

Cheshire Public Schools



Board of Education Curriculum Committee

Monday, March 9, 2026 – 7:00 p.m.

Humiston Board Room

Minutes

Committee Members Present: Ms. Anne Marie Cullinan (Chair), Dr. Anne Harrigan, Tim White, and Heather Fitzgerald

Cheshire Public Schools Staff Present: Marlene Silano, Assistant Superintendent; Azra Redzic, Curriculum Coordinator, CHS; Kevin Hanlon, Principal, CHS, Dr. Maureen Reed, Assistant Principal, Dodd Middle School; Kell Grillo, Principal, Ryan Murphy, Assistant Principal

Community Members Present: None

7:01 call to order

1. Public Comment

No public comment in-person or via email.

2. Review Minutes of January 12, 2026 Meeting

Dr. Harrigan made a motion to accept the minutes of the January 12, 2026 Board of Education Curriculum Committee meeting. Mr. White seconded the motion. Ms. Cullinan, Mr. White and Dr. Harrigan voted to approve the January 12, 2026 minutes. The motion passed.

3. New Business

a. Out-of-Country Field Trips

• [CHS - Costa Rica - June 23-29, 2027](#)

Gina Corrado, World Language teacher at CHS, shared that alignment to the curriculum provides meaningful opportunities for students. Students participating in the trip have been studying Spanish for six years, and this opportunity will allow them to practice using the language in real-life scenarios through immersion. Principal Hanlon reported that Costa Rica is currently at a Level 2 travel advisory. Participants traveling to Costa Rica will need to sign an insurance waiver in case adjustments to the trip become necessary. Travel advisories will continue to be closely monitored, and if the advisory level were to shift to Level 3, plans would be adjusted accordingly.

Currently, 10 students are registered for the trip, with the potential for additional students to register. The trip is scheduled through EF Tours.

Dr. Harrigan made a motion to move the Costa Rica trip to the full Board for approval. Mr. White seconded the motion. Ms. Cullinan, Mr. White, and Dr. Harrigan voted in favor. The motion passed.

4. Informational Items

a. Out-of-State Overnight Field Trips

- [CHS - Grand Canyon - April 10-14, 2027](#)

Sara Mik, Physical Education teacher at CHS, shared information about the proposed Grand Canyon trip. The committee was informed that students would have the opportunity to explore the Grand Canyon while focusing on health and wellness. Through physical activities such as hikes, river cruises, and rock climbing, as well as observation in various outdoor settings, students will gain a better understanding of the vital connection between physical and mental health.

The trip also connects to CTE coursework, in addition to its focus on physical health and wellness it will also include a culinary component. Student interest will be gauged after board approval is granted. The trip will be offered to students in grades 9–12.

- [Chapman - Outdoor Classroom, Ivoryton, CT - May 26-29, 2026](#)
- [Doolittle - Nature's Classroom, Charlton, MA - May 12-15, 2026](#)
- [Norton - Nature's Classroom, Charlton, MA - May 26-30, 2026](#)

Marlene Silano, Assistant Superintendent, shared that Chapman School will be traveling to Ivoryton, CT. This is a traditional Nature's Classroom experience. Students will also spend time at Meigs Point in Hammonasset engaging in hands-on learning experiences.

Doolittle and Norton Schools will be attending a Nature's Classroom trip in Charlton, MA. This trip is organized through the same company but will take place at a different location.

Since COVID, Highland School has surveyed families regarding field trips and will continue to offer in-house or in-town hands on field trip experiences (e.g., Empower low ropes course).

b. Multilingual Learner Update

Azra Redzic shared the current district ML enrollment numbers. At this time, the district has 180 ML students. LAS Links testing will conclude on Friday, March 13, 2026, and official test results are expected in mid-May. At that time, some students may exit ML services based on their results.

ML student data was also broken down by elementary, middle, and high school levels, and the top languages represented in the district were shared, including Spanish, Mandarin, Albanian, Urdu, and Korean.

c. Middle School Schedule

Kelly Grillo, Principal of Dodd Middle School, shared proposed scheduling changes aimed at increasing instructional time, adding a daily advisory block, decreasing class sizes (particularly in

Spanish), and reducing I-blocks (study halls). Principal Grillo and Assistant Principal Murphy have been reviewing the schedule and exploring ways to use instructional time more effectively, with significant input from teachers.

Two options were discussed: maintaining a seven-period schedule or moving to a six-period schedule. Both options would reduce or eliminate I-blocks (study halls) and increase instructional time. The six-period model would include 54-minute periods, while the seven-period model would include 50-minute periods, with unified arts classes at 40 minutes.

World language was also discussed. Students currently earn 1.5 credits, exceeding the one-credit requirement. Adjusting world language time could help reduce class sizes. Languages currently offered include French, Latin, and Spanish.

Both schedule options would move Dodd from a quarter system to a trimester system and require the addition of two staff members. At this time, the seven-period schedule appears to be the more feasible option.

d. CSDE Reading Benchmark Assessment Data Collection Requirements

Azra Redzic shared that districts received email communication from the state on March 2 about reporting reading data to the CSDE. This is part of the Right to Read legislation. The email stated that districts with a signed data-sharing agreement with the assessment vendor do not need to take further action, as the vendor will provide the CSDE with the required student-level data directly. Cheshire does not currently use an online platform and is administering the paper Acadience Assessment. Without the Acadience Learning Online data management system Cheshire will need to submit the data directly to the CSDE. Data submissions are due by March 27. The team also discussed the implications of this process and the time required for data collection and submission.

e. Kindergarten Entrance Inventory (KEI)

Azra Redzic shared the KEI Teacher Handbook with the committee. The handbook provides detailed information about the six areas assessed during the KEI. These areas include language, literacy, numeracy, physical/motor skills, creative/aesthetic skills, and personal/social skills.

Districts receive information about students' readiness skills in each of these six areas, and the data is shared to help inform instruction. Performance levels are reported in three categories:

- **Level 1:** Substantial instructional support needed
- **Level 2:** Some instructional support needed
- **Level 3:** Minimal instructional support needed

Three years of detailed data were provided, spanning the 2022–2023 through the 2024–2025 school years. These data sets demonstrate consistent year-to-year increases in Level 3 across all categories, with the exception of the language domain, which decreased slightly from 57% to 56% between the 2023–2024 and 2024–2025 school years.

f. Assistant Superintendent's Update

Marlene Silano shared that staff transfer conversations have been ongoing since the 2024–25 school year. Initial discussions included union representation and small group meetings, followed by surveys sent to all elementary staff to assess interest in transferring to a new school. Informational meetings were offered to all and a staff meeting was held at Highland to educate teachers on the transfer process.

In the 2025–26 school year, another survey was administered, and staffing implications were discussed. Potential drafts of placements were discussed with principals, and in consultation with curriculum and SPED teams. Two weeks ago, Dr. Solan, Superintendent, Marlene Silano, Assistant Superintendent, and the elementary school principal met individually with each staff member to personally inform them of the transfer. Of the 16 certified classroom teachers who were transferred, all but two were placed in their current grade level; the remaining two were assigned to a different grade as they had indicated their flexibility in the staffing survey.

Off-site professional development is scheduled for March 20 at the Reading Room with teachers from Barnum and Norton. Consultants Andy Dousis and Mike Anderson will focus on effective classroom strategies, student motivation, and school culture. PTOs at Chapman and Norton are providing lunch and coffee to allow staff an opportunity to meet one another. SPED and unified arts transfers are being finalized, pending budget considerations for additional staff and sections.

Principals have sent welcome letters to new families as part of the waiver process. Friends Day is scheduled for June 4 (rain date June 5), during which students will visit their new schools and participate in team-building activities led by the PE department. All new staff received an email to tour the schools prior to the PD day. Multiple criteria including grade-level experience, tenure, mentoring experience were used to guide staff placements, starting with general education, followed by SPED and unified arts.

Marlene Silano shared that over the past two years, the district has taken a proactive, district-wide approach to AI. The Cheshire Strategic Planning Initiatives (CSPI) committee has been exploring AI literacy, focusing on preparing teachers and students to use AI responsibly. A core realization driving this work is the stark contrast between how we protect children in the real world versus the virtual world. The philosophical shift from viewing AI as a “cheating tool” to a “thought partner” demands AI proficiency, and CSPI is actively planning for this transition. Educators are being trained to model and teach AI as a collaborative thought partner.

Professional learning for educators has been structured and hands-on. This included the use of the ChatEDU podcast in both administrative and faculty sessions, an introductory faculty meeting using CBS Morning clips as a primer, and a full district professional day on March 21, 2025, led by Matt Mervis from EdAdvance. The day focused on targeted AI topics such as designing durable assessments, understanding and mitigating AI bias, and identifying AI hallucinations.

Scott Conway, Technology Coordinator, has developed a series of “Quick Bytes” live streams to support this work, covering topics such as Intro to AI, The Gemini App, The AI Co-Teacher, Unlocking Google Workspace with Gemini, and Meet Notebook LM. CSPI grounds this work in

best practices, prioritizing self-education through literature reviews and research to ensure the district's approach reflects the best interests of students.

Looking ahead, the immediate next step is bridging teacher preparation with student outcomes. The CSPI committee will continue to meet to formally identify and define the AI literacy skills students need while addressing adult apprehension and environmental considerations.

5. Adjourn

Mr. White made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Harrigan seconded the motion. Ms. Cullinan, Dr. Harrigan, Mr. White and Ms. Fitzgerald voted to adjourn the meeting at 9:16 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 20, 2026, at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Azra Redzic

Azra Redzic
PK-8 Curriculum Coordinator

Next Meeting: Monday, April 20, 2026 at 7:00 pm