BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING – BOARD RETREAT
MANCHESTER SCHOOL DISTRICT SAU #37

August 31, 2026 **6:00 p.m.**

1. Mayor Ruais called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Committee Members Parr, Want, Taylor, Bergeron, Stewart, O'Connell, Potter, St. John, Garrity, Hamer, O'Neil-Wong, Smith and Mayor Ruais.

Absent: Committee Member Turner, Georges and Bergeron.

3. Board Retreat – Discussion with Barrett Christina, New Hampshire School Board Association, and Dr. Chmiel, Superintendent, on the Board Goals for the 2025/2026 School Year

- Attachments:
  1. New Hampshire School Board Association School Board Goal Setting Best Practices
  2. New Hampshire School Board Association – School Board Strategic Planning and Goal Setting Workshop
  3. 2017 New Hampshire School Board Association (NHSBA) Strategic Planning Training Document
  4. Policy BOSC 100: School Board Operational Goals
  5. 2026 Board Self-Evaluation Summary Totals
  6. 2025 Board Goals Update
  7. 2026-2027 District and Department Goals
  8. Manchester Community Strategic Plan Update
  9. 2020 Manchester Community Strategic Plan

School Board Goal Setting

The Board welcomed representatives from the New Hampshire School Boards Association, Barrett Christina and Will Phillips, to facilitate a discussion regarding School Board goal setting.

NHSBA reviewed the distinction between:

- Board goals;
- District goals; and
- Superintendent goals.

The Board was reminded that Board goals should remain within the Board's responsibilities and authority and should not become operational directives or a task list for Dr. Chmiel. Areas identified as traditional Board responsibilities included policy, budget and fiscal oversight, evaluation of the Superintendent, communications with constituents, collective bargaining, and other governance responsibilities.

The Board discussed the importance of developing specific and actionable goals with measurable outcomes and timelines.

Board/Dr. Chmiel Communication

Dr. Chmiel raised concerns regarding multiple Board members independently contacting members of the administrative team with similar or overlapping requests. Dr. Chmiel requested that Board members copy the Superintendent and Vice Chair when contacting administrative staff so that requests can be coordinated, duplication can be avoided, and the appropriate staff member can be identified.

The Board discussed the difference between keeping Dr. Chmiel informed and creating a "gatekeeper" for Board communications.

NHSBA recommended that expectations regarding Board-to-Dr. Chmiel communications be formalized through Board policy and/or the Board's operating rules.

Dr. Chmiel indicated that draft language would be developed and brought forward for consideration.

Superintendent/Board Report and Communications

Dr. Chmiel discussed the amount of staff time required to produce the Board Report and noted that readership had been limited.

Board members discussed whether the report should:

- Be shortened and presented in a bullet-point format;
- Become more of a public-facing communication document; or
- Be deemphasized in favor of more timely Superintendent updates directed specifically to the Board.

The Board expressed interest in continuing to examine how information is communicated to Board members and the public.

District Dashboard

The Board discussed development of a District data dashboard. The Clerk will distribute a survey to Board members asking which metrics and data points they would like included. Potential areas discussed included attendance, dropout rates, academic achievement, enrollment, and other District indicators.

The proposed timeline discussed was:

- Board members identify desired dashboard information by the end of September;
- Dr. Chmiel provides feedback and begins development during October;
- A draft dashboard is targeted for November; and
- A more finalized version is targeted for January.

Dr. Chmiel noted that some requested information may not immediately be available because of state reporting or embargo requirements and that the District currently has limited staffing and technology resources for development of a more sophisticated public-facing dashboard.

Strategic Plan

The Board discussed the existing Manchester School District Strategic Plan and agreed that reviewing and updating the plan should remain a priority.

Board members generally expressed support for preserving the foundation and overall direction of the existing plan while examining areas that may be outdated, completed, or require clarification.

Members noted that topics and circumstances have changed since the plan was originally developed. The Board discussed the importance of determining whether the process should be characterized as an **update**, **refresh**, or **revision**, with several members expressing a preference for updating the existing plan rather than beginning an entirely new strategic planning process.

Dr. Chmiel reported that it has been tracking the status of existing strategic-plan goals and can provide the committee with information identifying goals that have been completed, implemented, or remain in progress.

Strategic Plan Ad Hoc Committee

The Board agreed to establish a special Ad Hoc Committee to begin reviewing the Strategic Plan. The committee's objective will be to examine the current plan, identify areas requiring updates or clarification, and make recommendations to the full Board.

The Clerk will contact all Board members to determine interest in serving on the committee. Membership will then be established and announced at a subsequent Board meeting.

The Board discussed the importance of giving the committee a defined purpose, timeline, and reporting expectations. The committee may also consider:

- The status of existing goals;
- Which portions of the plan remain relevant;
- Areas requiring updating or additional examination;
- How community input should be incorporated;
- Whether outside facilitation or professional assistance is needed; and
- The resources necessary to complete the work.

NHSBA advised that the committee should first analyze the existing plan and determine what requires updating before deciding how extensive community engagement or outside assistance should be.

Board Self-Evaluation

The Board reviewed and discussed results of its annual self-evaluation. It was clarified that the Board had already formally accepted the evaluation results at a previous meeting and that the purpose of the current discussion was to consider the findings in connection with development of the new Board goals.

Discussion included the Board's relationship with the Superintendent, Board development and training, communications, governance practices, and opportunities to improve Board effectiveness.

Board Development and Retreat

The Board discussed establishing a more formal professional-development retreat focused specifically on Board governance and the Board/Superintendent relationship. Members expressed interest in holding the retreat on a Saturday rather than as a short evening meeting.

A January timeframe was identified as preferable.

The retreat would focus on Board development, governance, Board operations, and the Board/Superintendent relationship rather than District operational matters or student programming. Dr. Chmiel and Board members will gather suggestions for topics and potential resources in preparation for the retreat.

The Board also discussed holding the retreat in one of the District's school buildings rather than at an outside location.

Board Training

The Board discussed additional training opportunities. Contract negotiation training was identified as the next priority and is expected to occur within the next several months.

Additional training needs may be identified through the January Board retreat.

New Board members will also be expected to complete applicable cybersecurity training.

The Clerk will work on scheduling contract negotiation training and circulate information to Board members.

Development of 2026-2027 Board Goals

The Board discussed the relationship between its previous goals and the District's broader "Grow Our Learners, Grow Our Educators, Grow Our System" framework.

Members expressed differing views regarding whether the Board's goals should continue to be organized under those same categories or whether Board goals should instead focus more directly on governance responsibilities.

There was general agreement that Board goals should be specific, measurable, actionable, and within the authority of the Board.

By the conclusion of the discussion, the following areas had emerged as key Board priorities:

Strategic Plan

Update and clarify the existing Strategic Plan through the creation of an Ad Hoc Committee with defined responsibilities and a timeline.

Board Development

Conduct a Board development retreat in January focused on governance, Board operations, and the Board/Superintendent relationship.

Data-Informed Governance

Develop a District dashboard that provides the Board with meaningful, regularly available data to support oversight and decision-making. The Board also discussed strengthening relationships with community partners and increasing Board member visibility in schools, including opportunities for Board members and elected City partners to visit schools and better understand District programs and needs.

The Clerk indicated that a revised Board goals document would be prepared and circulated to Board members for review and suggested edits before being brought to the full Board for approval.

Meeting Efficiency and Board Practices

Toward the conclusion of the meeting, members discussed meeting efficiency and the tendency for issues to be repeatedly debated after positions had been clearly stated.

NHSBA representatives discussed parliamentary options available to members, including calling the question or moving to end discussion when debate becomes repetitive.

Members emphasized the importance of allowing differing viewpoints to be heard while also conducting meetings efficiently.

ADJOURNMENT

4. This being a special meeting of the board, no further business can be presented unless by 2/3 majority and a motion is in order to adjourn.

This being a special meeting, no further business was discussed. On motion of ***Committee Member O'Connell,*** *duly seconded by* ***Committee Member Stewart,*** *it was moved to adjourn. All were in favor, meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m.*

True Copy. Attest.
Respectfully Submitted,

Angela M Carey

Clerk of Committee