

BRIDGEPORT

Education Update

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

May 2026

Commissioner's Message

Dear Bridgeport families, educators, and community members,

As we approach the close of the school year, I want to reflect on the work we have undertaken together and what it means for the 19,380 students in Bridgeport Public Schools. From the beginning, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has worked to stand alongside the Bridgeport community—to listen, support, and strengthen the systems that serve your children.

Over the past year, we have worked with district leadership to stabilize operations and begin rebuilding a stronger foundation for the future. This has meant focusing on what matters most to families: ensuring students arrive at school safely, strengthening supports for students with diverse learning needs, and providing the district with tools and training to deliver high-quality instruction.

For families, this work is reflected in more reliable transportation and clearer communication. For educators, it has meant stronger instructional supports. And for students, it is about a more stable, supportive environment focused on their success. We are also seeing encouraging signs of progress, including improved attendance—an essential step in keeping students connected, engaged, and on track for learning.

At the same time, we have focused on strengthening governance, financial practices, operational systems, and ensuring every dollar is increasingly aligned to student needs.

We know there is still work ahead. As we look to the next school year, we believe Bridgeport Public Schools is in a stronger position to move forward, with effective systems, improved stability, and a renewed focus on what matters most—students and the staff who support them.

We are grateful to district and municipal leaders, the Bridgeport legislative delegation, and Governor Lamont for their shared dedication to the students and families of Bridgeport. Together, we will continue building on the progress we have made to ensure every student has access to the opportunities they deserve in unlocking their lifelong potential.

Yours in partnership,
Commissioner Charlene M. Russell-Tucker

Timeline of Intervention

January 22, 2025 – State Board of Education authorizes the Commissioner to address the stability of operations in Bridgeport Public Schools, improve student performance—with a focus on students receiving special education services—and address other needs in the district as deemed necessary.

February 20, 2025 – The Commissioner of Education assembles a Technical Assistance Team (Team) for Bridgeport Public Schools and approves governance training for the Bridgeport Board of Education. **From February through March, the Team facilitated 58 Listening Sessions with students, staff, and community members;** hosted numerous meetings with district and school leadership; and conducted over 20 walkthrough observations of classrooms.

May 2025 – The Commissioner of Education engaged CliftonLarsonAllen LLP to conduct a forensic audit of the district's fiscal years 2024 and 2025 operational budget to determine if expenditures aligned with budgeted allocations, and for where they did not, identify the basis for such misalignment.

October 2025 – The Commissioner of Education engaged Public Works, LLC to provide direct support to the district to address the fiscal and human resources recommendations resulting from the forensic audit.

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Impact of CSDE Staff and Team Support within Bridgeport Public Schools since February 2025

More Structured and Transparent Budget Process is Now in Place

- Paid for and conducted a Forensic Audit to identify 34 recommendations to improve fiscal and human resources processes.
- Paid for a vendor to provide direct support in developing systems that address the 34 recommendations in the Forensic Audit.
- Initiated the development of the 2026-27 superintendent's proposed budget and a process by which school leaders were included.
- Paid \$875,000 for busing to prevent an increase in walking distances for students.
- Conducted a review of vendor contracts for transportation, substitutes, staff, and service providers to ensure efficient and effective use of resources.
- Directed efforts that identified and recovered more than **\$12 million** through strengthened fiscal oversight, including special education and staffing efficiencies, Medicaid and excess cost reimbursement, and healthcare claims and billing reviews.

Stronger Oversight of Special Education Services is Underway

- Directed the district to conduct regular site visits and report on the quality of all out-of-district special education providers to ensure students with disabilities are receiving high-quality instruction.
- Initiated the development of a blueprint manual for special education self-contained classes to improve the consistency of quality programming across the district.
- Provided Individualized Education Program (IEP) Quality Training to administrative staff and certified special educators to improve the district's capacity to develop IEPs.
- Expanded the Special Education Parent Advisory Council to strengthen family communication.

- Provided multiple days of training to school and special education administrators on the topics of least restrictive environment, special education law, leading coordinated in-class instruction, and providing curricular support to teachers and related service staff to improve the quality of special education.

Staffing and Instructional Support Systems Continue to Improve

- Intervened to provide recruitment and hiring strategies to reduce summer 2025 certified staff vacancies from over 100 to 41, ensuring more students have access to certified staff.
- Coordinated professional learning for certified educators in instructional supports for English Learners/Multilingual Learners, K-5 literacy, STEM, and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support
- Coordinated the return of professional learning in the Connecticut Literacy Model to improve the systems and supports for literacy instruction in elementary grades.
- Supported the district to reinstitute the in-school suspension program to ensure students have access to school even when serving a suspension.

Board Governance and School Operations Continue to Strengthen

- Outlined clear expectations for the Bridgeport Board of Education to update their bylaws before launching a superintendent search.
- Provided training to support the 27 Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP) home visitors, resulting in a 2.6 percent reduction of the February 2025 to February 2026 district rate of chronic absence.
- Initiated multiple listening sessions with students to support district staff with improving the quality of school lunches.
- Negotiated with CTState on behalf of the district to secure a location for the Bridgeport Public Schools Central Registrar.



For prior Bridgeport education updates, press releases, and reports to the State Board of Education, scan or click the QR code or visit <https://portal.ct.gov/sde/board/state-board-of-education/bridgeport-intervention>.