



Board Report
May 17, 2024



BOARD UPDATE

From the desk of Dr. Alexandra Estrella, Superintendent
May 17, 2024

EXCELLENCE, EQUITY & INCLUSION

Communications

First Book



It's FIRST BOOK 2024! Have you heard about it? Our colleague Carol wrote a whole song about it. Hear who passed the torch of reading to Kimberly or learn why reading is important from Victoria.

Click here to watch all the great First Book videos plus, download and share the flyers attached to this email with all your friends and family. Tell them to come get their 50,000 FREE BOOKS!

Say Yes to a Prom Dress



Seniors picking out their prom dresses at the Say Yes to a Prom Dress event stopped to speak with our red-carpet correspondent Brian Acevedo to talk about their dresses and what they're most looking forward to at prom. Click here to see the exclusive interviews.

Shout out to the Family Center and their volunteer consultants who hosted an incredible event! You made every student feel like a star! We also want to express our heartfelt gratitude to the Norwalk community for their beautiful donation of dresses, shoes, jewelry and more to create the perfect prom ensemble for our students.

Why I Teach



One day or one week in May, it just isn't enough! Because we have so many amazing teachers in Norwalk Public Schools, we can't contain our appreciation of them all in such a short time span.

Our new Why I Teach campaign is a rousing success! We have so many schools participating to share their student-teacher interviews. NPS Communications' intern Lindsay Martinez Paredes also has a great series featuring staff at Norwalk High School.

[Click here to read the latest "Why I Teach - Lindsay Martinez Paredes Interviews..."](#)
[Click here to watch all the Why I Teach video interviews.](#)

Excellence in Education



In anticipation of the 2024 Excellence in Education ceremony hosted by the Norwalk Education Foundation, we're highlighting some of this year's recipients. The honorees were nominated by their building colleagues and selected by their School Governance Councils.

See more on our Facebook and Instagram channels including Paula Madden from Next Steps and Erica Dellon with Project SEARCH.

Please Note: The Excellence in Education event has been rescheduled to **Thursday, May 30 from 6 to 8 p.m. at The Shore and Country Club**. We look forward to celebrating our 2024 honorees.

In Case You Missed It

[SoNo School Skates \(VIDEO\)](#)

[¡Hola Familia! Episodio 3 \(VIDEO\)](#)



[Rowayton Elementary School Teacher Appreciation \(VIDEO\)](#)



Important Dates

Monday, May 27 - Memorial Day (No School, Central Office Closed)

Thursday, June 13 - 2-Hour Early Dismissal

Friday, June 14 - Last Day of School (2-Hour Early Dismissal)

Wednesday, June 19 - Juneteenth (Central Office Closed)

Upcoming Events

First Book 2024

Saturday, May 18 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Brien McMahon High School, 300 Highland Ave. in Norwalk

Here we go again! Reading Opens the World, a First Book initiative, returns on Saturday, May 18 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Brien McMahon High School. Come and choose from over 50,000 FREE books!

[Click here to learn more about the event](#)

Citywide Art Show

Thursday, May 23 from 5 to 7 p.m.

The Norwalk Art Space, 455 West Ave. in Norwalk, CT 06850

The Norwalk Art Space will host the opening of the Citywide Art Show in collaboration with Norwalk Public Schools on Thursday, May 23 from 5 to 7 p.m. The exhibition will showcase artwork created by students in grades K-12. The show will run until June 6.

NEW DATE!

Norwalk Open Streets: Bike, Walk & Roll Festival

Saturday, June 1 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Calf Pasture Beach Road in Norwalk

Come experience Norwalk's streets in a new way. The Norwalk Open Streets is a fun and free opportunity for recreation and community building by opening Calf Pasture Beach Road to walk, bike and roll. The event is FREE and open to the public. Come and enjoy a bike rodeo, bike tune-ups, kids activities and food trucks.

Be sure to stop by the Norwalk Public Schools table with our friends from the NPS Family Center.

Norwalk Public Schools Diversity Career & Services Fair

Thursday, June 6 from 3 to 6 p.m.

Brien McMahon High School, 300 Highland Ave. in Norwalk

Norwalk Public Schools is Fairfield County's #1 School District for Diversity and we're hiring!

If you know someone interested in joining a team that thrives on celebrating its many cultures and backgrounds, then Norwalk Public Schools is the place for them. NPS is hiring in all areas that make our district run. At the career fair, prospective employees can meet some of our administrative staff and learn about some of the services the City of Norwalk has to offer.

For more information, email jamesk@norwalkps.org. To pre-register for the event, use this link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfmoL8Vj3sA38DvUvyleYhZQmXcui2JwvqlyeQt_Ad48rKlzw/viewform

Pride in the Park

Friday, June 8 from 12 to 8 p.m. (NPS Booth open from 12 to 4 p.m.)

Veteran's Park, 42 Seaview Ave. in Norwalk

Norwalk Public Schools is proud to be returning to Norwalk's Pride in the Park on June 8. Join us for a day of unity, love and celebration filled with laughter, music and the collective spirit of the LGBTQ+ community and its allies.

Volunteers needed! Please contact Emily at morgane@norwalkps.org if you are interested in volunteering at our booth.

My Brother's Keeper and My Sister's Keeper

This year, 75 students from across the district participated in our annual MBK and MSK Year End Trip. The students and their mentors visited Philadelphia, where they toured Temple University, the African American museum and did a walking tour of the historic district and ended the trip with a dinner at the Hard Rock Cafe!



Testing & Accountability

The Smarter Balance and Next Generation Science testing window for grades 3-8 is May 7 to May 24. The team regularly monitors participation. Districts and schools are required to have a minimum of 95% participation. To date, over 75% of students started the English Language Arts tests, over 60% started math and over 50% started science.

DIBELS testing window for students in grades K-3 closed on May 8. This assessment is used to monitor early literacy skills and to identify students required to attend the Summer Reading Academy. Overall, the percentage of students meeting the spring benchmark was 64.6% compared to 53.4% of students in the fall. The number of students identified for 2024 Summer Reading Academy declined by 6% compared to 2023.

Spring NWEA district and school level reports are being prepared. The district monitors the percentage of students performing at the higher achievement bands (above the 60th percentile). Spring 2024 math results show 43% met the criteria which exceeded 2023 results by 9 percentage points and exceeded 2022 results by 13 percentage points. 39% of students reached high achievement levels in reading, one percentage point below spring 2023 results, and 1 percentage point above 2022 results.

Research & Analytics

Each year schools engage in creating a School Improvement Plan. To both streamline and better focus school improvement planning, the template for this plan was overhauled based on feedback from school leadership. The new template was presented at last week's Principal and Assistant Principal meetings. In addition, calculations for the end of year goals were provided to each school. Support will be provided to schools over the coming month as they engage in a Needs Assessment based on this year's data and plan for the 2024-25 school year.

Now that the end of year NWEA testing period is complete, the results from both the Reading and Math assessments have been integrated into NPS' in-house data dashboards. In addition to being able to see results and drill into the performance of groups of students, schools can see how the numbers of students who needed academic and/or attendance support shifted throughout the year.

Humanities

Continuing to support the new Social Studies standards, the 2nd cohort of elementary teachers received the first informational sessions. Next Monday, May 20 will be the last session for elementary teachers. The team is conducting a crosswalk of our current units of study and the topics released by the state to prepare for summer curriculum work. The April edition of the Curricula Corner has been published on supporting our Multilingual learners. The poetry contest ended and the students receiving the Award for Excellence have been notified and will attend the Board of Education meeting on May 21. The team continues to work on preparations for summer school.



Mathematics/STEM

The STEM team attended the last of the CES Council sessions last week, which is always a collaborative session with math and science council members from other districts. Additionally, we are gathering feedback and information from teachers on math curriculum implementation this year and planning for curricula revisions that will take place before the beginning of next school year. Additionally, we attended two different teacher team visits last week to support different foci for schools. We continue to work on preparations for summer school. Plans for summer and fall professional development are in the works.

Multilingual Learners

The Multilingual Learner department hosted a training session for teachers on HD Word, which is a set of lessons that systematically teach foundational reading skills and essential phonics structures. Teachers will use these lessons in small groups to support students with literacy development. The Family Center hosted the first Say Yes to the Prom Dress event last week! We had 107 participants who could pick out the prom dress of their dreams and receive a voucher for their prom ticket. See the links below for local news coverage:

<https://longisland.news12.com/norwalk-public-schools-family-center-hosts-first-prom-dress-giveaway>

<https://www.nancyonnorwalk.com/norwalk-prom-goers-say-yes-to-the-dress/>

Workforce Development

The Workforce Development team met with Goodwin University to explore their Welding program, which will be offered to our scholars and their families. The work continues on the Career Z Challenge Grant as we attend their community of practice and required working group sessions. We are now in the third grant submission stage, which is to write the grant's third iteration and submit it in June. "First Book" planning and preparation is in full swing, and the event will be hosted in just a few days. We have ordered wonderful weather for the event and hope to see everyone there! The team also met with the QuickDraw school to explore opportunities for our scholars and their families to pursue certifications in the healthcare field. We met with the State of CT relative to our Behavioral Health Pilot grant to receive state updates. CT State Norwalk and NPS Workforce Development continue to partner to bring our Junior and Senior scholars Workforce Certification Courses for the Fall. CT State Norwalk and NPS have partnered on their "College for Kids" Summer Programming. CT State Norwalk is offering a Free 2 Week Summer Trade Boot Camp for our Juniors and Seniors. The Perkins Grant committee meets bi-weekly to review and revise the grant funding for the Spring 2024 season. The Dual Credit Expansion Grant Committee has created a teacher application, and teachers have begun to apply. ***For all NPS Workforce Development Opportunities and more, visit www.norwalkps.org/careertraining. Please be sure to bookmark the site and check back regularly for new and exciting opportunities!***

Counseling/Support Services

The College & Career Specialists, with support from the School Counseling team, hosted the 38th Annual College Fair! The team continues to work with our 10 cohort schools and EduSolve to align our data with best practices. The RISE Network held its May Postsecondary Community of Practice and then visited the High School Counselors in our district meeting in follow-up. The team met with the State Department of Education in which we highlighted our DESSA and Social-Emotional Work within Norwalk Public Schools. A School Counselor committee has been created for June in which school counselors will write a social-emotional learning curriculum. The work continues on the SHAPE Assessment in partnership with the Child Health and Development Institute.

Specialized Learning

A couple members of the Specialized Learning Department returned from a fantastic time at LRPs National Institute on Educating Individuals with Disabilities Conference in Savannah, Georgia. The team attended several sessions on special education legal matters and updated case law. The team also connected with members of CONNCASE (Connecticut Council of Administrators of Special Education) who were also in attendance. The days were filled with significant learning and time networking and connecting with colleagues nationwide.

Special education administrator Jamie Granite organized a seminar on Co-teaching for the special education co-teachers from Jefferson and Kendall elementary school. The seminar was virtual and presented by Nicole Eredics. It covered various inclusive topics such as the Best, Powerful Co-Teaching Strategies to Increase Student Success. The teachers were left with valuable resources they could use in the classroom. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and the team hopes to have another seminar in the future and involve both general education and special education co-teaching teams from all schools.



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Leadership Development Cohort: Culminating Celebration

On May 15, the team held the culminating celebration for the inaugural NPS Leadership Development Cohort. The event was a great success as we celebrated the hard work and accomplishments of the cohort. During the time together, cohort members presented their action research projects to Board of Education members, Cabinet members, and other district and school leaders. Additionally, Christy Counts (Nathan Hale), Stephanie Peckham (Nathan Hale), and Mayrenid Mejia-Ayala (Silvermine) shared their “leadership why” stories and Maryann Murillo (Nathan Hale) and Miranda Getz (Cranbury) shared their reflections about transitioning into an interim assistant principal position. Special thank you to everyone who supported these aspiring leaders throughout the school year and during the celebration!



May Coaches Meeting

On May 16, Dani Brown and Misty Hofer hosted and facilitated the final Coaches meeting of the school year. For this session, Math and Literacy Coaches came together to reflect on the accomplishments of the year and to begin planning for the 2024-25 school year. During the session, the coaches engaged in various learning experiences designed to deepen their understanding of the Portrait of a Graduate work, with a focus on the Critical Thinker competency. The team thanks our Math and Literacy Coaches for their dedication and commitment to ensuring all students have access to High Quality Instruction and Support (NPS Strategic Priority #5).



BUSINESS & OPERATIONS

Food Services



The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable program is in full swing for spring.



Health Benefits:

1. Vitamin A - promotes healthy vision and cell growth
2. Vitamin B6 (pyridoxine) – brain, nervous and immune systems
3. Magnesium – heart, bones, and nervous system health



Health Benefits:

1. Rich in Vitamin C – immune system and healing
2. Antioxidants – overall health and fight against cancer
3. Fiber – digestion and heart health

The week of May 20 we have [yellow squash](#) and [star fruit](#) with a bonus of strawberries, and for the week of May 27 the vegetable will be [potato](#) and the fruit will be [mango](#).



Health Benefits:

1. Fiber: digestion, heart health, and satiety
2. Vitamin C: immune system, skin & healing
3. Potassium: heart health, muscles, and nervous system



Health Benefits:

1. Rich in Vitamin C, A & K – immune system, healing, vision
2. Rich in antioxidants – skin & reduces cancer risk
3. Contains potassium, folate and magnesium – heart, bones and brain health

All our Learning and Tasting videos can be seen here:

[Learning & Tasting: Mango](#)

[Learning & Tasting: Starfruit](#)

[Learning & Tasting: Yellow Squash](#)

Check out all the [Chartwells NPS Happenings](#) for the month of April.

Don't miss the [Blender Bike](#) coming to your school soon.

We will be serving a refreshing Non-Dairy Smoothie. [Make it yourself with the recipe here.](#)

The next two weeks the Blender bike will be at the following schools:

May 21 Wolfpit

May 22 Naramake

May 23 Sono

May 28 CMS/Ponus

May 29 Tracey

May 30 Side by Side Charter School

Facilities

The building of the Norwalk Community Health Center at the Family Center has made much progress. There are several items pending including millwork and furniture.



School Safety



SHELTER! Hazard and safety strategy.

STUDENTS

Use appropriate safety strategy for the hazard

Hazard	Safety Strategy
Tornado	Evacuate to shelter area
Hazmat	Seal the room
Earthquake	Drop, cover and hold
Tsunami	Get to high ground

ADULTS

Lead safety strategy
Account for students and adults
Notify if missing, extra or injured students or adults

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During the recent earthquake, several schools reported that they were unsure whether to activate a Shelter-In Protocol (get inside, seek cover) or the Secure Protocol (get inside, business as usual). To maintain the existing terminology connected to type of hazard and location, the Safety and Security Team developed two different types of Shelter-In Protocols ("Hard" and "Soft") depending on the environmental hazard as well as duration of the event. The updated protocols and full earthquake debrief, and presentation can be found below.

[Safety Committee Meeting 4.25 Soft Shelter In. Power outage.pptx](#)

Shelter In

Shelter In- Hard

- Environmental hazard related
- Get inside
- Visitors, students, staff able to enter building
- Seek cover- bring students and staff into hallways away from windows

Shelter In- Soft

- Environmental hazard related
- Get inside
- Visitors, students, staff able to enter building
- No one out
- Business as usual inside building



Footer

Transportation

Bike, Walk, Roll Festival has been rescheduled to Saturday, June 1, come out and join us for an Open Streets Event!



Welcome to Elizabeth A, Durham's new driver officially joining the team today! Elizabeth will drive a route servicing Brien McMahon, Ponus Ridge and Tracey Elementary School.

On May 14 NPS Transportation Office partnered with Durham School Services to help deliver Hands for Hope boxes/meals for over 70 families.



Health Services



Over 100 students received cardiac screenings via the In a Heartbeat foundation, held on April 2 at Norwalk High School. Two students were identified as having cardiac abnormalities and recommended to follow up with a cardiac specialist. In a Heartbeat works to identify individuals at risk for sudden cardiac arrest.



Nurses were recognized on May 8 for School Nurse Appreciation Day. The team is grateful for the dedication and the health services provided by NPS nurses!

As the school year ends, nurses will return student medications to parents/guardians. Please be sure to pick up student medications at the end of the school year. Medications not picked up will be destroyed. Don't wait- click [here](#) for medication orders for your student to have medication(s) in school for the next school year!

DIGITAL LEARNING & TECHNOLOGY

Enterprise Software and Data

The team has successfully compiled and shared the end-of-year assessment data with the Director of Testing and Accountability. Additionally, summer school rosters at all elementary schools are currently being created, utilizing end-of-year Dibels and NWEA literacy scores to ensure tailored educational support.

Infrastructure and Operations

The team's new firewalls have arrived and are scheduled to begin implementation and conversion in two weeks, aiming to complete this transition by the end of June. The team is enhancing cybersecurity measures by partnering with a new security vendor that integrates advanced AI technology to analyze and secure email communications.

Digital Learning

Leaders from the new VILS Building, alongside district and IT leads, are currently in Kansas City attending onboarding sessions hosted by Digital Promise. They are discussing topics such as Digital Equity, the coaching model and device rollout strategies. This initiative is part of an ongoing effort to broaden engagement with Digital Promise and enrich digital learning capabilities in the upcoming year.

FINANCE

Budget

We have recently concluded the School Based Budget 24-25 budget meetings and this week we have been having follow-up conversations to ensure that we have addressed all necessary aspects. Additionally, we have been updating MUNIS with the changes from the SBB's and incorporating central office updates. Furthermore, we have been in discussions with schools regarding the 23-24 year-end projections, along with updated general ledger summaries.

Purchasing/Accounts Payable

Please note that the deadline for submitting responses to the Food Service Management Company Request for Proposal is Monday, May 20. The evaluation committee will review and score the proposal submissions, intending to announce the award on Wednesday, May 22nd. In addition, the Student Activity team held a meeting with Tyler Technologies last week to address the back-end requirements and progress towards production. However, the team still requires IT support to facilitate check printing and finalize the workflow forms.