

Board of Education
January 27, 2026

The special session meeting was live streamed on COX channel 16 or Frontier channel 6101 and may also be viewed on: YouTube® Channel, “Wethersfield Government Access TV” at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfuf-C0gYVVxmD5iIfTnsQ>

The Wethersfield Board of Education met in regular session Tuesday, January 27, 2026, 7:00 p.m. The meeting was streamed from Town Council Chambers, Town Hall, 505 Silas Deane Highway. The following Board members were present: Ms. Callan-Carson, Ms. DiBacco, Mrs. Di Roberts, Mrs. Drew, Ms. Gold, Mr. Reilly, Vice Chairperson Laccavole, and Chairperson Granato.

Also present were: Superintendent of Wethersfield Public Schools, Jeff Wihbey; Assistant Superintendent of WPS, Jennifer Miller; WPS Director of Finance and Operations, Matt Kozaka; WPS Director of Special Education, John Karzar; WHS Principal, Siobhan O’Connor; WPS Executive Secretary-Superintendent’s Office, Kristin Underhill; and WHS Student Representative, Anushka Gandhi. Members of the public were also present.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

WHS Student Representative, Anushka Gandhi led in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Student/Staff Recognition

There were no Student/Staff Recognitions.

3. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings

a. December 9, 2025 - Board of Education Regular Session Meeting

Ms. Callan Carson MOVED to approve the minutes of the Board of Education Regular Session Meeting of December 9, 2025, as submitted. The motion was SECONDED by Mrs. Di Roberts and VOTED unanimously.

b. December 19, 2025 - Board of Education Hearing Panel Session Meeting

Mrs. Drew MOVED to approve the minutes of the Board of Education Hearing Panel Session Meeting of December 19, 2025, as submitted. The motion was SECONDED by Ms. Callan Carson and VOTED unanimously.

c. January 13, 2026 - Board of Education Workshop Session Meeting

Ms. Callan Carson MOVED to approve the minutes of the Board of Education Workshop Session Meeting of January 13, 2026, as submitted. The motion was SECONDED by Mrs. Drew and VOTED unanimously.

4. Public Comment

There were no comments made by the Public during this portion of the meeting.

5. Communications

a. Superintendent's Update – January 2026

Superintendent Wihbey referred to his January 2026 Informational Update provided to Board Members and provided the following highlights from the document:

Finance and Operations

Superintendent Wihbey reported that the Finance Department is implementing a districtwide P-Card (Purchasing/Procurement Card) program through WPS's existing relationship with M&T Bank. This is a no-cost program and credit cards will be issued on behalf of WPS. These credit cards, which display the WPS logo and tax-exempt ID numbers, are reserved solely for building and department administrators to use for emergency purchases or when ordering from vendors who do not accept purchase orders. The Board's independent auditor has a positive opinion of the program, noting that it enhances internal controls, boosts financial oversight, and encourages responsible spending. Superintendent Wihbey thanked WPS Finance and Operations Director, Matt Kozaka for his work in bringing this initiative forward.

Food Services

At the beginning of the school year, changes to federal funding have led to closer monitoring of Food Services spending. Through December, average daily breakfast participation has decreased by approximately 350 meals per day, including a 72% decrease at the elementary level. Average daily lunch participation has declined by approximately 525 meals per day, a 33% decrease compared to last year. Despite lower meal counts, à la carte sales have increased by approximately 17,000 transactions, generating \$88,000 in additional sales. Superintendent Wihbey emphasized that while spending patterns have shifted across budget lines, the Food Services program remains profitable each month and continues to operate in the black—an outcome that distinguishes WPS from many districts that operate lunch programs at a loss.

Teaching and Learning

There was strong participation from our students in statewide music events. Under the direction of WPS Music Teachers, Ms. Suara Malahaizer, Ms. Colleen Mello, and Mr. Jakob Voychick, more than 100 students in grades 5–6 participated in festival chorus, band, and orchestra events held in Bridgeport, CT. Concerts took place over Friday and Saturday and represented a significant statewide opportunity for WPS students.

Wethersfield High School Highlights

On January 9th, Wethersfield High School received news that it earned status on the Advanced Placement Honor Roll at the Bronze level, an award that acknowledges the school's ongoing efforts to increase access to AP and college-level courses. Superintendent Wihbey credited the WHS team, the Student Programs and Services Committee, BOE member Mrs. Di Roberts, and Principal Siobhan O'Connor, for their leadership in strengthening the course catalog.

December 18th, WHS hosted a Career and Technical Education celebration breakfast event at the Pitkin Community Center. Students highlighted career-ready skills and internship experiences developed through partnerships with the local community. Superintendent Wihbey applauded the event as a strong culminating experience for students and recognized the leadership of WHS Principal O'Connor and Mark Danaher in providing meaningful, real-world learning opportunities.

Board Comments: Mrs. Drew commented. Mr. Kozaka and Superintendent Wihbey also commented.

6. Action Items

There were no Action Items.

7. Reports/Discussion Items

a. Capital Priority List

Superintendent Wihbey referred to Reference 3 – Capital Priority List and provided the following highlights from the document:

The Superintendent commented on the Capital Priority List, explaining that it establishes a consistent standard for identifying and prioritizing facility needs across all schools while engaging key stakeholders, including staff, parents, students, and principals.

Superintendent Wihbey stated that every BOE facility will undergo inspections two times each year. Spring inspections will assess building needs and inform the development of each school's Capital Priority List. A second inspection will occur in August, approximately two weeks prior to the opening of school, during which buildings will be re-inspected, rated, and assigned readiness scores. This process helps make sure important tasks found in the spring are taken care of before school begins, supporting overall readiness for the new year.

Superintendent Wihbey explained that this process serves multiple purposes, including identifying district-wide priorities, safety concerns, potential risks, and opportunities for improvement. Each campus will create its own lists divided into three areas: Facilities, Information Technology, and Security. Principals are encouraged to collaborate in identifying approximately 7–15 priority items per location.

Superintendent Wihbey directed the Board's attention to page 21 of the Capital Priority List and stated that the BOE Facilities Committee will select a district-wide top 10, 12, or 15 list. This will allow the Board to provide input on the highest priorities across the district and will support clearer communication with the Town regarding WPS' capital needs.

Superintendent Wihbey emphasized that the Capital Priority List document discussed this evening represents a first iteration. In the spring, a facilities committee for the entire district will meet to review and update inspection criteria so they match Wethersfield Public Schools' needs. He stressed the importance of demonstrating responsible stewardship of public funds and appreciation for the community's investment in district facilities.

The Capital Priority List is one approach used to maintain and extend the life of district buildings, with the goal that new facilities opening in the next six to seven years will serve for 50–60 years. Superintendent Wihbey noted that the report will continue to evolve and become more robust, accurate, and inclusive of stakeholder input over time. He thanked WPS Principals, Head Custodians, Security Director, Michael Baribault; IT Director, Jim DeRagon, Director of Physical Services, Sally Katz; and Maintenance Supervisor, Juan Salazar; for their expertise in the creation of this document.

Board Comments: Mrs. Granato, Mrs. Drew, Ms. Callan Carson, Mrs. Gold, Mr. Laccavole, and Mr. Reilly commented. Superintendent Wihbey also commented.

b. Superintendent's Entry Plan- Part 1

Superintendent Wihbey began his presentation of his Entry Plan for WPS by stating that every conversation, classroom visit, and document review deepened his understanding of WPS and made him often revisit what he learned. The ongoing learning made it hard to “finish” this work, not because it was incomplete, but because the learning continues.

He clarified that this experience was especially meaningful due to the people—students, staff, families, and community members—who so generously shared their time and perspectives. He noted this report does not represent the conclusion, but rather the most honest picture possible at this moment in time, grounded in those voices.

He explained his responsibility is not just to present findings, but to remain engaged and open as district understanding continues to evolve. He noted this report is a milestone, not an endpoint, and that he looks forward to continuing this work together in shaping the future of Wethersfield Public Schools.

Superintendent Wihbey shared the opening sections of the report, reviewed the processes and timeline, and summarized current state of/future vision for WPS.

Process, Methods, and Timeline

Superintendent Wihbey began by outlining the entry process, including its methods, scope, and timeline. He explained the purpose of the entry process was to build a shared, evidence-based understanding of the strengths, needs, and priorities of the Wethersfield Public Schools, work directly informs the State of the Schools report and upcoming budget recommendations.

From July 1 through November 1, 2025, he conducted a structured and comprehensive entry process that included document and data review; school and classroom visits; interviews with school and district leaders; teacher and staff focus groups; and conversations with parents, community members, and students. Over the summer, 266 community members completed a district-wide survey, and he met with more than 364 stakeholders, whose perspectives shaped the findings.

He noted the work surfaced clear themes related to student achievement trends, program effectiveness, staffing/class size considerations, and facility/resource needs. He concluded that the findings form the foundation for our initial strategic priorities and future budget implications.

Verification of Findings

Superintendent Wihbey noted he began drafting this report in December and felt a strong responsibility to ensure accuracy in what he had heard/learned. He embarked on a verification process of returning to the schools—particularly around teaching and learning, which emerged as a dominant theme—to validate the findings with certified staff. He attended faculty meetings, teacher leadership meetings, and principal leadership meetings, and I asked three questions:

- What did I get right?
- What did I get wrong?
- What did I miss?

Initially, there was a level of hesitation and cautiousness from staff about telling him where he might be wrong, but he made it clear that it was a safe space and that their feedback was essential. After building trust, people began to have open and meaningful discussions, which made the findings and report much more credible and representative of what was genuinely happening in the schools.

State of Wethersfield Public Schools

Superintendent Wihbey then informed the Board Chair, BOE members, and WPS stakeholders that the state of WPS is **positive and ascending**.

He noted Wethersfield has a strong school system, with teachers, specialists, support staff, and leaders who care deeply about students and work incredibly hard every single day. He also observed that staff members are highly committed to advancing their own professional development, supporting the system's progress, and ensuring their students' success. He mentioned that the district is in very good hands with the employees of WPS and that the district has everything it needs for success.

He acknowledged the steady leadership of this Board of Education and its long-term focus on student achievement, staff support, and the overall health of the system as a solid foundation for working together. He found the civic pride (volunteerism, event attendance, commentary from families) in Wethersfield remarkable.

Key Themes and Areas for Growth

Superintendent Wihbey noted stakeholders expressed a clear desire for stronger, unified, district-wide coherence, as inefficiencies and inequities have emerged with schools and

departments sometimes operating in parallel rather than in partnership. He reasoned that strengthening coherence is essential to ensuring consistent expectations and high-quality learning opportunities for every student.

He also commented that there is the need for stronger alignment among scheduling, staffing, and student needs. He concluded that clearly outlining and intentionally protecting intervention time, specialist responsibilities, and planning structures is crucial, as these elements are often dictated by adult availability rather than a unified instructional goal. This includes developing a more integrated talent management system: clarifying roles, aligning hiring to competencies, and defining what it means to be an ideal Wethersfield Public Schools educator in staff recruitment and development.

He explained that frustration and slower problem solving have resulted due to role confusion emergence across systems, with families often bypassing school-level channels and going directly to town officials or Board members. Clarifying roles and reinforcing communication pathways are critical to improving customer service for families and staff alike.

Superintendent Wihbey noted communication at the elementary and high school levels was identified as positive. However, communication at the middle school level was identified as a particular challenge. Families expressed the need for more structured and predictable updates about student progress. Students, families, and staff all found moving into and out of SDMS to be a stressful experience. He noted stakeholders also expressed differing perspectives on discipline practices, signaling a need for clearer expectations, stronger behavioral supports, and more consistent communication.

Superintendent Wihbey noted the condition of our elementary facilities remains a concern. Many buildings lack the systems/spaces necessary for modern teaching and learning. The Town's recent decision to advance a major capital initiative represents an important turning point and underscores the need for a coherent, long-term facilities strategy aligned with district priorities.

Executive Summary: Vision for the Future of Wethersfield Public Schools

Superintendent Wihbey noted the vision for Wethersfield Public Schools (WPS) is informed by extensive engagement with staff, families, students, and community partners and reflects both the district's strengths and its opportunities for growth. It articulates a clear, forward-looking

direction for WPS as a coherent, student-centered system and provides a roadmap for ensuring a consistently high-quality learning experience for every student across all schools.

Central to this vision is a commitment to three critical student developmental benchmarks that will guide instructional priorities, system design, and resource alignment:

1. **Early Literacy:** WPS will strive for 100% of students reading at grade level by the end of grade three. Early literacy is foundational to long-term academic success and life outcomes and will remain a primary focus of district improvement efforts.
2. **Mathematical Readiness:** WPS will ensure that 100% of students successfully complete Algebra I by eighth grade, consistent with the Board of Education's Strategic Operating Plan. This benchmark helps make sure all students have equal access to advanced courses and future educational opportunities, so they are not held back by unequal chances.
3. **Career and College Readiness:** WPS will ensure that 100% of students engage in meaningful career and college readiness experiences aligned with the district's Vision of the Graduate. Building on strong existing programs at Wethersfield High School, the district will continue expanding coursework, credentials, internships, and experiential learning opportunities that connect academic learning to real-world applications.

Superintendent Wihbey views WPS as a learning-focused organization that continually improves. It operates as a unified system, carefully coordinating scheduling, staffing, and instructional support to meet students' academic and social-emotional needs. The district will protect instructional time, offer more effective interventions, and have its most skilled educators assist students who require the most support. WPS will base decisions on relevant data, ensuring openness and accountability throughout every stage.

Superintendent Wihbey noted WPS will build a strong, empowered workforce through competency-aligned hiring, targeted professional learning, and consistent feedback cycles to support that work. Clear role clarity, updated job descriptions, and user-friendly responsibility charts will strengthen communication, responsiveness, and accountability for staff and families.

Superintendent Wihbey also noted that family partnerships will grow stronger through intentional communication strategies, including scheduled conferences, data-informed check-ins, and straightforward tools for monitoring progress. These practices will ensure families have consistent insight into student learning and will promote greater student ownership of growth.

Superintendent Wihbey explained that to better meet the developmental needs of early adolescents, WPS will move toward establishing a dedicated Grades 5–6 Intermediate School at Webb School. This model will provide developmentally appropriate structures, a strong STEM focus, and targeted preparation for the increased academic rigor of middle school, particularly in mathematics. The district’s Vision of a Graduate will guide successful transitions from elementary school to SDMS and from SDMS to WHS.

Superintendent Wihbey stated that WPS will enhance long-term stewardship of its facilities by implementing a comprehensive capital planning framework, which emphasizes proactive maintenance, transparent reporting, and coordinated planning in collaboration with the Town of Wethersfield. This approach will protect investments and ensure learning environments remain safe, modern, and instructionally aligned.

Superintendent Wihbey expressed deep appreciation for the professionalism, dedication, and pride demonstrated by the Wethersfield community and looks forward to continued collaboration with the Board of Education. At the February Board workshop meeting, the Superintendent will present a deeper review of findings outlined in Appendix A to support further discussion and informed decision-making.

Board Comments: Mrs. Granato, Mrs. Di Roberts, Mr. Reilly, Mrs. Drew, Mr. Laccavole, and Ms. Callan Carson commented.

c. WHS Course Catalog Overview

WHS Principal, Siobhan O’Connor noted she, the Teaching and Learning Department and the Internship and Career Counseling Department have been working on WHS course catalog/curriculum changes to ensure that all students have both access to rigorous curricula and get the support needed to be successful.

There are two (2) new courses in the catalog.

Precalculus honors is now AP Precalculus, which can provide the opportunity for students to access college credit within the high school environment and thus save money on college tuition cost. This course serves as an alternative to honors pre-calculus and is regarded as its equivalent.

Geometry with lab will be available, providing students with an extra period to focus on strengthening their skills to ensure they are prepared and eligible for Algebra II.

Other changes to the catalog include:

- The full year course, **Mathematical Decision Making**, will be made a **half year class next year** to open FTE time for the geometry with lab course.
- Nutrition will change to **Baking**
- Nutrition 1 will change to **Cooking**
- Concert Orchestra will change to **Chamber Orchestra**
- Ecology and Evolutionary Biology will be **Environmental Science**

Principal O'Connor there will be a document/brochure noting career pathways for students. So far, eleven (11) distinct pathways have been discovered. Different career pathways will be connected to WHS courses. This initiative assists students who pursue areas like STEM, marketing, law, public safety, family and consumer sciences, education, and related disciplines. The published document or brochure will include a comprehensive list of all courses, detailed descriptions of each pathway, and information about careers connected to these pathways. That document will also provide a list of micro credentials available for each pathway.

Board Comments: Mrs. Granato, Mrs. Di Roberts, and Ms. Callan Carson commented. Mr. Wihbey also commented.

8. Board of Education

a. Meetings Held

i. Finance & Operations Committee (01.27.26): Mr. Laccavole reported the district is currently under budget due to costs associated with new hires being lower than expected with approximately thirty (30) changes in positions. The district is currently above the budgeted amount for student outplacements partially due to an uptick in the number of expulsions. There was a discussion of next year's budget regarding insurance. Early projections had the district incorporate 15%, and that percentage is trending lower as expected. The hope is that it continues downward. He noted the most recent projections are at 13.5%. More information will be forthcoming.

b. Meetings Scheduled

i. Policy & Planning Committee (02.10.26)

9. Public Comment

There were no comments made by the Public during this portion of the meeting.

10. Board Comment

Mrs. Di Roberts commented that former BOE member, Liz Walters, informed her that students Rog (son of former BOE member Christina Hernandez-Williams) and Tyler from WHS Boys Varsity Ice Hockey were shoveling driveways as a fundraiser after the recent snowstorm, Benjamin, and that she was very pleased with the job they did in clearing her property.

Mr. Laccavole noted his appreciation of WPS taking the safety precautions to close school on Monday and Tuesday. He also expressed gratitude to Central Office for remaining open today despite the schools being closed.

Mrs. Drew mentioned the Building Committee met last evening via Zoom with Architect TSKP. The timeline, which is on target for 2028. The Committee is working on the RFP for the Construction Manager for the building project. This manager will determine the actual costs for all selected building project tasks. Rather than Sally Katz managing all responsibilities, it is preferable to have an Owner's Manager in place. The Committee hopes to have the draft RFP completed by the end of this week. After choosing the Construction Manager, the next step is to pursue hiring an Owner's Manager. There was also a discussion about when the Committee would bring all the information to stakeholders, BOE, and Town Councilors. She requested that the BOE let her know if/when they need more information from the Committee, so she can provide it or assist in obtaining it.

Ms. Callan Carson noted WHS Safe Grad Committee completed its raffle this past month. She congratulated the raffle winners and thanked everyone who participated and helped raise funds. She encouraged attendance at WHS Safe Grad's next event "Music Bingo Night" on Thursday, February 5th from 6-9PM for \$30.00 per ticket (sold in advance and at the door). A raffle will take place during this event.

Mrs. Gold commented gave a shout out to all the school PTOs for the very well organized and efficient way they operate and serve their communities. She commented favorably of the Webb PTO meeting she recently attended and noted that despite Dollars for Scholars awards not being available to students in the Open Choice Program, Webb PTO is looking for other ways to help provide scholarship awards to collegebound graduates who attended Webb School.

Mrs. Granato noted Wethersfield Kid Mayor and Wethersfield Kid Chair essay contests will soon begin, with Mayor Lesser and Chair Granato speaking at assemblies in the elementary schools for grades 5 and 6 soon. WPS fifth and sixth graders will soon have the information for the contest. The hope is to inspire and challenge our fifth and sixth graders to tell the Board of Education or Town Council how they would run our town government, what they would change, and what they would add to make Wethersfield an even better community to live in and to go to school in. She noted BOE is excited to have the winners for Kid Chair share sit at the dais with the BOE for a meeting and read their award-winning essay. Each elementary school will have their Kid Chair attend a future BOE meeting in Town Council Chambers show off their award-winning Kid Chair representative. She encouraged participation in this challenge from fifth and sixth graders who wish to accept the challenge with their best ideas and effort. Mrs. Granato gave a shout out to Kristin Underhill, WPS Executive Secretary-Superintendent's Office, for her expertise and support in this endeavor.

WHS Student Representative, Anushka Gandhi provided the following update on recent events at WHS. Last week, students completed their midterm exams, which were followed by some much-appreciated snow days.

The midterm exams also concluded the first semester of the school year. Tomorrow (Wednesday, January 28th) marks the start of the second semester. This week, underclassmen will complete their course selection process for the upcoming school year.

The Annual 8th Grade Night is February 4th at WHS. Eighth-grade students, and their families, are welcome to learn about what WHS has to offer, such as clubs, honor societies, and athletic programs. WHS Dance Team placed second at the annual Cheer and Dance Challenge recently held at Quinnipiac University. The CIAC website will soon publish a story about the WHS Boys Varsity Hockey Team, focusing on the Player Leadership Council and how it contributes both to the team and the community.

11. Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business discussed.

12. Proposed for Executive Session

Mrs. Granato MOVED to end public session and enter into an Executive Session at approximately 8:31 p.m. for the purpose of **a. Superintendent's Mid-Year Review.**

The motion was SECONDED by Mrs. Di Roberts and VOTED unanimously.

Present for executive session:

Wethersfield Board of Education Members:

M. Callan Carson, G. DiBacco, J. Di Roberts,
A. Drew, M. Gold, B. Granato, M. Laccavole, J. Reilly

Administrators: J. Wihbey

13. Adjournment

Mrs. Granato MOVED to exit Executive Session and adjourn the meeting at 9:27 p.m.

The motion was SECONDED by Ms. Callan Carson and VOTED unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Matt Laccavole, Vice-Chairperson – Secretary

Minutes Recorded by Ellen Goslicki, Recording Secretary