

**MINUTES OF CHESHIRE BOARD OF EDUCATION ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
SHOWCASE MEETING HELD AT DODD MIDDLE SCHOOL ON MARCH 5, 2026**

Board Members Present: Timothy White, Secretary; Matthew Colehour; Anne Marie Cullinan; Mark Ecke;

Board Members Absent: Samantha Rosenberg, Chair; Anne Harrigan, Vice Chair; Heather Fitzgerald

Administrators Present: Jeffrey F. Solan, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools; Marlene Silano, Assistant Superintendent of Schools; Emily Taylor, Chief Operating Officer; Kevin Hanlon, Principal, Cheshire High School; Kristin Pelz, Assistant Principal, Cheshire High School; Maureen Reed, Ed.D., Assistant Principal, Cheshire High School; Daniel Tartarelli, Assistant Principal, Cheshire High School; Kelly Grillo, Principal, Dodd Middle School; Ryan Murphy, Assistant Principal, Dodd Middle School; Diana Burns, Ed.D., Principal, Chapman Elementary School; Katharine Carlucci, Assistant Principal, Chapman & Norton Elementary Schools; Kimberly Dessert, Principal, Darcey School; Kristin Lopa, Principal, Doolittle School; Jillian Romann, Assistant Principal, Doolittle School; Jodie Roden, Principal, Norton School; Erica Labickas, Assistant Principal, Highland Elementary School; Azra Redzic, PK-8 Curriculum Coordinator; Marie Broadway, Supervisor of Secondary Special Education

1. CALL TO ORDER – 7:05 P.M.

- A. Roll for Quorum. The roll was called and a quorum determined.
- B. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.
Ms. Rosenberg led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

2. AUDIENCE

None.

3. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SHOWCASE

Assistant Superintendent Marlene Silano introduced the Dodd Middle School Showcase. She said the purpose of tonight's elementary showcase is to highlight how our Elementary Instructional Coaches drive student achievement by partnering with teachers to turn curriculum, instruction, and assessment data into effective practice. Our coaching model builds teacher capacity, strengthens collaboration, and supports high-quality learning for all students.

Ms. Silano introduced Science Coaches Stephanie Kuncas and Stephanie Lopez Smith. They detailed the second year of their science initiative, moving away from online-only learning toward curiosity-driven, hands-on discovery. The coaches said their focus is

Strengthening elementary science curriculum; Supporting teachers through in-class modeling and coaching; expanding hands-on STEM opportunities, and ensuring consistent, high-quality science experiences across school. They reviewed their units and strategies:

- Robotics & Engineering: Students use the Engineering Design Process to solve problems, move robots in precise shapes (like squares), and analyze variables like speed and friction.
- Agra-Science (Grade 4): A "storyline" approach where students investigate soil types, particle sizes (using sandpaper as a model), and water absorption.
 - Local Connection: Kurt's Farm is donating plants for district experiments, connecting science to the Cheshire community.
- Earth's Place in the Universe (Grade 5): Uses the Star Lab (portable planetarium) to investigate celestial patterns.
- Ecosystems (Grade 5): Students study "nurse logs" to see how energy and matter flow through a system.

The Elementary Curriculum and Coaching Team presented on their curriculum and provided powerful testimonials from teachers.

- Anne Marie Wintenburg- Elementary Literacy Specialist
- Jessica Atnes- District K-6 Math Coach
- Mary Bruzik- Reading and Math Specialist Doolittle School
- Brittany Culver- Reading and Math Specialist Highland School
- Kristen Rayball- Reading and Math Specialist Chapman School
- Kristine Trifone- Reading and Math Specialist Highland School
- Jeanne Monti- Reading and Math Specialist Norton School

The coaches emphasized that education has evolved, and coaches ensure teachers aren't using "outdated techniques from 15–20 years ago."

What Coaches Actually Do:

- Collaborative Planning: Meeting with teachers to map out lessons and anticipate "productive struggle" points for students.
- Modeling & Co-teaching: Getting into the classroom to demonstrate new strategies or teach alongside the classroom teacher.
- Professional Learning: Hosting workshops where teachers experience the experiments themselves as "students" first.
- Data Analysis: Working with the Central Office to look at student trends and target support where it's needed most.

A major theme mentioned by Ms. Redzic and the literacy/math specialists is the shift toward Building Thinking Classrooms.

- Student Ownership: Students are moving from being passive observers to active participants.
- Evidence-Based Discourse: As seen in the "Science Circle" video, students engage in nuanced discussions to reach a consensus on scientific models.
- Interdisciplinary Skills: Science lessons are intentionally designed to overlap with Math (measurement, data analysis) and Literacy (evidence-based reasoning).

Board members thanked the teacher/coaches for the presentation.

4. **ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Mr. Colehour, and seconded by Mr. Ecke, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tim White, Board Secretary

Attest:

Carol K. Jesensky, Board of Education Clerk

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