



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

May 5, 2025

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**-Press Release-**

## **Bridgeport Public Schools Celebrates Historic South-West Conference Admission for Bassick and Harding High Schools**

**Bridgeport, CT** — In a historic move for Bridgeport athletics, Bassick High School and Harding High School have been officially accepted into the South-West Conference (SWC), effective with the 2026–2027 school year. This marks the first time in over a decade that these two schools will compete as full members of a structured interscholastic athletic conference, opening new doors for student-athletes in the city.

The SWC voted last week to approve the expansion, which brings total membership to 16 schools. With this milestone, Bassick and Harding will now share the field, court, and track with some of the state’s most competitive and recognized programs, including Bethel, Brookfield, Bunnell, Immaculate, Joel Barlow, Kolbe Cathedral, Masuk, New Fairfield, New Milford, Newtown, Notre Dame Prep, Pomperaug, Stratford, and Weston.

“This is a major moment for Bridgeport Public Schools,” said Dr. Royce Avery, Interim Superintendent. “For the first time in over ten years, our student-athletes at Bassick and Harding will compete in a conference that celebrates both competition and character. This opportunity affirms our commitment to equity, excellence, and the holistic development of every student.”

“Bassick High School is proud to join the rich history of sportsmanship and competition within the Southwest Conference,” added Dr. Joseph Raiola, Principal of Bassick High School. “This is a tremendous opportunity for our scholar-athletes to challenge themselves, represent their school with pride, and grow as competitors and leaders. With our new building and upgraded athletic facilities opening in fall 2025, the timing couldn’t be better.”

For Bassick and Harding, joining the SWC means access to a well-organized league schedule, postseason play under CIAC standards, and participation in league-wide recognition programs including academic awards, sportsmanship initiatives, and leadership development—such as the SWC Achievement Cup.

“Joining the SWC will foster a sense of belonging and achievement among our student-athletes,” said Harding High School Principal Vernon Thompson. “This gives them the chance to grow through healthy competition and to be seen on the same platform as schools across Fairfield and New Haven counties.”

Athletic Director Paul Catuccio shared, “This expansion into the South-West Conference is a game-changer for our schools. It provides a platform where our student-athletes can showcase their skills, gain new experiences, and push themselves to be the best. It’s an exciting new chapter in Bridgeport’s athletic history.”

SWC Co-Commissioner Mike Santangeli said, “This is an exciting new chapter in the history of the South-West Conference. We welcome Bassick and Harding with open arms.”

Co-Commissioner Mark Berkowitz added, “Our league has always been grounded in the values of education, sportsmanship, and collaboration—and we look forward to bringing these new member schools into that tradition.”

Over the next year, the Athletic Directors and Principals of both schools will attend SWC meetings to become familiar with league operations and prepare for the 2026 launch. Final conference scheduling and divisional alignments will be announced in the coming months.

Bridgeport Public Schools applauds this landmark decision and looks forward to seeing its athletes thrive in a league that reflects the values of excellence, competition, and community.

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**About Bridgeport Public Schools:**

Bridgeport Public Schools serves over 20,000 students across 40 schools, providing a world-class education through innovative programs and strong community partnerships. Visit [www.bridgeportedu.net](http://www.bridgeportedu.net) for more information.