school graduation. After the pandemic, 27 Alliance Districts improved on their Accountability Index from 2021-22 to 2024-25. Others have sustained a higher level of performance, including Vernon.
- Over the past several accountability cycles, around 25 percent of schools (around 30-40 schools) identified annually as Schools of Distinction have been in Alliance Districts.
- Alliance Districts continue to serve students with disproportionately higher needs than the rest of the state.

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

Mrs. Jablonecki attended the February PTO meeting at Lake Street School. She spoke of quail eggs being delivered to the school and subsequently hatching. The PTO is planning a Wolf Pack Game event, a future book fair, and their end of the year celebration. She also announced that the head of the PTO is looking to step down from her position.

Mr. Grabowski announced that the CRS PTO is planning several fundraisers and a dance. Unfortunately, Munson's Chocolates will not be offered this year as a fundraiser and many are not happy about this decision.

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11.0 Review and Update Board of Education Calendar

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

Dr. Macary reminded the Board of the Community Conversation event scheduled for tomorrow night at Vernon Center Middle School. He also reminded everyone that the Rockville High School Graduation will take place on June 11th and that June 19th is currently the last day of school due to 5 snow days to date.

12.0 Opportunity for Questions from the Press Regarding Agenda Items

No one from the Press was in attendance.

13.0 Adjournment

MOTION: Ms. Vacek made a motion to adjourn at 8:11 PM
SECOND: Ms. Colt
VOTE: Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,



Karen Colt, Board Secretary