



STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Bridgeport Public Schools Action to Address District Needs March 2026

Introduction

At its January 22, 2025, special meeting, the State Board of Education (SBE) duly authorized the Commissioner of Education to implement the powers set forth in Section 10-223e(e)(2) of the Connecticut General Statutes in order to address the stability of operations of the Bridgeport Public Schools (BPS), improve student performance – with a particular focus on students whom BPS has found eligible for special education and related service – and address other needs of the school district as deemed necessary by the Commissioner.

Fiscal and Human Resources Procedures and Decision-Making

On February 3, 2026, the Commissioner of Education met with the Interim Superintendent to share a list of items identified by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), the Technical Assistance Team (“the Team”), and Public Works that may result in additional cost efficiencies within the district’s proposed fiscal year (FY) 2027 budget. The CSDE, the Team, and Public Works met with the Interim Superintendent on February 10, 18, and 24 to monitor the district’s progress, and will continue to meet weekly until all items have been addressed. The district is prioritizing the following four areas that account for large budget line-item increases in recent years:

1. Payments to private providers of special educational services.
2. Costs associated with transporting students in-district during the school day.
3. Reliance on contracted services for paraprofessionals.
4. Reliance on contracted services for filling daily certified and non-certified staff absences.

The district has identified cost efficiencies across these four items resulting in a potential savings of nearly \$1 million and is exploring the additional cost-benefits of hiring permanent building substitutes to replace reliance on contracted substitute services. Processes are also being developed for staff to more efficiently request paraprofessionals, conduct site visits to private providers of special education services to ensure the district is receiving the quality of services as outlined in the contract, and eliminate the automatic filling of teacher absences without attention to the actual need for substitutes.

The district is working closely with Public Works to recommend updates to Bridgeport Board of Education (BBE) Series 4000 Personnel-Certified & Non-Certified policies impacted by the recommendations from the *2025 Forensic Audit of Bridgeport Public Schools*. If the BBE approves the policy recommendations, the district will work with Public Works to develop regulations that accompany these policies and support their implementation. BPS is also working

with Public Works to establish a districtwide process to ensure that staff are notified and trained on all newly adopted policies and regulations.

Regular and Special Education Instruction

After the site visit by Team members on January 29, 2026, to the University School, a private provider of special education and alternative educational opportunities for students who have been expelled from BPS, the Interim Superintendent directed his staff to make site visits to all out-of-district providers by April 1, 2026. As of February 19, 2026, BPS staff have completed eight site visits using a monitoring checklist developed with support from the Team. In addition to ensuring providers are programming effectively for out-placed BPS students, the district has identified students who are graduating or will be returning to the district resulting in cost savings.

Operational Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Bridgeport Board of Education

On February 13, 2026, Deputy Commissioner Dr. Charles E. Hewes, sent a letter to BBE Chair, Jennifer Perez outlining the specific expectations of the BBE before posting for a permanent superintendent (Attachment 1). It is the responsibility of the BBE to notify the CSDE when it has approved updated Bylaws and Administration policies that address the role of the superintendent and the process for his or her evaluation. By doing so, the BBE will have demonstrated publicly that it has taken action to operate efficiently and effectively in support of a permanent superintendent and satisfied a critical improvement goal established in May 2025. Team leader, David Erwin, will serve as the Commissioner's designee in the development of the search criteria and implementation of the search process.