



Board Update
February 23, 2024



BOARD UPDATE

From the desk of Dr. Alexandra Estrella, Superintendent

February 23, 2024

EXCELLENCE, EQUITY & INCLUSION

Testing & Accountability



Preparation is underway for the required State training sessions for Smarter Balanced (grades 3-8) and Next Generation Science (grades 5,8, and 11). In March, multiple sessions will be held for Building Test Coordinators. Topics will cover security, support/accommodations for special populations, test administration updates and delivery of results. Building Test Coordinators will receive a PowerPoint presentation to train their school proctors. All Building Test Coordinators and proctors must be trained annually.

Multilingual Learner (MLL) student rosters with recommended MLL supports for state testing have been shared with the Department, along with 2024 updates. MLL teachers will now review and update the supports, prior to the testing office uploading to the Test Information Distribution Engine (TIDE). Accommodations for students under SPED or with 504 plans are directly uploaded to TIDE from CT-SEDS.

Research & Analytics

The Research & Analytics team is working on documentation to accompany the various data tools and systems so that school leaders will have a guide that provides high-level instructions for how to use the tool, as well as guidance on strategic usage.

As the mid-point of the school year is now behind us, the team is also working on School Improvement Plan metrics to determine progress toward articulated goals around rigorous instruction, supportive environment and equity.



Before mid-winter break, the team worked with the CT RISE Network to host a grade 9 community of practice, which representatives from all four high schools attended. In addition to sharing progress

and upcoming priorities, school teams also shared where they had encountered pitfalls. We also dug into recent attendance data and collectively brainstormed ways to leverage student belonging strategies to work toward attendance and grade 9 on-track goals.

Communications

Quick Links

[Tracey Magnet School Named Only CT School of Character](#)
[4 NHS Choir Members Selected for CT All-State Chorus](#)

Black History & Heritage Festival



Join us for our 2nd Annual Black History & Heritage Festival celebrating “African Americans and the Arts” on Thursday, Feb. 29, from 5:30 to 8 p.m. at Brien McMahon High School.

The evening will feature performances and presentations from students across the district that highlight the many impacts of Black Americans on visual arts, music, cultural movements and more. We will also celebrate our local Black community in Norwalk.

If you haven’t been to one of our district wide events, they’re a lot of fun and the kids always do an AMAZING job. [Click here to see highlights from last year’s Black History & Heritage Festival.](#)

Valentines for Veterans



Congressman Jim Himes celebrated his annual Valentines for Vets program with students and staff at Silvermine Dual Language Magnet School. Silvermine students made Valentine’s Day cards that Himes’ office would later deliver to local veterans.

[Click here to read more about Himes’ visit and](#) [click the photo above to see some highlights.](#)

A Message from the Superintendent

Dr. Estrella is publishing a new monthly message to highlight the great work happening in Norwalk Public Schools and preview what lies ahead for the district. [Click here to read her February message.](#)

Also, don’t forget to read the latest [Board Update from Feb. 9.](#)

Mid-Year Goals Review

The NPS community is invited to attend the Norwalk BOE workshop on Tuesday, Feb. 27 at 5:45 p.m. at Jefferson Marine Science Elementary School where Superintendent Dr. Estrella and the Cabinet will present a mid-year review of the district's 2023-24 goals. Listen to the progress being made and what the district intends to achieve with each goal that works toward one of the priorities set out in the Future Ready for All: 2021-26 Strategic Plan.

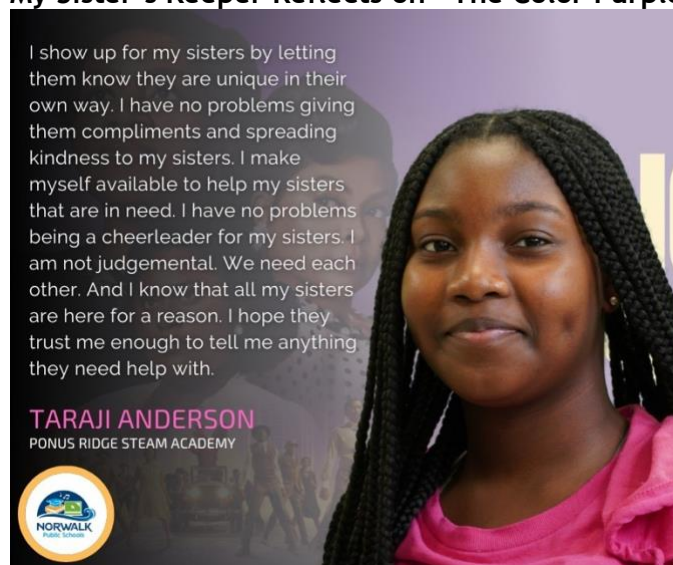
FY 2024-25 Budget

The current recommendation for the City of Norwalk's FY2024-25 Operating Budget is \$442.7 million which includes a 4.46% increase for the city and a 4.5% increase for the Norwalk Board of Education. The recommended increase for the Board is significantly less than the 8.2% increase requested, which would allow us to maintain the same level of quality service and excellence currently expected by our students, staff and families.

[Click here to read a response from the Superintendent and the Norwalk BOE regarding the budget recommendation.](#)

In Case You Missed It

My Sister's Keeper Reflects on "The Color Purple"



(Check our Facebook and Instagram for more reflections throughout the month)

More NPS Shorts!

Be sure to watch more of our [NPS Shorts \(VIDEOS\)](#).

[Valentines for Vets \(ENGLISH\)](#)

[Valentines for Vets \(SPANISH\)](#)

Superintendent's Book Club - Celebrating Black History Month

Rob Pennington, "I Promise" (VIDEO)



Sandra Faioes & Lunda Asmani, "The Roots of Rap: 16 Bars on the 4 Pillars of Hip-Hop" (VIDEO)



Important Dates

Thursday, March 14 - K-5 Conferences (90-Minute Early Release)

Thursday, March 21 - K-5 Conferences (90-Minute Early Release)

Monday, March 25 - Staff Professional Development (2-Hour Early Dismissal)

Friday, March 29 - Good Friday (No School; Central Office Closed)

Upcoming Events

Black History & Heritage Festival

Thursday, Feb. 29 from 5:30 to 8 p.m.

Brien McMahon High School, 300 Highland Ave. in Norwalk

Join us for our 2nd Annual Black Heritage & History Festival celebrating "African Americans and the Arts." The evening will feature performances and presentations from students across the district that highlight the many impacts of Black Americans on visual arts, music, cultural movements and more. We will also celebrate our local Black community in Norwalk.

"The Colors of Frida/Los Colores de Frida"

Friday, March 15 at 6 p.m.

Jefferson Marine Science Elementary School, 75 Van Buren Ave. in Norwalk

NPS Family Center invites families to see "The Colors of Frida/Los Colores de Frida" presented by Teatro Sea on Friday, March 15. Admission is FREE!

"The Colors of Frida/Los Colores de Frida" is a bilingual show about the great Mexican painter Frida Kahlo. It combines storytelling, music, visual arts and puppets.

[Click here to reserve a seat.](#)

BMHS Presents “Footloose: The Musical”

Friday, March 22 at 7 p.m. and Saturday, March 23 at 2 p.m. & 7 p.m.

Brien McMahon High School, 300 Highland Ave. in Norwalk

Let’s hear it for Brien McMahon High School, which will present their spring musical production of “Footloose: The Musical” in March. They are holding out for an audience jam-packed with their friends, family and community. It’s sure to be a night that’s almost paradise.

Tickets are not on sale yet. Visit the [BMHS Drama website](#) for more information.

CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION & SPECIALIZED LEARNING

Curriculum

The Curricula department is preparing the Curriculum Corner for publication. It will highlight the classroom environment, student engagement and the use of scaffolds to support all learners.

The Connecticut State Department of Education has recently adopted new Social Studies standards. The team has created a comprehensive plan to update the social studies curriculum over the next few months. This work highlights our commitment to providing students with high-quality, engaging, and relevant educational experiences.

Fox Run recently held a family engagement night that focused on literacy. It was powerful to see the Fox Run staff develop a love of literacy in the school community.



Multilingual Learners

Kindergarten registration has opened for the 2024-25 school year, and we currently have 208 incoming students who have begun the registration process. Families should come to the Family Center to submit the required documentation needed to complete enrollment.



Norwalk Public Schools Kindergarten Registration

COME Register for Kindergarten!
All children who turn **5 years old** on, or before September 1st 2024, are eligible to start Kindergarten!



WHERE:
NPS Family Center
1 Park Street

Monday: 8:00AM - 4:00PM
Tuesday: 8:00AM - 4:00PM
Wednesday: 8:00AM - 4:00PM
Thursday: 8:00AM - 6:00PM
Friday: 8:00AM - 4:00PM

Documents Needed:

- Child's Birth Certificate or Passport
- Parent/Guardian Photo Identification
- Mortgage Statement, Deed, Lease or Residency Affidavit
- 2 Recent Utility Bills



Please call us at
203-854-4100
with any question



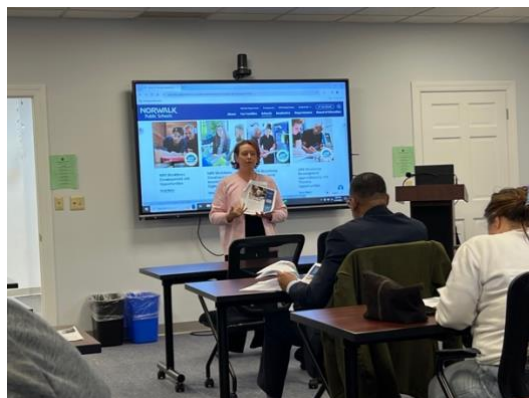
Can't come in person?
Register online by using the QR code!



Counseling/Workforce Development

In Workforce Development, The Red Fashion School at NPS will be hosting a Costume and Fashion Design Class weekly in the Spring for scholars in Grades 10-12 who are 16+ years old. The program's professor is also from the Parsons School of Design and her classroom at the college is featured on Project Runway! Participating scholars will have the opportunity to start their brand and build their fashion portfolio. Other skill sets scholars will learn and practice are draping, fashion design, fashion illustration, making patterns and learning to build a fashion collection. Class participation is based on a first come, first serve basis and scholars must apply for this free opportunity.

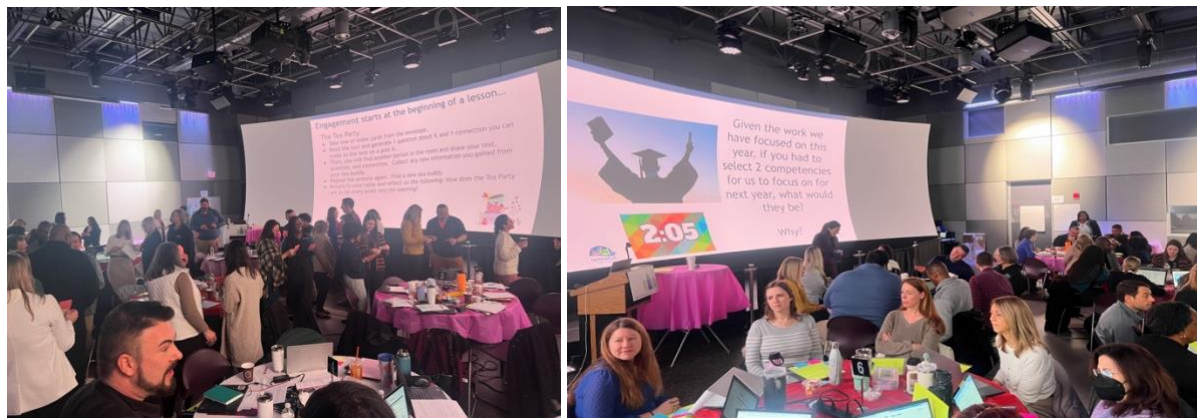
The Workforce Development Department was also able to offer a workshop on various resources such as apprenticeship & training, opportunities, internship information, job postings, winter classes, year-round enrichments and volunteer opportunities. One of the highlights was students who recently graduated but were looking for opportunities.



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Strengthening Student Engagement

During our February Principal and AP Meetings, we continued our focus on ensuring all students have access to the standards-based tasks and texts, with a special focus on student engagement. The text, [New Thinking About Student Engagement](#) was used to develop a shared understanding on strong student engagement. Later in the day, Principals and APs attended small round table workshops based on their interest and need. Each of the workshops focused on a specific strategy or protocol to strengthen student engagement.



School Improvement

Every January/February, school leaders assess whether they are on track to meeting the goals outlined in their School Improvement Plans. By analyzing data, they can identify celebration areas and improvements. As a result, schools develop their action plan for the February - April cycle and identify the professional learning needs of their staff. Congratulations to the following schools for meeting their end of year goals in the middle of the year!

Reading	Math
Marvin, Naramake, Tracey	CMS, Cranbury, Jefferson, Kendall, Marvin, Naramake, Rowayton, Silvermine, Tracey, Nathan Hale, Ponus, Brien McMahon, Norwalk High

BUSINESS & OPERATIONS

Food Services



Blue is the color for March! Please check out Mrs. Kelly's video [Eat a Rainbow: Blue/Purple](#). You can see all the benefits of fresh foods that are blue [here](#).



The Fresh Fruit and Vegetables for next week will be [beets](#) and [strawberries](#). On Feb. 26, the team will share the videos: [Learning & Tasting: Beets](#) and [Learning & Tasting: Strawberries](#).

Featured Fresh Vegetable: EGGPLANT



Health Benefits:

1. Antioxidants – overall health and fight against cancer
2. Fiber – digestion and heart health
3. Copper - red blood cell formation, bone health, immune function

Featured Fresh Vegetable: PLUMS



Health Benefits:

1. Vitamin C: supports immune system, healthy skin and healing
2. Antioxidants: overall wellbeing, reduces risk of heart disease and cancer
3. Vitamin A: promotes healthy vision and cell growth

The Fresh Fruit and Vegetables for the first week in March will be [eggplant](#) and the fruit [plums](#); yum! Please enjoy the videos for the week of March 4 [Learning & Tasting: Eggplant](#) [Learning & Tasting: Plums](#)

Facilities

At Cranbury School, work is currently underway on the tennis/pickleball court and the new softball field is being constructed. The color coat for the tennis court and sod for the field are expected to be completed during the spring (weather permitting).

EXTERIOR VIEW 02

NORWALK HIGH SCHOOL / P-TECH NORWALK

NORWALK, CT
APRIL 27, 2023



P-TECH
NORWALK

K/AESTLE BOOS
ASSOCIATES, INC.

For the NHS/P-TECH project, the GMP (Guarantee Maximum Price) for this project has been approved by the city. Phase 1 of the project is scheduled to begin in early March 2024. This phase includes the construction of the new school. The school will be completed for occupancy in August 2027.



The GMP for the South Norwalk School project has also been approved by the city. Construction is scheduled to begin in late February 2024. The new school will be completed for occupancy in August 2025 (this is if we do not expect unintended delays and milestones to be met).

School Safety

All 692 NPS Wi-Fi Door Alarms are online and active providing another layer of protection to NPS schools. Each door has a customized setting for when a “door ajar” notification will be sent to school personnel, depending on what the door is used for during daily operations.

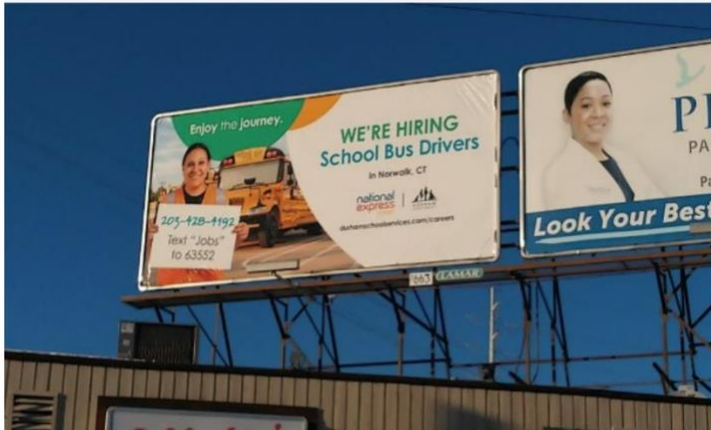
Health Services

Summer school has been fully staffed with a registered nurse in each school building. Additional vision screenings have been scheduled for those students who missed their mandated vision screening.

The team has also met with Norwalk Community Health Center and NPS leadership to discuss the family practice model envisioned for the NCHC health center to be located there. The goal is that this Family Health Center provide services to students and their parents, truly meeting the needs of the whole family.

Transportation

The Transportation Department is happy to see our first Durham billboard up in South Norwalk!



DIGITAL LEARNING & TECHNOLOGY

Enterprise Software/Data Application

The team collaborated with Data Analyst Alden Burnham on articulation processes that building leaders work through for rising 6th and 8th graders. This includes reviewing current practices, needs and challenges and the team will continue to work together to build an efficient user-friendly dashboard.

The team is also hosting a Central Office training session on Friday, Feb. 23 in unison with Norwalk Acts. Central Office staff responded to a poll targeting frustration areas in Excel, Google and O365. The team and Ms. Palermo will provide the training to the staff.

The team is excited to continue with this opportunity by adding more sessions this year.

Infrastructure/Operations

Infrastructure and Operations hope to finalize the decision on a new district firewall in the next two weeks. Technicians are starting to prepare for the roll-out of new machines for some of the secondary schools.

Digital Learning

A Ponus team of students is one of the 300 state finalists in the 14th annual Samsung Solve for Tomorrow competition. The team received a \$2,500 prize package and state winners will be announced soon! The team focused on creating a sustainable streetlight that runs on solar and wind energy. For more information, please click on the following link to the article in [the Hour](#). Also, the Ponus CyberPatriots team placed number 1 in the middle school division in CT. Although they were short of making the semifinals, this was a great accomplishment for the team that is only in its second year of competing!

FINANCE

Payroll

The payroll team has successfully completed the bi-weekly payroll for this week. In addition to that, they have also printed and mailed out W2Cs on Friday to all employees who have an HSA and require a corrected W2. Furthermore, the Benefits and Payroll departments are currently collaborating with the City Comptroller's office to ensure that all 1095Cs are sent out by the March 1 deadline. This demonstrates our commitment to timely and accurate financial reporting.

The UKG time & attendance implementation team had a meeting on Thursday, Feb. 15 to discuss the project timeline and review all completed workbooks and timeclock installation locations. This project is progressing well and is currently on schedule. The team is dedicated to meeting all required timelines to stay on track and deliver a successful implementation.

Budget

The budget team recently met to strategize on the next steps of the budget process, with a particular focus on the student-based budgeting process. This highlights our commitment to ensuring that our budgeting decisions align with the needs of our students. Additionally, the budget calendar has been updated to accommodate any shifting meetings, ensuring that our budgeting process remains organized and efficient.

The team also held meetings with individual departments to review current year spending and provide them with updated general ledger summaries. This open line of communication allows the team to track and analyze spending patterns, ensuring that the team makes informed decisions that align with the district's financial goals.

Purchasing/Accounts Payable

To enhance the skills and knowledge of the district's administrative secretaries, a professional development training session was conducted on Thursday, Feb. 15. This session covered various functions and processes within the finance realm, fostering a productive and collaborative environment. As a result of this meeting, there will be follow-ups to address vendor lists, process and procedure library, and the assignment of duties for student activity and P-Card reconciliation. This training session reflects our commitment to continuous improvement and ensuring that staff has the necessary tools to excel in their roles.

Preparation for the district's Food Service Management Company Request for Proposal is ongoing. To ensure a smooth process, the Connecticut State Department of Education conducts weekly training calls to address any questions that arise and provide training on the new proposal submission platform.