



Board Report
April 5, 2024



BOARD UPDATE

From the desk of Dr. Alexandra Estrella, Superintendent

April 5, 2024

EXCELLENCE, EQUITY & INCLUSION

Testing & Accountability



The Spring NWEA testing window opened on Tuesday, April 2. During this term, all kindergarten students through grade 10 take MAP Growth reading and math. This gives the district the opportunity to review the growth of students, not only from 2023-24 Fall to Spring, but also from Spring 2023 to Spring 2024 for students with matched scores. Results will be reviewed at the class, school and district level before administering statewide Smarter Balanced testing in May.



Support is being offered to school testing teams, as they review student support and accommodations. The focus has been on grade 11 students who will take the Next Generation Science assessment on April 8 and April 9. On these days grade 9 and grade 10 students will take the spring PSAT.



Access to the Panorama Survey has been extended until end-of-day, Monday, April 8. Survey topics include students' perceptions of skills and competencies, student and staff perceptions of support, environment and family-school relationships. The participation goal is 80% for students and staff and 40% for families.

Research & Analytics

In conjunction with the CT RISE Network, the team gathered representatives from all four high schools for a Community of Practice centered around post-secondary success. The post-secondary work is focused on preparing all students to access and succeed in their chosen pathways (college, trade/technical, military, workforce, etc.). This is the first year that all four high schools have engaged in this work; previously, only McMahon engaged in post-secondary work with RISE. The

session focused on understanding the impact on our students of biased systems and messaging, accessing resources and brainstorming ways to counteract.

The team presented to the Board on April 2. An update was provided on the [Portrait of a Graduate](#), which is NPS's collective vision for all students; it is the path to operationalizing our commitment to ensuring all students graduate from NPS future ready. The team also joined Dalio Education and RISE to discuss Dalio Education's report on [Disconnected Youth](#) and the steps NPS is taking to address the crisis and implement the recommendations of the report. Please see the [Board Documents](#) for those presentations. The team also collaborated with Leadership Development to lead sessions at this week's Principal and Assistant Principal meetings on Portrait of a Graduate.

Communications

Quick Links

- NPS Celebrate Paraeducator Appreciation Week <https://bit.ly/3VJzWgf>
- City of Norwalk and NPS Celebrate Official Groundbreaking of New, State-of-the-Art NHS/P-TECH <https://bit.ly/3TE3Uzv>
- Norwalk Public Schools Accepted into National Network of Innovative School Districts <https://bit.ly/3TS5xd9>
- Cybears Robotics Club Qualify for FIRST Robotics Competition District Championship <https://bit.ly/3xi5TBP>

Groundbreaking for Norwalk High School/P-TECH Norwalk

Norwalk Public Schools and the City of Norwalk celebrated the official groundbreaking of the new, state-of-the-art Norwalk High School/P-TECH Norwalk building on April 1. We were honored to welcome Gov. Ned Lamont to the ceremony as well as CT Senate Majority Leader Bob Duff, whose advocacy for the project secured the city an 80% reimbursement rate on the project.



Click here to see the latest edition of "Inside NPS" featuring the groundbreaking, watch the full press conference, and read more about the event. <https://bit.ly/3TE3Uzv>

Celebrating Women's History Month

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



In the spirit of Women's History Month, NPS' very own Deputy Superintendent Sandra Faioes reflected on her time in Norwalk and the relationships she has made along the way. Several of her former co-workers also shared why Sandra is one of the great leaders of Norwalk Public Schools and the Norwalk community. [Watch the video here.](#)



NPS Communications was also fortunate enough to sit down with the First Lady of Norwalk, Lucia Rilling, who spoke about the influence that her grandmother and mother had on her life. We thank Mrs. Rilling for taking the time to be a part of this month's celebration. [Watch the video here.](#)

BOE Update

Every two weeks, the different departments of Norwalk Public Schools provide an update to the Board of Education of the work they have been doing to ensure an excellent and equitable education for all our scholars. Click here to read the latest BOE Update from March 22.

<https://bit.ly/4a4DygX>

In Case You Missed It



Jefferson Marine Science Elementary School Teacher Appreciation <https://youtu.be/6Jc3P8JQamQ>

Hola Familia #1



Communications is excited to launch this new series exclusive to our Spanish-speaking families! ¡Gracias Catalina, Natalie y Leidy por su ayuda! [Watch the video here.](#)

Celebrating School Social Workers



To close out March, we celebrated all school social workers who play a pivotal role in enhancing the well-being and success of students.

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

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1h29qWidll&list=PLnaz_-SEqHdojvTYrMoEXG9JRBVa8I9E_&pp=gAQBiAQB

More NPS Shorts! (VIDEOS) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mOIUigwGEQw&list=PLnaz_-SEqHdqAMDLaM85HQiHXgqkZH6w9&pp=gAQBiAQB

Be sure to watch more NPS Shorts.

- P-TECH Celebrates Women's History Month
<https://youtube.com/shorts/BWr45dl5EYE?feature=share>

Important Dates

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

April 15-19 - Spring Recess (No School)

Monday, April 29 - Staff Professional Development (2-Hour Early Dismissal)

Upcoming Events

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.

<https://www.showtix4u.com/events/23868/?event=80818&date=214834>

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.

<https://www.showtix4u.com/events/22985/?event=79907&date=212740>

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, displaying student art that uses recycled materials and other student projects that highlight what they are learning about the environment in their classrooms.

3rd Annual NorWALK for Mental Health: Walk + Wellness Fair
Saturday, May 4 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. (rain date: May 11)
Norwalk Green, 8 Park St. in Norwalk

The third annual NorWALK for Mental Health will feature the 8 Dimensions Wellness Fair with music, art and other fun activities as well as health and educational resources. Come at 10:30 a.m. to hear from community speakers and to try Laughter Yoga. The Awareness Walk, which is wheelchair accessible, will begin at 11:15 a.m.

A few NPS students will be speaking at the event, so please come and support!

CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION & SPECIALIZED LEARNING

Humanities

The Humanities Team completed the April calendar of suggested titles that focus on celebrating Arab Americans, Autism Awareness, Earth Day, and Poetry. The latest edition of the Curriculum Corner with a focus on inquiry has been completed. Finally, professional learning and support continue as the new Social Studies standards roll out in September 2025.

Mathematics/STEM

The Mathematics/STEM Team has been evaluating feedback specifically around professional learning in science and evaluating the use of a new resource for the '24-'25 school year. From this feedback, the team is preparing professional learning sessions for the middle and high schools that are most interested.

Do not miss the Solar Eclipse on Monday, April 8! The team purchased NASA-approved glasses for students grades K-9 and shared viewing safety tips with administrators and families.

Additionally, the STEM department supported the Principal and Assistant Principal meeting this week as we continually focus on the Portrait of a Graduate.

Gifted and Talented

Dr. Lori Leibowitz, Assistant Education Administrator for Gifted and Talented (GT), presented at last week's National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) conference about gifted and talented best practices based on the GT program at NPS. Her work highlighted the identification protocols, curriculum, and multi-tiered services offered in Norwalk through the exciting talent-development model NPS has developed over the past few years. Her session entitled, "*Improving Access and Equity: Increasing Opportunities for Gifted Multilingual Learners*" was widely attended and well-received. Lori was also awarded an Outstanding Dissertation Award at NABE for her work with multilingual students.

Multilingual Learners

The Multilingual Learner team was excited to present at the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) conference last week in New Orleans, LA! The team presented alongside Superintendent Dr. Alexandra Estrella, Board Chairperson Diana Carpio, Assistant Superintendent Rob Pennington, and Principals Cesar Nina and Adam Reynolds. The presentation was selected from a large pool of candidates throughout the nation and it was an honor to be selected. The presentation demonstrated the commitment to creating educational equity for Multilingual Learners.

The Family Center is collecting formal dresses, shoes, and accessories. Help local students go to prom. Donate a formal dress to allow an NPS Senior to join their friends at a formal high school event.

Donations of formal dresses are accepted now through April 26 at The Family Center, 1 Park Street, Norwalk, CT 06851.

Workforce Development

Work continues on the Career Z Challenge Grant as the team attends the community of practice and requires working group sessions. The Dual Credit Expansion Committee has created a teacher application which has been shared. NPS Workforce Development Highlights were showcased at the April 2 Board Workshop meeting specifically our Career Pathways, CT State Norwalk Certification Programs and the Workforce Development Workshops for high school scholars and NPS families. The NPS Internship Program continues to place scholars on their internship sites. Today's Students Tomorrow's Teachers is in the planning stage at Brien McMahon High School.

Counseling/Support Services

School Counselors attended a Professional Development session in which the Risk Assessment Guide was reviewed. A committee is being created for June enabling School Counselors to write Social Emotional Learning Curriculum for the district for Grade 7. School Counselors have started working with their scholars for course selection and continue to meet with them as needed. The work continues on the SHAPE Assessment in partnership with the Child Health and Development Institute.

Specialized Instruction

The Department of Specialized Learning celebrates NHS Bears United. The group hosted members of the BHMS United group to a dance on March 28. The students from both schools danced the night away and had a blast!



The department is busy finalizing all aspects of the IDEA Grant due in May, preparing for school-based budgeting meetings, transitioning students to their next grade, and preparing for the next Parent Workshop/ BOE Specialized Learning Subcommittee on April 25.

The Department had a great Autism Awareness event at the Norwalk Green on Thursday, April 4. The team raised awareness and lit the Norwalk Green blue!



SRBI

Individual schools were able to do walk-throughs to assess intervention needs. Reading Buddies volunteer reading program had a mid-check-in to review progress and see how we can get even stronger with supporting students. SRBI was also able to attend the UCONN job fair with over 40 interested teachers in shortage areas. The team is preparing for the end-of-the-year benchmark period.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

April School Leadership Meeting

On April 2 and 3, the team met with our principals and assistant principals, respectively. Everyone engaged in collaborative reflection and began diving into instructional priorities for the 2024-25 school year. School leaders reflected on the school improvement process and engaged in professional learning related to critical thinking. This meeting's planning was a product of cross-team collaboration and incorporated much feedback from our school leaders. Overall, the feedback from school leaders was very positive.

April District Learning Walk

Next week, the team will engage in the third and final district learning walk. This year, Leadership Development has sustained a professional learning focus on the planning and engagement [look fors](#). The purpose of the learning walk is to identify district patterns to identify areas for celebration and next steps, related to the look fors. This data will be used to inform future professional learning and to identify areas for support. This month, members of the district team and school leaders will visit classrooms together at seven schools.

BUSINESS & OPERATIONS

Food Services



The color of the month for April is [Green](#). Mrs. Kelly's Green Video is [here](#). The week of April 1's featured fruit and vegetables were [honeydew melon](#) and [snow peas](#) respectively, along with a green apple bonus fruit.



Health Benefits:

1. High Water Content – great for hydration!
2. Fiber – heart health, digestive system & stable energy
3. Vitamin C – immune system, skin health and healing



Health Benefits:

1. Vitamin K – blood clotting and bone health
2. Iron – blood and bone health
3. Calcium – promotes strong bones, heart and muscle health

The learning and tasting video from Mrs. Kelly are below:

[Learning & Tasting: Snow Peas](#)

[Learning & Tasting: Honeydew Melon](#)

This week, NPS served [crunchy celery](#) and green grapes as part of the Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Program.



Health Benefits:

1. Great source of fiber – good for digestion
2. Rich in Vitamin C – immune system and healing
3. High Water Content – great for hydration!



Health Benefits:

1. Copper: red blood cell formation, bone health, immune function
2. B Vitamins: brain and nervous system health, growth, and development
3. Antioxidants: overall wellbeing, reduces risk of heart disease and cancer

Of course, while students enjoy the fresh fruits and vegetables, they can learn all about their snacks with Mrs. Kelly's Videos:

[Learning and Tasting: Celery](#)

[Learning and Tasting; Grapes](#)



Join the team on Tuesday, April 9, at Ponus for a STEAM student cookoff. The winning dish will be served as part of the school lunch on Friday, April 12.

Rock the Bike starts the first week after spring break, students will be on the lookout for the golden ticket at Breakfast for a chance to win a ride.

Students have spoken - and their voices are loud and clear!

On April 3, the upper schools will be serving, [Torta De Pollo](#) and the Elementary schools will be serving [Black Bean and Corn Salsa](#). On April 24, the schools will be serving [Rotini Pasta with Chicken & Broccoli Alfredo](#).

Facilities



The groundbreaking ceremony for the South Norwalk School is scheduled for April 8 at 11:30 a.m. We hope to see you there!

A request to Land Use was approved on April 3, to apply to the State for 60% reimbursement regarding the removal of underground oil storage tanks and asbestos abatement at Fox Run. The goal is to perform these projects during the summer. These items will require final approval during the April 9, Common Council meeting before submitting an application to the State.



School Safety



After nearly a decade serving NPS schools, students and staff, Sgt. Orr will no longer be supervising the School Resource Officers effective April 4, as he transitions into a new role at the NPD. In his place, Sgt. Brian Hamm will be the School Resource Officer Supervisor. Welcome Sgt. Hamm!

Transportation

Durham School Services will be testing new driver candidates over the next few weeks, test dates on April 5 and April 17. The team is hoping to welcome three new drivers to the team. Good luck!

Health Services



Karlene Barnett, LADC, LPC-A from Positive Directions, is offering free alcohol and drug counseling to students in the high schools on Tuesdays at NHS/PTECH and Wednesdays at BMHS/CGS.

[Alcohol & drug counseling at NPS](#)

Grants



The team is excited to share that NPS has been awarded the First Robotics Grant to support the CyBears Robotics club. The grants team has been able to support the club as they head to the New England FIRST Robotics Competition District Championship, an incredible milestone in the club's eight-year history. Also, NPS has supported the Multilingual Learners Department at Norwalk High School in a pilot program as they take a senior trip to Washington DC.

DIGITAL LEARNING & TECHNOLOGY

Enterprise Software/Data

The Data Governance Committee met again just before the holiday break. The committee set goals to begin generating roles and responsibilities for creating documentation, think through maturity of current data systems and identify roles within the context of the primary system we each work on.

Thanks to Alden Burnham, who has been pivotal in methodically moving this project forward and has also provided excellent resources and reading materials for committee members.

Infrastructure/ Operations

The team has finished evaluating new firewalls. Digital Learning will be going with a new Fortigate firewall from Fortinet. The TCO over five years will save NPS approximately \$270,000.

Digital Learning

Digital Learning would like to congratulate Amy Fussarelli and Dan Kreiness for being nominated by Verizon to serve as Mentor Coaches for the 2024-25 school year. As Mentor Coaches, they will provide support to other digital learning coaches nationwide and enhance their own skills to assist the new coaches at the new VILS schools.

The Fox Run Broadcasting Team is currently producing their second Fox Run News. Their efforts include recording interviews, writing scripts, and editing videos with WeVideo. Additionally, two students are gaining further expertise by engaging with the WeVideo student certification program.

In partnership with the Cranbury Science Teacher/Coach, our Digital Learning Coaches are developing a STEM video to display our students' STEM projects and experiments. This video will be presented at the STEM expo in April.

Principal, Cesar Nina was chosen as CT Association of School Librarians (CASL) Administrator's Award. He will be honored at their Spring Fling ceremony in May to celebrate his commitment in supporting, maintaining and making improvements to the library.

Maria Paris, library media specialist at Jefferson, received the ISTE's 24 Virtual Award, which will allow her to attend the ISTE conference virtually.

April is National School Librarian Month, which is a time to celebrate the work that all library media specialists engage in throughout the year. They are professionals who transform libraries into learning.

FINANCE

Payroll Update

Phase 1 of the retiree benefits database is officially complete. We are now gearing up for the next phase and will soon be meeting with the HRIS team to kickstart the process. But that is not all - preparations for open enrollment are already in full swing! To ensure a seamless and successful launch, the benefits team and Payroll team will be meeting every two weeks. This collaboration will guarantee a smooth experience for everyone during this year's open enrollment period.

Budget

The BET hearing on the operating budget took place on April 2. The budget cap was set at 3%. The budget team is diligently reviewing projections for the current 2023-24 school year and ensuring the timeliness of payments by reviewing purchase orders. The budget team has also recently fine-tuned projections related to salaries, benefits, and other non-wage items.

In addition, the team is actively building the student-based budget (SBB) files for the 2024-25 school year. This year, Finance has upgraded the files to provide a more comprehensive view of grants that directly apply to schools. This enhancement empowers principals to plan and collaborate with local funds tied to their schools.

Last week, Finance hosted a new Principals' SBB training session and a refresher training session for all Principals and Assistant Principals. The SBB refresher meeting was held virtually and served as an open forum for attendees to ask questions about the SBB process for the 2024-25 Budget year.