



Board Report
March 22, 2024



BOARD UPDATE

From the desk of Dr. Alexandra Estrella, Superintendent

March 22, 2024

EXCELLENCE, EQUITY & INCLUSION

Testing & Accountability

State testing began on March 20 with the administration of the CT-SAT to grade 11 students. This is the third year that the CT-SAT has been administered online.

On March 21, training sessions required for State SBAC and NGSS testing were held for elementary and middle school Building Test Coordinators and their testing teams. Major topics were security and the use of approved supports that make the tests accessible to all students. The Testing Office completed the upload of MLL designated supports to TIDE, the test delivery engine for students in grades 3-8 and grade 11. Now school teams are ready to review the supports and revise as needed. Teachers and students will simulate live testing using online state practice tests. This gives students the opportunity to become familiar with the testing platform and use their assigned supports and tools before live testing.



The Panorama survey window is March 11 through March 28. This survey is given annually to students in grades 3-12, families and staff. Topics include growth mindset, emotional regulation, school climate, school safety, relationships and communication. Results are used to identify positive trends and next steps at the district and school level.

Communications

Quick Links

[Jefferson Teacher Named State Science Finalist for Presidential Award](#)

[BMHS Senior Roshni Yousuf Awarded First-Ever Rising Star ImpACT Award](#)

[Silvermine 3rd Grader Inspired by Norwalk Mayor's Hearing Aid](#)

Celebrating Women's History Month



Throughout the month of March, we've been celebrating Women's History Month by highlighting the female leaders and educators who are making an impact on our students, our schools and the Norwalk community. See more on our Facebook and Instagram channels.



We were fortunate enough to sit down with Norwalk Common Council President Darlene Young who shared with us why she thinks it's important to celebrate Women's History Month and passed along some words of wisdom for the girls and young women in our community. [Click here to watch.](#)

Celebrating School Social Workers

“
Social Work is not just a job, it is a calling. I was born for this, it is my purpose in life, and I feel honored and blessed to have discovered that; I live in my purpose, it is what I do naturally and out of my genuine love and concern for youth.
”



JACKIE ROBERSON
Social Worker
Norwalk High School

“
One thing I love about my job is seeing the progress students with more severe needs make from kindergarten to fifth grade. Seeing the transformation is so gratifying and exciting.
”



DANA WEINER
Social Worker
Cranbury Elementary School



The first week of March is National School Social Worker Week, but we couldn't limit our outstanding group of social workers to just one week so we're featuring them throughout the month. School social workers play a pivotal role in enhancing the well-being and success of our students. Their tireless efforts and commitment to fostering positive school environments directly impact students, administrators, teachers, educators, parents and the community at large. Check it out on our Facebook and Instagram channels.

Superintendent's March Message & BOE Update

In a new monthly message from the Superintendent, Dr. Estrella recognizes the importance of celebrating Women's History Month and the female leaders who are making a difference in our community today. [Click here to read the March '24 Message from the Superintendent.](#)

Every two weeks, the different departments of Norwalk Public Schools provide an update to the Board of Education of the work they've been doing to ensure an excellent and equitable education for all our scholars. Spanish and Haitian Creole translations are available. [Click here to read the latest BOE Update from March 8.](#)

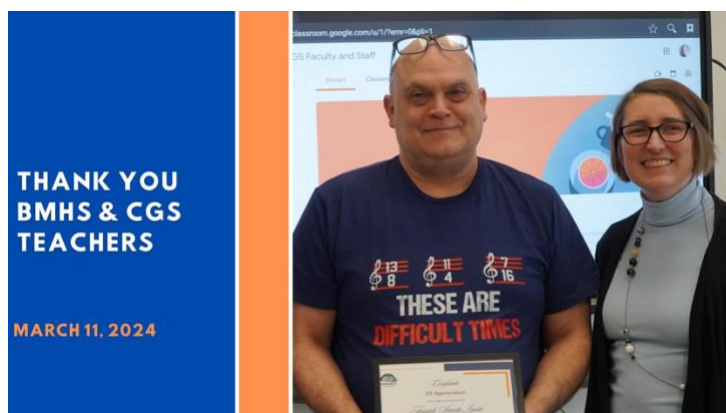
In Case You Missed It

P-TECH Honored at Brave Enough to Fail Gala (VIDEO)



Brave Enough to Fail honored P-TECH students involved in its BOSS Academy program at the organization's Person of Courage Award Gala. [Click here to read more about the ceremony](#) and watch the video to see how P-TECH senior Sariah Rogers became a BOSS student mentor.

Brien McMahon High School/Center for Global Studies Teacher Appreciation (VIDEO)



Superintendent's Book Club Celebrates Women's History Month (VIDEOS)



To celebrate Women's History Month, the Superintendent has invited members of the Norwalk Board of Education to share their favorite stories by female authors and books celebrating girls and women. Click the photo to watch the video.

More NPS Shorts! (VIDEOS)

Be sure to watch more of our NPS Shorts.

[Silvermine 3rd Grader Maria Visits Norwalk Mayor \(VIDEO\)](#)

[SoNo School Family Dance Party \(VIDEO\)](#)

[Nathan Hale Middle School's Songwriting Club Goes to the Studio \(VIDEO\)](#)

[NPS Girl Power! Celebrating International Women's Day \(VIDEO\)](#)

Important Dates

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

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

Wednesday, April 10 - Eid al-Fitr (No School; Central Office Closed)

April 15-19 - Spring Recess (No School)

Upcoming Events

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're holding out for an audience jam-packed with their friends, family and community. It's sure to be a night that's almost paradise.

The musical is directed and choreographed by Christina Zangaglia. She was assisted by musical director Laszlo Balazs, producer Holly Robert, and assistant directors Alba Alcantara and Samantha Pullia.

Tickets are \$10 for students and NPS staff; \$12 for senior citizens; and \$15 for adults. Cabaret seats are available for \$25 each. [Click here to purchase tickets.](#)

WRMS Presents "Beauty and the Beast Jr."

Friday, March 22 at 7 p.m. and Saturday, March 23 at 2 p.m. & 7 p.m.
West Rocks Middle School, 81 West Rocks Road in Norwalk

West Rocks Drama Club asks you to "be our guest" for their production of "Beauty and the Beast Jr." More than 50 students in grades 6-8 are part of this year's production from the cast to the backstage crew.

The musical follows the plot of the classic Disney film and Broadway production - a reminder that true beauty lies within.

Tickets are \$10. [Click here to purchase tickets.](#)

City of Norwalk Presents Easter Eggventure Spring Celebration

Saturday, March 23 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Mill Hill Historic Park, 2 E. Wall St. in Norwalk

The City of Norwalk will host its Easter Eggventure Spring Celebration on Saturday, March 23. The fun-filled day will include an egg hunt (for children under 9 years old), arts and crafts, and a special appearance by the Easter Bunny. There will also be free coffee and treats.

Parking will be available at the Yankee Doodle Garage at 3 Burnell Boulevard and Norwalk City Hall at 125 East Avenue. For more information about this event, please [visit www.visitnorwalk.org](http://www.visitnorwalk.org).

NHMS Presents "Beauty and the Beast Jr."

Friday, April 5 at 7 p.m. and Saturday, April 6 at 1 p.m. & 7 p.m.
Nathan Hale Middle School, 176 Strawberry Hill Ave. in Norwalk

Nathan Hale Drama Club will open their production of "Beauty and the Beast Jr." the first weekend of April. The young thespians invite you to enjoy this enchanting musical about the classic fairy tale!

Tickets are \$8 for students and \$10 for adults. [Click here to purchase tickets.](#)

NHS Presents "The Drowsy Chaperone"

Fridays, April 26 and May 3 at 7 p.m.; Saturdays, April 27 and May 4 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.
Norwalk High School, 23 Calvin Murphy Dr. in Norwalk

The Norwalk High School Performing Arts Department invites you to "The Drowsy Chaperone," "a musical within a comedy."

The story concerns a middle-aged, asocial musical theater fan who, feeling "blue", decides to play for the audience an LP of his favorite musical, the fictional 1928 show *The Drowsy Chaperone*. As the record plays, the show - a parody of 1920s American musical comedy - comes to life onstage, as the man wryly comments on the music, story and actors.

The NHS production is directed by Charles McAfee with vocal direction by Steven Oliveri, choreography by Maria Cherniske, and orchestra direction and production by Chris Rivera.

Tickets are \$15 for students and seniors, and \$18 for adults. [Click here to purchase tickets.](#)

3rd Annual Norwalk Earth Day Festival
Saturday, April 27 from 12 to 4 p.m.
Norwalk Green, 8 Park St. in Norwalk

Learn more about what the Norwalk community is doing to create a better, cleaner environment at the 3rd annual Norwalk Earth Day Festival. This is a FREE event open to the public!

This event draws the support of Norwalk environmental groups, local community organizations, and city agencies. Norwalk Public Schools is also proud to be participating in this year's event, highlighting student art that uses recycled materials and other student projects that highlight what their learning about the environment in their classrooms.

CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION & SPECIALIZED LEARNING

Humanities

The Humanities Team has been working on the new Social Studies Standards rollout that will take effect as of August 2024. There are six teacher training meetings scheduled between March and April. The first middle school session was on March 20th. During the training session, 8th-grade teachers and school administrators dove into the inquiry process and the new standards.

The team continues to provide school support throughout the district in literacy and social studies. There is a focus on student engagement and discourse.

Humanities has also partnered with Voices of Hope and Theory of Enchantment to plan Holocaust Remembrance Day on May 6, 2024, in the middle schools. Plans are continuing to evolve for the 2024 Poetry Contest-inspired by *Memory Jars* by Vera Brosgol. April's reading calendar will be released on April 1st.

The next edition of the Curriculum Corner is slated to be published the week of April 1. This edition will focus on the elements of inquiry and creating an inquiry-based classroom.

The team is pleased that five of our middle school students are advancing to the state history day competition.



Mathematics/STEM

The team is supporting a new math coach at Naramake School as well as supporting the school as they have identified and are creating a cycle focused on mathematics instruction and professional learning. Additionally, the team facilitated professional learning in middle schools last week focused on health, math, and science while leveraging teacher leaders and math coaches at our schools. This week, Mathematics/STEM focuses on professional learning at the high school level with the same three subjects.

Science professional learning time was based on feedback from teachers to have some specific time to familiarize themselves with a possible instructional resource for next year through teacher leaders and collaborative work with colleagues.

Multilingual Learners

The Multilingual Department is attending a three-day training on ASQ-3(Ages and Stages Questionnaire) for developmental screening. This tool is being used for our Kindergarten scholars to identify their strengths and areas where they may need additional support. It is the district's commitment to ensure scholars receive the necessary resources and intervention.

Additionally, the MLL Department, along with Dr. Walqui, Dr. Estrella, Mr. Reynolds, and Mr. Nina, will be presenting at the National Association of Bilingual Educators conference on "Complexity and Coherence in Transforming District Practices" to offer multilingual learners' educational quality and equity. The NABE conference brings together over 2000 bilingual education leaders, educators, researchers and advocates to learn and share best practices. Administrators and teachers were invited to attend this year's conference.

Workforce Development

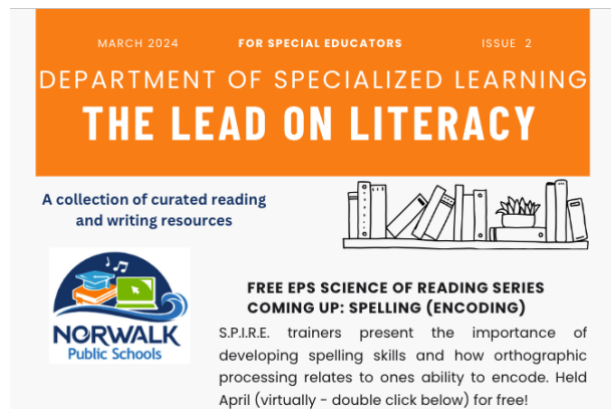
The work continues on the Career Z Challenge Grant as the team attends the community of practice and requires working group sessions. The team was asked to spotlight the Norwalk Public Schools' Workforce Development Ecosystem for a national working group. The Dual Credit Expansion Committee is now turning its attention to the teacher credentialing portion of the grant and is creating a teacher application and will work to meet with Sacred Heart University for a potential partnership. A Workforce Development Workshop was hosted for Twilight Academy scholars and the website demonstrated for Marvin Elementary and NECC Staff. NPS Workforce Development Highlights were given the spotlight at the NorwalkACTS Quarterly convening in March. The NPS Internship Program continues to place our scholars in their internship sites. The Red Fashion School NPS Spring cohort has started and our scholars are still able to apply, if interested. The Mayor's Youth Summer Employment Program and the Sound Waters Program have been offered to our scholars and families who may be interested in summer youth employment and the marine science industry.

Counseling/Support Services

A School Counselor Committee is being built for June so that they can write Social Emotional Learning Curriculum for the district for Grade 7. School Counselors are currently working on Course Selection for next year. School Counselors have started working with their scholars for course selection and continue to meet with them as needed. MLL Transcript reviews are being conducted for the Class of 2025 as we work to position them for graduation better next year. The work continues on the SHAPE Assessment in partnership with the Child Health and Development Institute.

Specialized Instruction

The Specialized Learning Literacy Specials publish a regular research-based newsletter with carefully curated reading resources for teachers and leaders to enjoy. The focus this month is encoding (spelling) and writing - orthographic processing. The team is pleased to share it here with the community. [The Lead on Literacy](#)



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

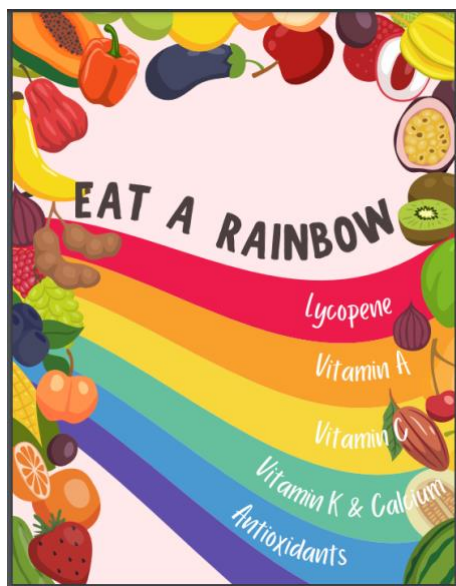
NPS Leadership Development Cohort

This year, the team launched the first Leadership Development Cohort for aspiring administrators. The goal of this cohort is to invest in current teachers who have leadership aspirations and establish a pipeline for future leaders. As the participants have engaged in this work, they have developed and implemented an action research project in their school to apply their learning. On May 15 from 3 to 5 p.m., the team will be hosting a culminating celebration for the cohort. During this event, the team will celebrate the successful completion of the program and participants will share what they have learned from the cohort experience. Board members are invited to attend! Details to follow.

April District Learning Walk

As a district team, district learning walks were conducted in October and December. Our final learning walk is scheduled for April 9 and 11. For each walk, district and school leaders visit seven schools to collect patterns and trends on our instructional priorities: standards-based planning and student engagement. At the conclusion of the walk, the team debriefs the patterns and trends to identify areas of celebration and to inform the professional learning plan. Findings will soon be shared.

Food Services



Our students at Marvin school ate the rainbow at a pop-up tasting on Tuesday, March 19. In the next two weeks our Fresh Fruit and Vegetable schools will be jumping into spring with our [Spring Mix Salad](#) and [Figs](#).



Fun Facts:

1. Spring mix is a mix of different greens varying in tastes and textures!
2. Lettuce is the second most popular fresh vegetable in the US behind potatoes.
3. The average American eats approximately 30 pounds of lettuce each year, which is five times what was eaten in 1900.



Health Benefits:

1. Good source of calcium & potassium – bone health
2. Rich in antioxidants – skin & reduces cancer risk
3. High in fiber – fantastic for digestive health and stable energy

The learning and tasting videos for this week from Mrs. Kelly provided for our students and staff to watch while enjoying their fresh fruits and vegetables can be found below:

[Learning & Tasting: Spring Mix](#)

[Learning & Tasting: Figs](#)

The week of March 25 the FFVP we will be serving [Turnips](#) and [Blackberries](#).

[Learning & Tasting: Turnips](#)

[Learning & Tasting: Blackberries](#)



Please enjoy the Norwalk Food Service [“What Makes a Meal”](#) video to let families know exactly what makes a meal and help reduce food waste. It is posted on the [Food Service Website](#).

Just a reminder the Norwalk Public Schools Smoothie Bike will be back on tour after April Break

Health Services



In A Heartbeat

On April 2 from 2:30 to 7 p.m. middle and high school students are invited to attend a free cardiac screening event at NHS through In a Heartbeat, whose mission is to prevent death from hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM) and sudden cardiac arrest by raising awareness. Click [here](#) for more information, click [here](#) to register your student.

On March 25, nurses will attend a Narcan refresher training with Positive Directions. An opioid-antagonist, Narcan saves lives and is available in every school in the district.

Our new School-Based Health Centers are running and making an impact!

Facility (February 1 to February 29)	Visit Count
SBHC Brien McMahon CGS Behavioral Health	54
SBHC Brien McMahon CGS Medical	92
SBHC Ponus CMS Behavioral Health	54
SBHC Ponus CMS Medical	75
Overall	275

Facility	Total Number of Enrolled Students as of 3/19/24
SBHC Brien McMahon	230
SBHC Ponus	102

Facilities

Norwalk High School/P-TECH Norwalk Project-

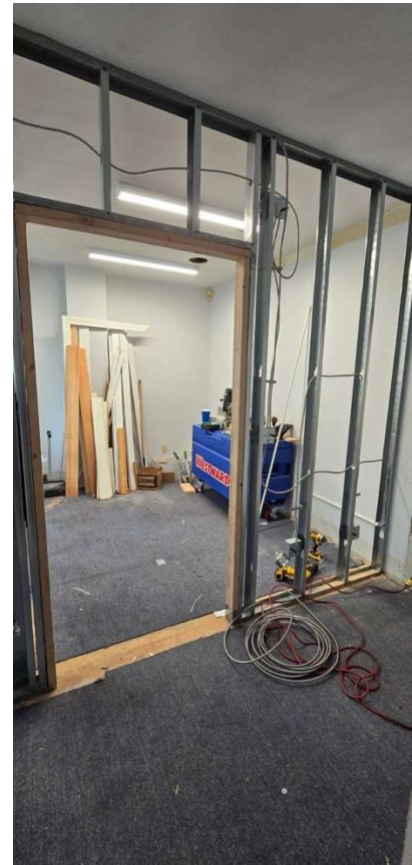
Monthly communications have begun. [March's communication](#) was shared with the Naramake, Nathan Hale, Norwalk High School and P-TECH families and staff.



SoNo School Project- Demolition of existing buildings at the former Hatch and Bailey site started in early March. The older buildings will be cleared through the historical building demo process before being demolished.



The Family Center Health Center construction is underway. Great progress has been made and the district anticipates the space will be ready by the end of April. The office will include a space for medical exams, dental services, and vision care. Once the space is ready, Norwalk Community Health Center will begin the process for getting insured, hiring staff, and providing comprehensive services for NPS families.



Transportation



On March 20, 28 drivers were honored with the [Durham Safety Award](#). These drivers exhibited safety and care over the last three years, having had no accidents or injuries during this length of service. Drivers were presented with a bright (neon) green, durable jacket donning the Durham School Services Emblem with Safety Award printed on the arm.



The team is partnering with city counterparts on the Norwalk Open Streets: Bike, Walk, Roll Festival. The event will take place May 4 between the hours of 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. The event is a collaboration between Norwalk Public Schools Transportation Office and the Wellness Committee, City of Norwalk Bike/Walk Commission and State of CT DOT Safe Routes to School Division. Other participating groups are Norwalk Kiwanis Club, Nuvance Health and Watch for Me CT/Safe Kids CT. The event will begin at Marvin Elementary School with a Bike Rodeo and travel down Calf Pasture Beach Rd to Calf Pasture Beach Park. This is an educational, interactive event for families to participate in. An [Eventbrite invitation/information](#) will be shared in the next week or so. Stay tuned!

Transportation also welcomed another new driver to the team, Christian Santos, who recently passed DMV testing began training on a route this week. He will service BMHS, Ponus Ridge STEAM and CMS campuses. Welcome Christian!

Grants

The Grants Team has many exciting school performances funded by the Extended School Hours Grant: *Beauty and the Beast Jr.* at both Nathan Hale and West Rocks. Ponus just completed a successful production of *Moana Jr* and Roton had a successful run of *Once on This Island Jr.* Next week, the team has a Q3 check in with the US Department of Education regarding Marine Science Pathways Grant. The team is eager to share the impact this funding has provided for students from Jefferson, Ponus and Brien McMahon.

DIGITAL LEARNING & TECHNOLOGY

Infrastructure/Operations

Last week, our team conducted a VILS evaluation at NHMS, which included over 500 devices. The information gathered will assist in projecting the devices needed moving forward and establishing a baseline for repairs. The vendor delayed the installation of our VDI solution to the start of April. The team is setting a target date for the end of April. Infrastructure/Operations is in the final stages of selecting a replacement firewall, with considerations of price, Total Cost of Ownership (TCO), and functionality.

Digital Learning

Please congratulate Amy Fussarelli, Digital Coach at Ponus Ridge STEAM Academy, for her insightful presentation at the National League of Innovative Schools Conference this past Wednesday. The team is proud of her contributions and the impact she has made on the lives of teachers and students, guiding them to be future-ready learners.

All the district's Digital Learning coaches were accepted into a select group of national educators to join the 2024 ISTE-GM Artificial Intelligence Explorations Program. Here is a description of the program: This innovative K-12 STEM Education initiative is a collaboration between the International

Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) and General Motors (GM). It aims to promote the exploration of artificial intelligence (AI) and its practical applications in school environments. As participants in this program, our coaches will join approximately 375 educators and educational leaders for exceptional professional development opportunities.

The Digital Learning Team is excited to position our coaches at the forefront of AI and to integrate this learning seamlessly with our staff and students.

FINANCE

Budget

The budget team is reviewing the 2024-25 budget for new assumptions and data accuracy. The updated projections related to Cigna health insurance should be received by the month end. This update may potentially have a positive impact on both budget years. The BET public hearing on the operating budget was held on March 20. This meeting will help to determine the next steps of the process in setting the budget cap. The budget team continues to review projections for the current 2023-24 school year and prepare for the year end by reviewing purchase orders and timeliness of payments. Projections related to salaries, benefits and other non-wage items have recently been fine tuned.

The team is currently building student-based budget (SBB) files that incorporate the new per pupil figures for the 2024-25 school year. This year, the team has upgraded the files to include a more robust view of grants that apply directly to the schools. This new view allows the principals to be more proactive in planning for the grant funds in collaboration with local funds tied to their schools. Next week, the team is hosting a new Principals' SBB training session and an SBB refresher training for all Principal and APs. This SBB refresher meeting will be held virtually and is intended to be an open forum for all attendees to pose questions about the SBB process for the 2024-25 Budget year.

Grants/Financing

The Grants Team has reviewed grant-connected timesheets and submitted them for payroll processing. We recently held a Microsoft Teams meeting with some of the Title 1 schools to discuss the spending plan for carryover funding that needs to be utilized by June 30. We also met with the Chief of Finance and Deputy Superintendent to review the projected budget for The International Baccalaureate® (IB) for the current year and to discuss the 2024-25 budget for the next year. As the team approaches the School Based Budget (SBB) school meetings, preparation for the rollout of the New SBB Grant tab has begun, which will be included in all SBB Budget workbooks.

Purchasing/Accounts Payable

Purchasing met with representatives from the City of Norwalk and the district's energy suppliers to review current agreements for natural gas and electricity. Electricity prices have been trending upward, but due to a mild winter, prices have slightly decreased. The team has been able to secure guaranteed pricing with a 27% increase. Fortunately, natural gas prices have been trending downward, and the team has locked in a rate with a 35% decrease for Fiscal Year 2025.

The team also reviewed NPS summer capital projects with NPS Facilities and the City of Norwalk. Since there is a short window in the summer to complete these projects while the schools are empty, we reviewed timelines with City Purchasing to ensure that requests are on track for necessary approvals (Land Use Committee and Common Council) so work can begin once the July 1 funds are released. Additionally, the team is actively working on the district's Food Service Management Company Request for Proposal. The team recently met with the Connecticut State Department of Education to review the scoring criteria and ensure compliance with their specific requirements for district proposal reviews.

Capital

This week, the capital team had a phone conference with Michelle Dixon, an Education Consultant from the Department of Administration Services of Connecticut, to discuss the closeout of the Jefferson Elementary School capital project. The team addressed and resolved all questions, concerns, and documentation to move forward with the closeout payments. Additionally, the team met with the Director of Facilities to review funding for summer capital projects and discuss plans for filing two construction grant projects in April.