OCTOBER 13 , 2026 BOARD OF EDUCATION ACADEMIC SUB COMMITTEE MEETING

CALL TO ORDER

Holly Orazietti called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

ROLL CALL
Committee Members Present:

Holly Orazietti
Jim Gildea
Dan Foley
Rebecca O'Hara-**ABSENT**

Additional Board Members Present:

Melissa Mongillo
Kim Tovar
Erica Nuzzo

PUBLIC PORTION

Candace Lebel acknowledged the Board for affording her the opportunity to give feedback and thanked the Board for their support.

3. REVIEW OF THE STATE PROVIDED SBA DATA
4. TRENDING SBA DATA FOR DERBY, ANSONIA NAUGATUCK BRIDGEPORT NEW HAVEN AND WATERBURY 2021-2026

The meeting began with Dr. Conway discussing the challenges associated with the state-mandated curriculum and the objections raised by the Derby Public Schools during its implementation.

Dr. Conway presented a video highlighting testimony previously provided by himself and former members of the Derby school system regarding their concerns with the curriculum. Despite the objections raised by the district, the Connecticut State Department of Education ultimately mandated its implementation.

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By Marc J Garofalo MPA, MMC, MCTC at 1:45 pm, Oct 19, 2026

Review of Student Assessment Results

Following the curriculum discussion, Dr. Conway presented and reviewed Derby's English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics assessment results.

At the request of Holly Orazietti, Derby's results were compared with those of four neighboring school districts: Naugatuck, Ansonia, Bridgeport New Haven, and Waterbury.

Upon completion of the presentation, Holly Orazietti asked whether anyone had additional comments or questions.

5.REVIEW/DISCUSS INFORMATION PROVIDED BY CLASSROOM TEACHERS

Kim Tovar raised questions regarding a teacher survey that had been referenced several times throughout the evening. She asked about the survey's origin and who had initiated it.

Holly Orazietti acknowledged that she had initiated the survey in preparation for the Academic Committee meeting.

Melissa Mongillo then asked how the survey had been distributed. Holly Orazietti stated that it had been distributed through a Derby Education Association (DEA) contact. When Melissa Mongillo asked whether Alicia (Olenoski) had emailed the survey to staff, Holly Orazietti confirmed that she had.

Melissa Mongillo subsequently asked whether Holly Orazietti had used her Board of Education email and represented the survey as being conducted on behalf of the Board. Holly Orazietti confirmed that she had.

Kim Tovar asked whether the survey had been distributed to staff across all schools in the district. Holly Orazietti confirmed that it had. Kim Tovar then asked whether the responses presented represented all of the staff members who had responded to the survey. Holly Orazietti confirmed that they did. Kim Tovar expressed surprise at the limited number of responses received.

Melissa Mongillo then asked whether all responses received had been included in the report presented to the Academic Committee. Holly Orazietti acknowledged that they had not. Melissa Mongillo questioned how the responses included in the report had been selected. Holly indicated that she omitted responses that were "not applicable".

Kim Tovar expressed concern that responses had been withheld, questioning the appropriateness of excluding information that had been provided by staff.

Melissa Mongillo then asked whether the survey had been discussed during Academic Committee meetings or whether any other members of the Board of Education had been informed of its development or distribution.

Holly Orazietti stated that they had not been informed, explaining that she believed the survey needed to remain confidential in order to encourage teachers to respond.

Jim Gildea stated that, as a member of the Academic Committee, he had not been aware of the survey or its results.

Melissa Mongillo questioned the characterization of the survey as confidential and asked who had received the responses. Holly Orazietti confirmed that she had received them directly.

Melissa Mongillo then asked whether the responses were identifiable and whether Holly Orazietti could associate individual responses with the names of the employees who submitted them. Holly Orazietti confirmed that she could.

Melissa Mongillo expressed concern regarding the confidentiality of the responses, stating that information collected by a Board member acting in an official capacity could constitute Board records and should not be treated as information belonging exclusively to an individual Board member. She further questioned Holly Orazietti's authority to assure employees that their responses would remain solely in her possession.

Melissa Mongillo then questioned whether district leadership had been informed of or included in the survey process.

She directly asked Superintendent Dr. Conway whether he had been informed of or included in the survey. Dr. Conway stated that he had not.

Melissa Mongillo then asked Dr. Rafferty whether she had been informed of or included in the survey. Dr. Rafferty also stated that she had not.

Melissa Mongillo subsequently asked whether any district administrators had been informed of or included in the survey process. Responses from those present indicated that they had not.

Holly Orazietti initially indicated that the administration had been aware of the survey. When asked to clarify whether the administration had been notified before or after its distribution, she acknowledged that they had not been informed until after the survey had been sent.

Melissa Mongillo expressed concern that the survey had been developed and distributed without the knowledge or involvement of the Superintendent, Director of Curriculum, or district administrators. She characterized the exclusion of district leadership as disrespectful and emphasized the importance of following the established chain of command and appropriate communication procedures.

Melissa Mongillo further stated that individual Board members do not have the authority to independently act on behalf of the full Board of Education. She expressed concerns regarding confidentiality, labor relations, Board governance, policies, and ethical obligations.

She clarified that her concerns were not related to an unwillingness to receive or consider feedback from teachers, but rather to the manner in which the survey had been created, authorized, distributed, collected, and presented.

Melissa Mongillo stated that she believed the process had been conducted without appropriate consideration of established Board policies and ethical standards. She recommended that the Board refrain from proceeding further with the survey or its findings until the Board's legal counsel had been consulted.

Kim Tovar agreed that teacher feedback was valuable but expressed concern regarding the manner in which the survey had been conducted. She stated that surveys of district staff should be reviewed and authorized through the appropriate Board processes.

As an example, Kim Tovar referenced a previous school lunch survey, explaining that it had been discussed at both the committee and full Board levels before being

administered through Superintendent Dr. Conway, whom she identified as the appropriate channel for communication with district staff.

Holly Orazietti acknowledged that she had made a mistake and explained that teachers had approached her with concerns, prompting her to seek additional feedback. She stated that her intention had been to better understand the concerns being raised by teachers.She stated that she handled it this way so that teachers would feel comfortable sharing their feedback because their responses would be confidential.

Melissa Mongillo explained that this was in fact quite the opposite as Holly could not be the sole member to have access to the information because she's part of this Board. She had no right to assure them of that and would likely need to turn over all of the information she has access to, to the full Board.

Jim Gildea expressed concerns regarding the manner in which the survey had been conducted, stating that he believed several Board of Education policies may have been violated.

He also raised concerns regarding potential Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) implications, particularly as they related to the disclosure of the survey in its entirety, including participant information and any associated text messages, telephone communications, or emails.

Jim Gildea and Melissa Mongillo both requested that the survey and the circumstances surrounding its development, distribution, collection, and presentation be reviewed by the Board's legal counsel to determine whether any Board policies, ethical standards, or legal requirements had been violated.

Erica Nuzzo asked whether the Board of Education could face legal liability as a result of the survey.

Jim Gildea responded that he believed the Board's potential exposure might be limited if the survey and associated records were properly disclosed, although he emphasized that the matter would require legal review.

Holly Orazietti accepted full responsibility for her actions and again acknowledged that she had made a mistake. She described the experience as a learning process

and questioned whether her actions had created potential liability for the Board of Education.

Dan Foley responded by acknowledging that Holly Orazietti was learning.

Kim Tovar expressed strong concern regarding the potential liability to the Board, stating that she did not want to be held responsible for actions she considered negligent.

The discussion concluded with concerns regarding the survey's authorization, distribution, confidentiality, completeness of the reported findings, compliance with established Board procedures, and potential legal implications, as well as requests that the matter be referred to legal counsel for review.

ADJOURN

Jim Gildea made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:27 p.m.

The motion was seconded by Dan Foley.

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By Marc J Garofalo MPA, MMC, MCTC at 1:46 pm, Oct 19, 2026