

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in special session on Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 7:00 PM in the library at Coginchaug High School.

Board members present: Mrs. Booth, Dr. Friedrich, Ms. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino

Board members absent: Mrs. Caramanello

Administration present: Dr. Schuch, Superintendent of Schools, Mrs. Neubig, Director of Finance, Mrs. Keane, Director of Student Services and Special Education, Mr. Brough, Human Resources Specialist, Mrs. DiMaggio, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, Mr. Pietrasko, Director of Infrastructure and Security Technology and Mr. Warner, Principal of Coginchaug Regional High School

Mr. Moore called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Approval of Agenda**

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the agenda, as presented.*

*In favor of approving the agenda, as presented: Mrs. Booth, Dr. Friedrich, Ms. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried.*

**Public Comment**

None.

**Approval of Minutes**

**A. Board of Education regular meeting - August 11, 2021**

*Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to approve the minutes of the August 11, 2021 Board of Education regular meeting, as presented.*

*In favor of approving the minutes of the August 11, 2021 Board of Education regular meeting, as presented: Dr. Friedrich, Ms. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried, with Mrs. Booth abstaining.*

**B. Board of Education special district meeting/public hearing - August 11, 2021**

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the minutes of the August 11, 2021 Board of Education special district meeting/public hearing, as presented.*

*In favor of approving the minutes of the August 11, 2021 Board of Education special district meeting/public hearing, as presented: Dr. Friedrich, Ms. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried, with Mrs. Booth abstaining.*

**Next Board Meeting - September 22, 2021 at 7:00 PM**

Mr. Moore explained that that is the night before the Durham Fair and there are committee meetings scheduled for that night as well. He will look to reschedule those meetings.

**Communications**

Mr. Moore received a letter from Janina Eddinger who asked that her letter be entered into the record. She was suggesting that Brewster be PreK-1, Memorial 2-4, Strong 5-7 and Coginchaug 8-12.

Mr. Roraback received a message from Sarah Aceto inquiring about bus transportation out of district to an arts school in New Haven and noted that her child's attendance seemed to be contingent upon bus transportation. He will forward that to Mrs. Neubig.

Mr. Hicks reported that there will be a ribbon cutting ceremony at ACES at Chase for 6-8 learners. The Lieutenant Governor will speak. Enrollment is almost full at this point.

**Superintendent's Report (if applicable)**

Dr. Schuch reminded everyone that convocation is this Friday at 8:00 AM in the auditorium. The kids come back next Wednesday.

Dr. Schuch reported that they conducted another reimagining education session with 20 participants last week. He hopes to have at least a draft strategic plan by the end of the year. Dr. Schuch noted that they are really seeing energy and enthusiasm in these sessions.

Dr. Schuch also introduced Katie Trainer, the new assistant principal at Coginchaug, who will start on Friday. Mrs. Trainer was at North Branford High School as the director of bands as well as the dean of students and the district's K-12 music department leader. She also served on the Vision of the Graduate committee, the NEASC professional practices committee, the COVID-19 reopening team and in several other capacities. She has also served as the advocacy chair for the Connecticut Music Educators Association, chaired the Shoreline Music Festival and fund raising event chair for the Connecticut Brain Tumor Alliance. Mrs. Trainer has a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in music education from the Hartt School and a certificate in educational administration from Sacred Heart University. She and her husband, Matt, live in Guilford along with their cat JJ.

Mrs. Trainer was selected from 119 applicants through a rigorous process that included a written performance test and several interview. Dr. Schuch congratulated her and welcomed her to the district. Mrs. Trainer plays all of the wind instruments, with clarinet being her primary.

**Director of Finance's Report**

Mrs. Neubig updated the board on the compressor that was lost over the summer at the high school which is currently running on two. The current chiller was put in service in 2003 and it may not be the best use of funds to repair it. Another option would be to replace just the broken compressor which would be about \$50,000. A third option would be to replace the chiller with an energy efficient unit that would

qualify for a rebate from Eversource, but that price is \$237,000. The Eversource incentive is estimated at approximately \$13,000. The estimated annual savings would be \$20,000 a year because of its energy efficiency. Mrs. Neubig also explained that the surplus from the 2021 school year would support this purchase and still leave enough for fund balance carryover that was estimated. She recommended that option for financing, but added that they could also try to get a bank loan to pay for it or use American Rescue Plan COVID funds that would allow for that purchase. Mrs. Neubig added that if they were to use the COVID funds, it would use most of the grant. Trane would be used as they are on the state bid list and no bids would be needed.

Mr. Yamartino asked if the district should try to get this included in the energy savings project to get a guaranteed payback and Mrs. Neubig explained that they had said this would be a 59.1-year payback period at about \$7,900 per year. Mrs. Neubig stated that Trane had estimated the savings at approximately \$20,000 a year. Mr. Yamartino asked if they could get a performance guarantee on that and Mrs. Neubig wasn't sure they would do that, but would try to get more documentation on how the savings was computed.

Mr. Yamartino also felt that they could enter into a lease buyback agreement with a bank though he wasn't sure what the interest rate would be and/or he wouldn't be averse to using the CARES funding for half of it and a lease buyback for the second half.

Dr. Friedrich suggested bringing this to the ERC to work with Mrs. Neubig on this. Mr. Yamartino would be happy to look into the different options. Mr. Moore felt that it would be prudent to replace the chiller rather than repair it. He also felt it would be worth looking into what the interest rates are on a bank loan. The board would have to vote to authorize a bank loan, but not the lease buyback. The board generally agreed that replacement would be better than repair at this point.

Mrs. Neubig also reported that there is a bus driver shortage that is approaching the critical stage. As of today, the district is three drivers short. They are testing a new driver on Friday and if they were to pass, then the district would be two short. Because of that, the routes are going to need to be doubled and will keep that consistent. Doubled routes will lengthen the time for each bus, possibly 10 minutes but could be up to 40 minutes.

Ms. Geraci mentioned that parents are concerned that their kids will be on the bus for over an hour and her own kid will be on the bus for an hour and 20 minutes. Mrs. Neubig felt that must be an error, as regular routes are not to exceed one hour. They are still in the process of adjusting routes and stops.

Dr. Taylor asked what happens if there is no way of getting around bus routes that are greater than an hour and Mrs. Neubig explained that some routes are just 30 minutes and hopefully those are the ones that can be doubled. She reminded everyone that they did a lot of doubling last year. Mrs. Neubig also mentioned that athletics will face some challenges because of this as well. Mrs. Booth asked if they could allow parents to transport their children to sporting events and Mrs. Neubig agreed to look into that.

Mrs. Neubig also reported that there is a .6 vacant position and there has been an increase in special education needs. They would like to increase that position to 1.0, meaning a .4 increase in the staff headcount in special education. They have had some turnover in different positions and natural attrition can absorb the additional amount. Dr. Taylor asked if the headcount was distributed across the schools and Mrs. Keane explained that it is, with particular need at the Memorial/Strong level.

**Resolution to set a Date and Approve the Question for a Referendum Vote to Amend the Plan of Regionalization for the District and to Authorize the Preparation of Explanatory Text**

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, and read the following resolution into the record: "Regional School District 13, Towns of Durham and Middlefield, Resolution to approve the question for a referendum vote to amend the Plan of Regionalization for the district and to authorize the preparation of explanatory text. Be it resolved that the Regional School District 13 Board of Education hereby approves the following referendum question which shall be submitted to electors of the towns of Durham and Middlefield at a referendum vote on voting tabulators in the towns of Durham and Middlefield on November 2, 2021 between the hours of 6:00 AM and 8:00 PM Eastern Time and placed on the ballot labels as the following question: 'Shall the Regional School District 13 Plan of Regionalization be amended to authorize the Region 13 Board of Education to close John Lyman Elementary School in the town of Middlefield'. The responses will be either yes or no. Further resolved that the Secretary of the Board of Education is authorized to prepare, print and disseminate a concise explanatory text concerning the referendum question above. Such explanatory text is subject to the approval of the Board of Education's attorney. Subject to the approval of the Board of Education's attorney, the Board of Education authorizes the Superintendent to prepare and print explanatory materials regarding the proposed amendment to the Plan of regionalization. The explanation text and explanatory materials shall not advocate either the approval or disapproval of the referendum question above and shall be prepared in accordance with Section 9-369(b) of the Connecticut General Statutes."*

Dr. Schuch stated that he had spoken to the attorneys and if the board is to approve this motion, they then fall under the moratorium on expending any district monies to advocate for this. The video and FAQs have been taken down and Dr. Schuch has been told that he can't launch any more ThoughtExchanges on this topic after this vote, upon the attorney's advice. Mr. Yamartino felt that the FAQs should be rewritten in a manner that is not advocacy. Dr. Schuch stated that the attorney did go through the FAQs and sanitized them, but Dr. Schuch and Mrs. Maloney both felt that that might be viewed negatively by the public. Ms. Geraci also felt it would be worth looking into this because she really would like the public to be educated. Dr. Schuch will send out the attorney's version to the board members tomorrow. Dr. Taylor felt that any time facts are presented, they can always be looked at as advocacy. He felt that they have done what they can up until now and this doesn't preclude anyone from advocating on a personal level.

Mr. Moore added that the FAQs are still in people's emails and documents, but just won't be on the district's website. Mr. Hicks was opposed to "attorney shopping" and felt it was unethical. If the district's attorney has given an opinion, then to spend more money on further attorneys would be against everything he stands for. Mr. Yamartino added that this was the same attorney and firm that had told them that they couldn't advocate on their own.

*In favor of the above resolution: Mrs. Booth, Dr. Friedrich, Ms. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried.*

**Resolution to Consider a Potential Closing Date for John Lyman Elementary School**

Mr. Moore reviewed that a number of people have suggested that the district would not be able to effectively close John Lyman by June, 2022 and felt that it should be moved out to June, 2023.

*Mr. Moore made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to adopt a resolution that states that the district will not close John Lyman School any earlier than June or July, 2023.*

Mrs. Booth asked if that wording will be on the ballot and Mr. Moore noted that it will not. Dr. Schuch reviewed that the time line would have to be delayed in order to change the question and they attorneys recommended this exact action if the board is committed to that. Dr. Schuch did do another ThoughtExchange that got slightly more participation, but not a lot of new issues. The one thing that the groups did agree on was the desire for a time line. Dr. Schuch felt that this would show that the board and administration are listening.

Ms. Geraci felt that even a generic time line would be helpful and also a visual of what Brewster School might look like. Dr. Schuch felt that that could even be done after November if the community knew that there would be adequate time to build that time line in. He added that staff could do a much better job of making the transition happen if they have more time.

Dr. Taylor agreed with Ms. Geraci and felt that people want to know that there is a plan in place. Mrs. Booth stated that plans are already on the website, but people may not realize that. He too feels that people would like to see some type of time line. Mr. Moore cautioned that they should be careful on how they do that because it is contingent on the closure of John Lyman. He felt that they should say “no earlier than” since the information is already on the website. Mr. Roraback also mentioned that the board is acknowledging that end-of-life systems could happen during the year.

Mr. Yamartino felt that there needs to be reasons for the resolution and offered to write up some language. It was agreed to postpone the vote on the resolution until later in the meeting.

The board then returned to this later in the meeting and Mr. Yamartino asked for the prior motion to be withdrawn. Mr. Moore and Dr. Friedrich withdrew the motion.

Mr. Yamartino made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to create a resolution for the delay of John Lyman closing: Whereas RSD-13 Board of Education held a district meeting on 11 August 2021 for the purpose of discussing the amendment of the Plan of Regionalization to allow the closing of John Lyman Elementary School; and Whereas members of the public expressed concern regarding the post-closing plan; and Whereas John Lyman critical infrastructure is at the end of its useful life; and Whereas the Board of Education and Administration recognize that time will be needed to solicit public input into the post-closing grade and facility configuration; and Whereas the Board and Administration recognize that time will be needed to implement the adopted post-closing plan; and Whereas some capital improvements may need to be funded and implemented prior to relocating students; and In the event the electorate approve the referendum to amend the Plan of Regionalization to allow the closing of John Lyman Elementary School, the Regional School District 13 Board of Education hereby resolves that John Lyman Elementary School shall not be closed prior to 30 June 2023. Adopted by the Regional District 13 Board of Education, this 25<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2021. Signed by Robert Moore, Chairman.”

*In favor of the above resolution: Mrs. Booth, Dr. Friedrich, Ms. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Pretrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried.*

**Policy Committee report (possible vote on policy proposals)**

Mr. Hicks reported that the Policy Committee met earlier tonight and had a rather lively discussion concerning the changes due to COVID and developed one succinct statement. He asked to waive the rule for a first read and a second read to vote on this policy tonight.

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to adopt the following new policy: "Policy concerning temporary policies and regulations related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Regional School District 13 Board of Education, also known as the Board, recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic, the 'COVID-19 pandemic', has prompted changes in laws, rules and guidance affecting Board policy and school district operation and requiring the Board and the administration of the Regional School District 13 public schools, the 'administration', to implement certain changes consistent with such laws, rules and guidance. The Board further recognizes that the circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic are continually changing and that the Board and the administration must prepare to adapt and evolve as appropriate and/or required. In all circumstances, the Board prioritizes safeguarding the health and safety of students and staff while continuing to educate students in according with state law. Therefore, the RSD13 Board of Education authorizes the superintendent to implement guidelines or procedures that comply with state mandates and/or guidance from the District Health Director, Connecticut State Department of Health, CDC and Connecticut State Department of Education."*

Dr. Schuch reviewed that they would like to publish guidance as early as tomorrow which would mostly be a repeat of state mandates. He highlighted the differences between how last year ended and this year will begin. The first is that there is now an employee vaccine mandate. They have also received guidance from the state that included a situational instructional mask flexibility for teachers when it is appropriate, such as for young learners to see the teacher's face or problems hearing the teacher. This is a district decision and they are recommending that the teachers do have that flexibility. He added that there is mixed feelings about this throughout the state, but he felt that most districts will be allowing it. Dr. Schuch also recommended that the visitor policy during the day would be essential visitors only, but he does feel that it is okay for community and school-related groups to use the facilities after hours provided they follow the district's protocols though they may deny requests for activities with large numbers of people. They also believe that field trips could be allowed in outdoor settings. Dr. Schuch added that he didn't feel it was fair that the soccer team could practice outside but the oceanography class cannot do an outdoor activity. Another change has to do with communication about individual or isolated number of cases and they are recommending not sending out mass notification but instead contacting only the individuals who were potentially exposed. They will, however, update the website with any cases that have been reported.

Dr. Schuch also explained that they would like to create a short video to hit the high points of this policy. There is a new contact tracing guideline that applies to masked individuals in classroom settings and invokes a three-foot rule in lieu of a six-foot rule. He also reviewed that there is no Cohort C remote option this year and people cannot simply choose to not come to school. Dr. Schuch mentioned that the state also mandated that the district cannot do remote learning in lieu of weather days in the winter.

Mrs. Booth asked if the children will be eating in the cafeteria or still in their classrooms. Dr. Schuch felt that cafeterias will be used at this point, but each school will be slightly different. They do intend to do cohorting and potentially utilize some outdoor space as well. Mrs. Keane added that they may also use some classrooms and alternate days in the cafeteria, depending on the school. Mrs. Booth mentioned that

there will be no way to tell who the kids in the middle school and high school sit next to. It was felt that the students could tell who they sat next to and Mrs. Booth mentioned that that would be a HIPAA violation as that would be disclosing who has COVID. Mrs. Keane stated that, in contact tracing, they only ask the person who has tested positive who they were around. Mr. Warner stated that he has assessed the area and hopes to not disrupt functions of the school. They are in the process of moving tables to one side only and he has requested more picnic tables. There is also flexible seating that could be placed in corridors, if needed. Tables in the cafeteria will be marked as to what seating is available. Mrs. Keane added that Strong School is planning to cohort with assigned seats in the cafeteria. She does believe the students will be able to pick their seats. Mrs. Booth asked if lockers will be used this year and Mr. Warner stated that they will be allowed at the high school though he does have a plan if that doesn't work.

*In favor of the above-stated policy: Mrs. Booth, Dr. Friedrich, Ms. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried.*

Mr. Hicks also reported that the committee reviewed a policy on advertising, with conversation about signage at sporting events. They do need to continue the conversation about how money will be handled. Mrs. Neubig will research that and report back to the committee.

The Policy Committee also reviewed public comment guidelines. Ms. Geraci had offered some language from the Milford Board of Education and Dr. Friedrich rewrote it. He explained that this language would be added to the bottom of all board meeting agendas. "Public comment is limited to three minutes per speaker. As specified by Board Policy 1120, the chair of the board may, at his/her discretion, restrict, extend or curtail comments at any time. All comments must refer to the educational program of RSD13 and conform in manner and content to the district's core ethical values. Comments at the beginning of the meeting are limited to items on the meeting agenda. It is board practice not to respond to comments during the meeting."

Dr. Taylor suggested removing his/her and replacing it with their and Dr. Friedrich agreed. Mr. Yamartino felt that the board should be able to comment and correct a statement made by the public that is patently false. Dr. Friedrich offered to leave that sentence off if it is felt to be too restrictive. Mr. Yamartino agreed that the board should not engage in conversation, but should reserve the right to correct any inaccuracies. Dr. Taylor asked to have that sentence remain and felt that the board could address those statements through communication and potentially omit the last public comment on the agenda. Dr. Taylor felt that far too many board meetings recently have had back-and-forth which completely disrupts the meeting. He felt it was better to allow people to say what they want to say and then address it through communications. Ms. Geraci also felt it would be hard to draw the line in the sand and liked the idea of addressing it through communications. Mrs. Booth added that she didn't feel most people knew that they could not get a question answered during a meeting.

Mr. Yamartino disagreed with removing the public comment at the end of the meeting and Dr. Friedrich proposed saying that it is the board's usual practice not to respond or possibly at the chair's discretion. Mr. Moore suggested that the chairman may correct any misstatements. Mr. Roraback felt that public comment about things not on the agenda will happen anyway. Mrs. Booth added that public comment is just that and may not necessarily be correct information. Ms. Geraci stated that her goal for this was to let people know what can and cannot happen.

Dr. Schuch stated that it was unusual to have two public comment items at every meeting and suggested that items related to the agenda could be first in the queue and set a time limit for the entire public comment while offering to take public comments in writing. He felt that people should be told how to get their questions answered.

The board generally agreed to include the above-stated text on upcoming agendas.

### **Public Comment**

Rhonda Riggott-Stevens, from Durham, read part of a letter from Shipman and Goodwin to Mrs. Frances Rabinowicz, executive director of CAPSS, stating that “actions inconsistent with mask mandate could expose the school district to adverse consequences including loss of state or federal funds. In addition, boards of education that fail to implement a mask mandate risk loss of funds, specifically the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary Relief Plan, ARP ESSER funds require that school districts that receive ESSER funds develop a plan for safe return to in-person instruction. Moreover, the interim final rules of the United States Department of Education provide that a district plan must include, among other things, how it will maintain the health and safety of students, educators and other staff through policies that follow the safety recommendations established by the CDC, including (a) universal and correct wearing of masks. The CSCE ESSER guidance reiterates these requirements and sets forth a checklist for Connecticut school districts to follow. To aid in the planning process, CSCE has also provided a safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services plan template which makes clear that districts must describe their mitigation strategies in various areas including the universal and correct wearing of masks and social distancing. The CSCE template provides that the LEA must implement, to the greatest extent possible, each element of the most up-to-date guidance listed in the table. Given the ARP ESSER fund requirements, there is a risk of substantial adverse consequences if a Board of Education chooses not to develop a plan that includes the wearing of school masks. While the law does not explicitly set forth a penalty for failing to create and implement the required plan, presumably federal government could demand payment for such funds allocated to school districts as aforementioned requirements and conditions for receiving ARP ESSER funds.”

Mrs. Riggott-Stevens asked the Board of Education to consider the disconnect and inconsistencies of the State Department of Education and the Department of Public Health issuing guidance for masking. The CDC says that only individuals who are ill should be PCR tested, yet the State Department of Education and Department of Public Health want to put onsite PCR testing in K-6 schools. She would like the board to consider putting PCR testing for healthy students is in complete contradiction to the CDC guidelines.

### **Anticipated Executive Session**

#### **A. Strong Middle School principal vacancy**

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Ms. Geraci, to go into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing the Strong Middle School principal vacancy and invite the Superintendent, Dr. Schuch, and Mr. Brough to join the session.*

*In favor of going into executive session for the purpose stated above: Mrs. Booth, Dr. Friedrich, Ms. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried.*



**Adjournment**

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to adjourn the special meeting of the Board of Education.*

*In favor of adjourning the special meeting of the Board of Education: Mrs. Booth, Dr. Friedrich, Ms. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried.*

Meeting was adjourned at 9:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz  
Alwaz First

**Resolution for Delay of John Lyman Closing**

Whereas RSD 13 Board of Education held a district meeting on August 11, 2021 for the purpose of discussing the amendment of the Plan of Regionalization to allow the closing of John Lyman Elementary School; and

Whereas, members of the public expressed concern regarding the post-closing plan; and

Whereas, John Lyman critical infrastructure is at the end of its useful life; and

Whereas, the Board of Education and Administration recognize that time will be needed to solicit public input into the post-closing grade and facility configuration; and

Whereas, the Board and Administration recognize that time will be needed to implement the adopted post-closing plan; and

Whereas, some capital improvements may need to be funded and implemented prior to relocating students; and

In the event the electorate approve the referendum to amend the Plan of Regionalization to allow the closing of John Lyman Elementary School,

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education hereby resolves that John Lyman Elementary School shall not be closed prior to June 30, 2023.

Adopted by the Regional District 13 Board of Education this 25th day of August 2021.

Signed By: Robert E. Moore, Chairman, Board of Education      Date: August 26, 2021

**Public Comment Received Via Email**

**From:** Janina EDDINGER  
**Date:** August 25, 2021 at 2:39:33 PM EDT  
**To:** [rmoore@rsd13.org](mailto:rmoore@rsd13.org)  
**Subject:** Public Comment - BOE Meeting August 25, 2021  
**Reply-To:**

Dear Mr. Moore and fellow members of the Board of Education,

If our district is to unite and finally move forward as a unified community, I request that you consider setting a closing date for John Lyman School based on when Brewster, Memorial, and Strong could REALISTICALLY be ready to support the transfer of students. That will likely not be before June 2023. After further discussion tonight, it may even be later.

I also ask you to seriously reconsider the grade designations in our district as well:

Brewster Elementary Pre-K, K, 1st grades  
Memorial Elementary 2nd, 3rd, 4th grades  
Strong 5th, 6th, 7th grades  
CRHS 8th-12th grades

We lose a number of students after eighth grade to private schools. Even losing ten students, when a class size is about 85, that is almost 12% of the grade! Sometimes that includes well-rounded examples of what we hope RSD13 graduates will look like! If the eighth grade were to be shifted to Cuginchaug Regional High School, students would be offered an opportunity to

- experience accelerated academic offerings, such as accelerated math and science courses,
- try a wider range of extra-curricular performance/ensembles including jazz band at the high school based on audition, a capella groups, or drama/improv/musical theater performances,
- expanded intramural sport offerings (ie. Ultimate Frisbee, yoga, strength training) / interest clubs (ie. Robotics, Public Service, or Environmental clubs),
- feel invested in the secondary school community (with teachers, staff, coaches, and students), which would make it emotionally harder to leave the district for high school.

CRHS is the most under-utilized building with learners in it currently. The building would be better utilized with this shift as well. I know that you (as a Board) had asked the community of parents several years ago about this grade shift, and it was shot down. But now that our kids are a few years older, some learners have matured quite significantly, and 6th grade students have adjusted to riding the bus with high school students, I think this adjustment would not be as 'scary' as parents first thought.

Thank you for reading my comments to be entered into the meeting minutes.

Sincerely,  
Janina Eddinger of Middlefield  
Parent of 6 students in RSD13