

FY 2024-25 Operating Budget Key Drivers

1. Teacher Release Time (\$2.0 million)

This budget addresses the increase in planning time needed for teachers, particularly at the elementary school level, so they have the necessary time to develop and execute the best educational plans for their students. Release times will increase from 4 to 5 periods requiring an additional \$2.0 million for certified teacher coverage while classroom teachers are planning.

2. Student Enrollment/MLL Needs/Special Education (\$2.0 million)

Student enrollment has seen a spike, returning to pre-pandemic growth rates. In addition to enrollment growth, the individual needs of our students now require additional resources and support. Multilingual learners (MLL) are the fastest growing population in U.S. public schools. Norwalk is not unique. NPS has seen nearly 300 new MLL students this year. NPS has also seen an increase in students needing specialized learning services, also known as the prevalence rate. The prevalence rate has risen to over 15%, an increase trend seen both nationally and statewide. This budget includes an additional \$2 million for out of district tuition and additional staffing of paraeducators. This increase combined with rising out of district tuition costs and other unfunded state mandates, has translated into a higher cost burden on the district. The requirement that public schools should support special needs students until they turn 22 will cost NPS nearly \$0.7 million. Norwalk Public Schools is legally required to provide these special education services to fulfill the needs of a student's individual education plan (IEP), whether that's in the district or by an outside provider.

3. Reinstatement of Funding for Magnet Schools (\$2.0 million)

The magnet school supplement was first offered in 2017-18 as NPS was expanding its school choice programs and establishing new program options. The supplemental funding was provided to schools in addition to the base per pupil allocation. Last year, the funding was cut and schools had to absorb the cost of magnet expenses from their existing student-based budgets. This budget reinstates \$2.0 million for schools with magnet programs.

4. School Lunch Fund Contribution (\$1.3 million)

Over the past several years the district was required to transfer funds to cover the deficit in the School Lunch Fund. During the pandemic, federal funds were received allowing this fund to sustain itself. During this time, NPS qualified and the Board of Education adopted the Community Eligibility Plan (CEP) where all students eat for free. For the 2024-25 school year, the district is projecting a \$1.3 million deficit due to the lower reimbursement received from the state. Approximately the same deficit would have occurred if the district was not registered under CEP and students were paying for most meals. Under this

current option, all students benefit from eating a healthy meal to keep them alert in the classroom and ready to learn.

5. Contractual Wage Increases (\$3.5 million)

Nearly 85% of the budget is directed towards employee salaries and benefits. Norwalk has approximately 1,910 Full Time Equivalent Positions, **97%** of whom provide services directly to students. This budget includes \$3.5 million for contractual wage increases. Additionally, the budget also includes 25.99 FTE paraeducators needed to support teachers and students. These positions are mandated and align with student individualized education plans (IEP). Additionally, 5 grant funded Education Administrators were also added as part of the recently awarded \$15.0 million Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP).

SUMMARY OF STAFFING CHANGES				
Object Code	Position Titles	FY 23-24 Total	FY 24-25 Total	Change
111	Superintendent	1.00	1.00	0.00
112	Cabinet	7.00	6.00	-1.00
113	Administrators *	51.00	51.00	0.00
114	Education Administrators & Assistant Education Administrators **	20.00	25.00	5.00
117	Teachers	1,074.65	1,080.05	5.40
119	Other Certified Staff ***	125.10	128.10	3.00
121	Secretaries & Clerks	60.72	60.32	-0.40
122	Paraeducators	345.96	372.73	26.78
124	Custodians (Internal) & Maintenance	51.00	49.00	-2.00
125				
126	Non-Affiliated Staff	79.33	86.73	7.40
127	Security Guards (Internal) & AV Technicians	15.01	17.01	2.00
143	Nurses	25.00	24.00	-1.00
145	Physical & Occupational Therapists	8.00	8.00	0.00
	Grand Total	1,863.77	1,909.95	46.18

* Includes Principals, Assistant Principals, (Curriculum) Directors and Digital
 ** Includes Education Administrators, Assistant Education Administrators, Out of District Coordinators and Related Services Supervisor
 *** Includes School Counselors, Psychologists, Social Workers and Speech

