

The Business Meeting of the New London Board of Education was held on March 11, 2024 in the New London Public Schools' Welcome Center and via Zoom Webinars.

DRAFT

1. Call to Order

President Elaine Maynard-Adams called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Present for the Board of Education: President – Elaine Maynard-Adams
Vice-President – Bianca Alexis-Sylvain
Secretary – Bryan Dougherty

Board Members Present: Alisha Blake (*attended via Zoom*)
Susan Hambey

Board Members Absent: Nathan Caron
Danni Cruz

Present for the administration: Dr. Cynthia Ritchie, Superintendent of Schools

All votes were taken by roll-call vote.

2. Public Comment

C.J. Parker, New London – ***Mr. Parker read the following statement (which was submitted in its entirety to Ms. Francolino).*** I am here representing the members of our organization, Hearing Youth Voices. We have been located at 230 State Street in downtown since 2014. And for the last 12 years we have focused on supporting school building, citywide and statewide change towards a more equitable education experience for students of color and working class families. On February 26th, you all were presented a budget that attempted to meet the near impossible fiscal limitations of this year. And while we understand the gravity of the position we, as a district, find ourselves in this budget season, much like many seasons before, we want to urge you to make one vital shift and reinstate the Wellness Positions in the final budget and work with us, community members, the city and the state to cover the cost of this funding gap. We have estimated this is roughly \$200,000 of this years budget and while that number may seem daunting we believe the investment is worth every dollar. You will hear from young people today, discussing the impact of the Wellness positions established district wide for the last 3 years. Our framework, Schools that Work For Us lays out a vision of schools that prioritize wellness as a pivotal pillar of student success. According to research from the American Psychological Association (APA), restorative practices lead to better student behavior and improved school climate compared with traditional punitive measures. By eliminating these positions, we risk reversing this progress. And the wellness interventionists at both the middle and high school have the been instrumental in

implementing restorative practices, and leading the district towards their goals of being a more restorative district. We are hoping to meet with you all and discuss further the opportunities before us to continue building out a structure for student success and making these positions a permanent piece of the budget going forward. We will also be speaking with city councilors, the mayor, teachers, parents and our state reps on the important passage and implementation of SB 1 and SB 50. Which combined, create funding and infrastructure for holistic student safety and wellness. We look forward to reaching a resolution with you all. Thank you, Hearing Youth Voices

Jazzy Brown, New London – Ms. Brown shared that she is a student at New London High School and here to speak regarding the budget cuts for the Wellness positions. She stated that her first impression when she learned about the cuts was that wellness was being taken away. Wellness consists of mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing, as well as the education of students. Taking away the interventionists brings feelings of upset, anger and sadness. These staff have a great relationship with students, and are respectable, kind, genuine and helpful. They have so many resources that they give students a lot of the students do need it. Looking at the statistics, there are many students in the school who are homeless or in a hard situation and need someone to talk to. The interventionists are helpful and a safe way of learning. They also help students figure out what they need to do, what is best for them, and keep them safe and comfortable to be able to learn. Taking these positions away would be wrong, and there should be a different resolution rather than getting rid of the positions. There should be a different way to keep the staff while still being productive.

Raelyn Lopez, New London – Ms. Lopez stated she was present to advocate for the wellness interventionists. Having the interventionists at school is important to provide a safe space for students. They teach practices to benefit students outside of high school as well. As a member of the high school community, she strongly advocates to keep these position for the mental, emotional and physical wellbeing for students. Wellness interventionists provide support for students facing various challenges, including stress and anxiety. Students are able to seek their guidance and this contributes to a healthier student environment by maintaining and promoting mental health awareness and the message that it matters and that help is available. These positions also have an impact on academics. Research shows that wellness should be prioritized, and these staff help to enhance their overall performance in school. Wellness interventionists are an invaluable asset to the high school community.

Da'Shaun Phillips, New London – Mr. Phillips shared that he is a student at New London High School. He stated that he doesn't believe the wellness positions should be taken away. During his time at NLHS he has seen the great things that the staff have done at the school. They keep kids who may not be doing well in school, stay focused and do work. This position has helped him in the past. When Mr. Parker was working, he was a great help in his life and was comfortable to talk to. He stated that if Mr. Parker hadn't been there he is not sure he would have been good on those days. He stated that these interventionists are doing now, what had been done for him and for many years.

Serenity Lancaster, New London – Ms. Lancaster stated that she is a student at NLHS and is here to support to keep the wellness interventionists. She stated that there were multiple incidents in the high schools that may have escalated without the interventionists. She stated that there is a lot of respect between the students and the staff in these positions, and it has taken a lot of time for this bond to grow. If these staff are not there when students need them, there are a lot of things that could go wrong. She continued that she cannot imagine not having these adults who have given her and others a healthier learning environment.

Savahn Warren, New London – Mr. Warren stated that the staff in these positions help him to stay on track with his grades, and get off his mind what he needs to while helping to keep him in a positive position. The wellness interventionists are good for students and have helped them throughout the years. They help to cause things not to escalate and are good when students need a mentor to talk to. He stated that a lot of kids do not have this support at home and a lot of students need this because it will help them to speak up and become the best students.

The following community members submitted comments in writing which were read aloud during the meeting by Ms. Kristea Francolino. These comments can be found in their entirety at the end of these minutes.

- Julianni Morales
- Jessie McKay and Zakkiyya Griffin
- Shaliyah Haggins
- Andrea Simmons
- Alex Kuvalanka
- Jadelise Garrett
- Dale Clark
- Ny'Asia Weaver
- David Bridges

3. Reports and Communications

- Board Chairperson's Report

Ms. Maynard-Adams shared that she had recently reported on the One World Art Installation which was at the Mystic Museum of Art, and that it is now located at the Garde Arts Center for viewing. She stated that she has spent much of the last few weeks building support for the budget. She shared that she has had multiple conversations with the Mayor and State Representatives, and that there seems to be a glimmer of light on the horizon, but she does not want to get anyone's hopes up. She expressed that she does not recall there being this much of an understanding among community members of what the Board is trying to do for the students. She is hopeful that the Legislature will be able to come through with money for the students. Ms. Maynard-Adams also shared that she had written a guest commentary editorial in *The Day*. This editorial was a discussion of the budget,

providing an overview of what is in, what is out, and an explanation of how the Board tried to keep the increases under control.

4. Information and Reports

i. Superintendent's Report

- NLPS2024 – District Improvement Plan: Mid-Year Update
 - Dr. Ritchie, Dr. Hills-Papetti, Ms. Rivera, Mr. Funk, Mr. Gautier and Ms. Francolino presented the mid-year updates of the District Improvement Plan. This presentation included the review of all sections of the plan including:
 - Theory of Action 1: Student Achievement
 - Theory of Action 2: Climate and Culture
 - Theory of Action 3: A School Community that Creates Welcoming and Empowering Partnerships for Learning
 - Theory of Action 4: Operations, Systems and Structures
 - Theory of Action 5: Talent Management: Recruit, Retain and Recognize

A copy of this presentation is available in their entirety upon request.

5. Approval of the Minutes

Motion by Mr. Doughty, seconded by Ms. Hambey, to approve the following minutes:

- February 15, 2024 – Special Meeting – Budget Presentation
- February 22, 2024 – Special Meeting – Budget Presentation
- February 26, 2024 – Special Meeting – Public Hearing on the Budget
- February 26, 2024 – Business Meeting

Motion carried, 5-0

6. Approval of the Consent Agenda

Motion by Ms. Maynard-Adams, seconded by Ms. Hambey, that the following items, as set forth on the Consent Agenda for the Business Meeting of March 11, 2024 be approved unless removed by a Board member or the Superintendent of Schools:

A. Superintendent's Written Update

- I. Academics
- II. Human Resources

- III. Student and Family Support Services
- IV. Business and Finance
- V. Operations – Includes Magnet Pathways, Athletics, Facilities and Technology
- B. Action Items
 - I. Approve Policy 6146.6 – Foreign Exchange Students Attending Local Schools for its Second and Final Reading.

Motion carried, 5-0

7. Items Pulled from Consent Agenda

A. Action Items

a. Increasing Educator Diversity Plan

Motion by Mr. Doughty, seconded by Ms. Maynard-Adams, to approve the Increasing Educator Diversity Plan.

Mr. Doughty stated he believes the District is pretty high in the State, but wondered if 22% is achievable. Ms. Pemberton stated that she and Dr. Hills-Papetti believe that it is achievable. They have seen improvements in things happening now, and there are eight students in the Sacred Heart cohort. Mr. Doughty shared that when compared to other places in the State New London is doing a good job. He stated that he hopes that the State improves the implementation of their work so that the District can achieve their goal of 22%

Motion carried, 5-0

8. Board Comments, Questions

Mr. Doughty recognized all of the students and staff who came forward to speak and submit their comments and writing. He also thanked Ms. Francolino for reading all of the public comments that were submitted in writing aloud. He thanked Ms. Maynard-Adams for writing her op-ed that was in *The Day*. He also announced that the marching band has been fully funded to march in DC in the spring.

Ms. Hambey stated this is the first time she has seen a student group give a presentation here, and it is evident that they planned and prepared and deserve their consideration.

Ms. Maynard-Adams stated that we are still in the infancy stages of the budget process. When the budget is received back from the City there will be more of an idea of what the next steps are. She stated that the Board will continue to advocate for students, and will continue to encourage them to advocate at City Council.

Dr. Ritchie thanked the Board of Education for all that they do in recognition of Board of Education appreciation month.

9. Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Doughty, seconded by Ms. Alexis-Sylvain, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried, 7-0

The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bryan Doughty
Secretary

From: [Julianni Morales](#)
To: [Francolino, Kristea](#)
Subject: wellness interventionist
Date: Monday, March 11, 2024 10:01:49 AM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

My name is Julianni Morales I am currently a senior at New London High School. Personally I strongly believe Wellness Interventionists should be kept in school systems, I believe this because they are an additional support. I also believe not everyone should just be hired for a position like that just because, being a Wellness Interventionists comes with genuinely caring and understanding your students. To create a bond with your students, so they are comfortable to go to you when they're upset but still keeping that respect barrier. I believe strongly that Wellness Interventionists fit that criteria very well, therefore should be kept in the school systems to help majority of the youth feel heard, loved and cared for, thank you for taking the time to read this and hear us.

Dear Board of Education,

It has come to our attention that the wellness positions have been cut in our secondary schools due to budget cuts, and we want to ensure that similar cuts do not happen at the elementary level. We are writing this statement to advocate for our elementary wellness staff and stress the importance of their work with our elementary-aged students.

Since the pandemic, we have seen increasing numbers of students with mental health and behavioral health challenges. Many students struggle to behave appropriately in a classroom environment, socialize appropriately with peers, and manage their emotions. As classroom teachers, we do all that we can to support our students, build relationships, and give them the attention they need and deserve. However, with class sizes of 22-28 students and a vast expanse of needs, we cannot feasibly always provide services to all our students. Our wellness staff is critical in supporting our students and seeing that their needs are met, which directly impacts their mental health and academic success.

Wellness and behavior have a direct impact on education. Students that do not feel safe cannot learn. Students that are not exhibiting self-control cannot learn. Students who lack coping skills and emotion management cannot learn. Students who are too worried about the drama in their friend-group cannot learn. These are just a small portion of the areas where our wellness staff provide support daily. Without the added support of wellness staff, we see an increase in these types of scenarios, which directly impacts building climate and academic achievement. Classroom teachers simply cannot do it all. We cannot provide differentiated instruction while simultaneously deescalating students, utilizing Safety Care techniques, and providing 1:1 behavior check-ins. We are already juggling our instructional minutes, Tier 1 classroom management, individual behavior charts and other Tier 2 management strategies, parent communication, PBIS systems, documentation and referrals, building relationships, creating positive and safe climate, to name a few. We cannot provide everything our students need without our wellness staff.

When we started at NLPS, the wellness team was only made up of certified student support services staff, such as social workers and psychologists. These staff members are also critical, but have their time managed by IEPs and other legally binding special education protocols. While they can provide crisis intervention and behavioral support, their priority lies with the students on their caseloads, as it should. When the wellness interventionists and behavior motivators were hired, it was game changing. There were now staff members available to check in on ALL students, support ALL students, and to be available to support with wellness curriculum, restorative practices, classroom management, and problem-solving. We can attest to the fact that we have personally seen a positive change in student wellness and behaviors since the addition of the non-certified wellness staff, and we are confident that we will see a negative change if they are eliminated. NLPS serves a very diverse and high-needs population. Many of our students need a higher level of support to succeed. Everything we do is about and for our students, and we cannot provide the most targeted support without our entire wellness team.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jessie McKay and Zakkiyya Griffin

Fifth and Fourth Grade Teachers

From: [Shaliyah m. Haggins](#)
To: [Francolino, Kristea](#)
Cc: Nicole@hearingyouthvoices.com
Subject: Re: Testimony for the board of Ed meeting
Date: Monday, March 11, 2024 2:16:43 PM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Sorry about that, here it is. Yes I can.

My name is Shaliyah Haggins, and I am a senior at New London High School Multi Magnet Campus in New London Connecticut. I am writing to advocate for all interventionists staff members who work on our campus at New London High School.

Throughout the year, at New London High School Multi Magnet Campus I was fortunate enough to have witnessed how impactful the wellness interventionists have been on myself and my peers. The wellness suite in New London High School contains the purest and most charismatic interventionist specialists from different walks of life, backgrounds, and cultures who are determined to support students mentally, physically, emotionally, and even spiritually. The specialists who work in the wellness suite aren't just staff members to us students, but mother and father figures to we students who lack positive role models in our lives, or who may not have a father or a mother present in their lives.

The impact that the specialists have had on the students is something deeper than what's outside on the surface. The specialists have truly allowed us students to be heard, as well as gain so much knowledge on how to navigate and solve whatever challenges this unpredictable world may have in store for us.

I vouch for all students walking the New London Halls when I say that the amount of pressure and life-altering decisions we must make in this important time of our lives is truly frightening and intense, especially for the seniors. The amount of intense pressure coming from our family, friends, school, and even society genuinely has taken a negative toll on us. We don't get the opportunity in our daily lives to self-nurture because we are so busy stressing about our futures, trying to please our parents/ guardians, and filling out a lot of applications for colleges, jobs, scholarships, etc. That's why the wellness suite and the intervention specialists

are so essential to us because it finally gives the students the opportunity to truly take care of ourselves mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually, and socially.

Many of my peers and I have benefited from the wellness suite and the specialist so much by just walking into an environment that is welcoming and filled with open-minded people who see us as young adults who want more for ourselves. The wellness suite and the specialist have defused so many issues and caused many resolutions within our school community. The specialists not only support us but honestly give us the motivation to continue to push through when we feel defeated by the world. The impact made within our school community has had an endless impact on our lives.

The wellness interventionist positions are major positions that have benefited myself and my peer's lives. Without these positions available to support us students, it will cause a downside effect on our school community and our personal lives.

Thanks again for your time, Shaliyah M. Haggins

On Mon, Mar 11, 2024 at 2:09 PM Francolino, Kristea <FrancolinoK@newlondon.org> wrote:

Good afternoon!

Unfortunately, the link to the PDF won't open, is there any way you might be able to send me the text in the body of the email?

Thank you!

Kristea A. Francolino

On Mar 11, 2024, at 2:02 PM, Shaliyah m. Haggins

<[REDACTED]> wrote:

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☐ Testimony.pdf

From: [Simmons, Andrea](#)
To: [Francolino, Kristea](#)
Subject: statement for BoE meeting
Date: Monday, March 11, 2024 3:49:21 PM

Hi Kristea,

I was hoping the following statement could be read at the BoE meeting.

The Wellness Interventionist is an instrumental position at Nathan Hale. Any cuts to this position would negatively impact students, teachers, and families who rely on the skilled work of those in this position. Our Wellness Interventionist has had a positive impact on our school in many ways, including response to behavioral crises in classrooms, the use of restorative practices to repair relationships, and supporting teachers in developing strategies and interventions to help students with self-regulation. These supports allow teachers to focus on tier one relationships in the classroom and teaching and learning. Without our Wellness Interventionist, my classroom would have been in a very different place last year. There were multiple behavior plans to implement in my room, and it was always comforting to call for assistance and have our Wellness Interventionist arrive to support. In addition, the Wellness Interventionist is able to provide proactive supports and breaks as some students need throughout the day. Thank you for considering this teacher's experience and perspective regarding the importance of those in this position.

Respectfully,

Andrea Simmons

Grade 3 teacher, Nathan Hale Arts Magnet School

Logo



Andrea Simmons
3rd Grade Teacher

Nathan Hale Arts Magnet School

office: 860-447-6060

e: simmons@newlondon.org **w:** www.newlondon.org



From: [Alex Kuvalanka](#)
To: [Francolino, Kristea](#)
Subject: Public Comment for BoEd Meeting 3/11/2024
Date: Monday, March 11, 2024 4:15:29 PM

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Hi there!

As someone working in New London, I am immeasurably disappointed in the elimination of the Mental Wellness Interventionist positions from next year's budget. Having seen the massive impact Covid has made on our youth, I cannot stress the importance of keeping these professionals in our school system. They teach our youth coping skills, give hungry teens and tweens snacks, and connect them to services that help them become productive members of society. Not investing in our youth is setting ourselves up for failure.

Thank you,

Alex

From: [Jadelise Garrett](#)
To: [Francolino, Kristea](#)
Subject: Public Comment 3/11 BoE Business Meeting
Date: Monday, March 11, 2024 6:03:13 PM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello, my name is Jadelise. I am a Junior in high school, and I have attended New London High School since my freshman year starting in 2021. I am in support of keeping the wellness interventionists positions.

My experience with the Wellness Interventionists has been nothing but helpful to me and my mindset while going into school. My freshman year there would be fights all the time mostly between the same people because they would receive suspensions and it would just continue when everyone returned. The wellness interventionists influence students with a more leveled way to avoid or deal with altercations. Restorative circles are commonly used to dispute issues between two parties allowing both sides to feel heard and have an opportunity for an agreement to be made, good terms or no contact, allowing students to go back to class in a better head space, ready to succeed.

If you look at the data from 22-23 compared to 23-24.. The suspension rate and the number of referrals has gone down and attendance has improved. The Wellness Interventionists have come to make a better school climate for students and staff. Having them allows students to be able have a safe space and somewhere for them to go, reset and in some cases, remind them of their end goals so they can go back into class and be able to function better with their teachers, peers and within themselves. Personally, the advice given to me by Mr. Richardson, Mr. Parker and Ms. Charity have had a positive impact on the mindset I have while in school, helping me excel socially and academically. They care. They help.

Like a breath of fresh air.

What is the motive here?

Student success?

Sincerely,

*Junior Class
President*

*Jadelise
Garrett*

From: [Clark, Dale](#)
To: [Francolino, Kristea](#)
Subject: Wellness Interventionists
Date: Monday, March 11, 2024 6:14:45 PM

To the Members of the Board of Ed and Central Office Staff.

Eliminating positions in order to balance a budget is a stressful responsibility to say the least.

The Pandemic might be over, but the aftermath is not. Most of our students have returned to the normal routine of school, extracurricular activities and jobs.

Unfortunately, many have not fully recovered from the impact of COVID 19. Some students never received grief counseling for loved ones who died during that time, whether from the disease or not. Parents lost jobs and families were evicted from homes. These students also, have not received professional emotional or mental health support. And then there are still several students who are still gripped with fear, uncertainty and social anxiety due to their experiences during the virtual learning years.

School Social Workers and School Psychologists have full caseloads for counsel and testing IEP students. In addition, they are constantly dealing with Crisis interventions and other high level situations. School Counselors also are inundated with scheduling changes, parent meetings, peer mediation, credit appeals and student success planning for all students on their caseloads.

This is where the Wellness and Behavior Interventionists have provided the much needed supports for a significant number of challenging students. Because of their flexibility, they are able to go to classes quickly and bring the students to their offices in order to provide a safe space for students who require a time to vent and decompress. Through their consistency with each of these students, they have developed the trust and respect needed to bring about improvement in these individuals. Patient and caring small group discussions and restorative practices have impacted the lives of so many young people, that they have become self advocates and are now participating in extracurricular activities, have improved grades, attendance and behaviors.

Removing these valued staff members, who are an intricate part of the Whaler Family, will create a devastating blow to those who either have little trust for adults, have lost the adults who were most supportive or who never really had anyone that believed in them.

My hope is that you are able to find a way to keep each one of these positions. It took years for them to build these relationships. It could take twice as many to restore them after the fallout. Thank you for your continued commitment to the wellbeing of all of our children and families.

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Ny'Asia Weaver](#)
To: [Francolino, Kristea](#)
Subject: Public Comment 3/11 BoE Business Meeting
Date: Monday, March 11, 2024 6:18:38 PM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

hi , my name is Ny'Asia weaver and i am a student at new london highschool and a leader with the hearing youth voices organization. the wellness interventionist position in the highschool is very important to the students and even staff. getting rid of the position would be very detrimental to the students. The people who work in wellness help when we have bad days, or need someone to talk to and related to. they have saved me on days i thought i would never get out of a dark hole. they care , and i think that's a very important thing for the students at new london highschool. They see us and genuinely want to help in any way they can. which includes checking on our grades and making sure we're going down the right path , checking on us in general to make sure the bad day we had before came to pass. they care and they see us they are a very important factor and i ask that you take that into consideration going forward with he budget.

thank you ,
Ny'Asia weaver

My name is David Bridges, and I am a 12th grade English teacher at New London High School. I am writing to you in support of the mental health / interventionist program here at New London High School Multi Magnet Campus.

I am a veteran teacher with 24 years of service in the NLHS community. In the past, I have seen the school struggle without any real wellness support for many years and I can attest that, with the advent of the wellness suite and interventionists positions here, there has been a profound change in the culture of the performance, happiness, and welfare of the student body. The program is a resounding success and to shrink or eliminate large portions of this program would be bordering on disastrous.

The effect of the wellness / interventionist program at HLHS cannot be overstated. Ironically though, the portion of the student body benefiting the most might not even register on some data point presented to the School Board. The efficacy in this program has been to support, empower and aid the overall stability of the student body, especially the “middle class” of the population. High schools will always have those students with chronic issues that go beyond its ability to help effectively. Likewise, schools will always have students with needs that are readily apparent, and those services will always be there to help them. However, when I say the “middle class” of the student body, I mean the vast majority of students who bring levels of unresolved issues into their school day with the effect of downgrading their performance in subtle ways. An “A” student might get “C”s or “D”s if their needs are left ignored or trivialized. These students are the bread and butter of our performance data—be it the SAT or ASFab tests—or performing in LAS Links or iReady testing. If you really want the face of New London Public Schools to change, reducing support to this “quiet middle group” is definitely NOT the way to do it.

Certainly, in the post-COVID years, the stressors on teens are at an all-time high. The very adults who students have historically relied upon to be organized, consistent, understanding, and informative have been reduced to quibbling and preoccupied strangers set in their own survival modes. I have seen a deterioration in the intrinsic amount of adult guidance in society and the high schoolers you have in the halls today are still feeling displaced and a bit unhinged. The wellness program here at our school has given them a foundation of care, understanding, and answers they lack through the various lenses of their families and social media platforms.

Please do not consider budget cuts to this program. I appreciate money cannot be stretched but so far, but the intervention program at New London High School Multi Magnet Campus is an absolute necessity and I would not want to be a member of any school board who has to answer for a serious situation or even crime in the high school by admitting they eliminated a successful intervention program the year before.

Thank you for your time and attention.