

Superintendent's Report: March 2026

Highlight of the Month: The month of February was filled with many highlighted moments. Among those I attended were Mrs. Boccacio's grade one Hundred Day Parade of Fashion; Mrs. Bisson's tall tale presentations; Mrs. Rhynhart's exciting language arts class and Ms. Garvie leading a rather large group of primary age dancers in her after hours dance club.

March is the month to honor the members of the Board of Education: Robert Ellsworth (14 years), Stephen Bowen (12+ years), Terry Cote (8+ years), Adam Minor (6+ years), Lauren Barlow (4+ years), Michael Bilica (4 years) and Nancy Neff (3 months).

Educational Leadership:

- We are hopefully moving away from winter weather that includes 4:00 am conference calls that result in decisions to close school, delay opening or dismiss early. None of these decisions are easy ones to make as they interrupt the educational programming as well as the daily flow of family life. The amount and type of precipitation as well as the timing of the storm are all factors in the decision – however the number one factor is the safety of our staff and students.
- Charles Kernan and I attended a very informative meeting with the leadership of E.O. Smith. We discussed key aspects of the programs offered at E.O. Smith as well as the costs associated with their special education programs.
- As a follow-up to the conversations at our last meeting, I did contact the superintendents from the other WA sending schools. Overall, there was a shared concern about the 5% increase in base tuition (\$19,144) and special education tuition (\$20,772), after we were told to expect an increase between 3-4%, particularly after most of our budgets were developed. There doesn't seem to be much effort in adjusting either of these rates based on concerns expressed by sending schools. There was overall a feeling of the need for more communication and a better overall understanding of the sending schools. Some of the larger districts are increasing the number of designated high schools which is stretching their transportation services. There is also some concern being expressed by town leaders in other communities about the difference in cost of tuition between WA and other possible choices.

Facilities:

- Snow and ice dams on our roof resulted in some ceiling leaks. Northeast Builders Roofing responded to our request for help in removing the ice dams. They also made recommendations to better prepare our roof for a large storm in the future.
- I asked Northeast Builders Roofing to perform a roof inspection once the weather settles. This will inform us as to the extent of immediate roof repairs that may be needed and provide an overview of the overall condition and life expectancy of our middle school roof. According to the State guidelines we may qualify for a roof replacement project earlier than the date targeted in our long-term plan. The Facilities Committee can make an informed decision regarding moving forward with a roof replacement project based on the roof inspection study.

Finances:

- Kymberli submitted all the back invoices that were requested to obtain the dollars from the 2023 security grant application. Once all paperwork is reviewed and completed the Town should receive the dollars approved in the 2023 grant.
- We have not yet received any notice of the application that will hopefully secure funding for our Pre-K program.
- The dates for the next steps in the budget process have been set:
 - March 12 - Meeting with the BOS to discuss the BOE's budget request @ 4:30 PM.
 - April 30 – Town budget hearing @ 7:00 PM.
 - May 14 – Referendum @ 7:00 PM following BOE meeting @ 6:00 PM.

Collaboration:

- There is an increasing amount of communication and attempts at collaboration among the school districts in our area. The increasing costs of special education, together with the decrease in available staffing, is impacting all the towns.
- There has also been a concentrated advocacy effort to inform the legislators of the unique needs of the small towns in our area. Steven Rioux, Superintendent in Putnam, is heading up an advocacy initiative in the attempt to bring school leaders and members of local Boards together to speak to the need for additional resources. A thank you to Michael Bilica for attending the March 1 information meeting held in Putnam. Michael may wish to share his thoughts at the meeting. Thanks also to Nancy Neff who had all intentions of attending but, given she is new to the area, was somewhat misguided as to the location by her GPS. I can appreciate her experience having had similar experiences when I first began to navigate the neighboring communities.
- Deb Richards and I discussed the long-term facilities plan and there is agreement that the cost of the improved filtration system be shared between the town and the school.
- We recently received notice of the future meetings of the Community Table (March 26, May 7, June 4) and the Leadership group (March 11). If any BOE member is interested in attending a meeting of the Community Table, please contact me for additional details.

Reminder: C.A.B.E. will be facilitating a short informal role and responsibilities meeting from 5:00-6:00 PM before our March meeting. Pizza is included. Included in this packet is some information from C.A.B.E. for you to review to make the time as beneficial as possible for you. If you have any specific questions you would like to have addressed, please send them to me.

Unfinished Business

Long Term Capital Plan, Discussion and Possible Action

In your packet is most recent long term facilities plan. The plan reflects a change in the timeline of the listed potential projects. It prioritizes upgrading the water filtration system. As noted last month we are scheduled to receive \$37,716 from the new D.R.I.P. grant in 2026. We have not yet received the money. Once received we can investigate the possibility of using these funds to address the filtration system.

New Business

Annual Healthy Food Certification

The BOE must vote annually that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027. If the BOE votes "yes", they can also vote to allow the sale of exempted food and beverages under certain circumstances outside of the school day.

Financial Reports

As always, please submit any questions or concerns regarding the financial reports and/or recommended transfers prior to the meeting so the administration can prepare the needed information. No transfers are being requested currently.