



**Board Report**  
**July 12, 2024**



# BOARD UPDATE

From the desk of Dr. Alexandra Estrella, Superintendent

*July 12, 2024*

## EXCELLENCE, EQUITY & INCLUSION

### Communications

#### Quick Links

- [Dr. Jeff Beckley Earns Mary L. Fitch Trust Grant for Jefferson Marine Science Elementary Schools](#)
- [Norwalk High School Graduate Megan Pollard Named Inaugural Recipient of Kevin M. Eidt Memorial Norwalk Community Service Scholarship](#)

#### Memorial Bench Donation



We were honored to receive the memorial bench from the Birchard and Lubin families on Monday, dedicated in honor of their daughters Samantha and Jolie who were tragically lost too soon. The Norwalk High School graduates had strong ties to the Next Steps program, and the bench sits outside the NPS Family Center where Next Steps is located.

In addition to the memorial bench, the Birchard and Lubin families also gave a generous donation to the Next Steps programs in memory of their daughters. [Click here to learn more.](#)

## Health Services Goes to Washington



The Norwalk Public Schools Health Services department along with our partners at the Norwalk Community Health Center visited Washington D.C. last week to attend the National School-Based Health Alliance Conference.

The group attended many great workshops and learned more to benefit our own school-based health centers that we have established across the district in partnership with NCHC.

## Workforce Development Works Curriculum



A volunteer committee of NPS school counselors were hard at work this June, helping to write the district's Developmental Guidance Curriculum in Workforce Development for Grade 2.

This work will be implemented through monthly classroom lessons co-taught by our school counselors and the classroom teachers in Grades K-2 across the district and focus on the following state standard for Workforce Development: Identifying personal values, personality, abilities and work interests in relation to career options and the world of work.

Scholars will explore and identify their likes and dislikes, their hobbies and favorite leisure activities. They will learn the reasons that people choose a particular job or career, and they will define personality and how it influences a person's career choices.

Thank you to our Workforce Development School Counselor June 2024 Committee Members!

## Graduation



We saw nearly 1,000 students walk across the stage to accept their high school diplomas last month, including 21 P-TECH students who also earned their associate's degrees from CT State Community College Norwalk. Congratulations to all our graduates!

Want to see photos? [Click here for our graduation albums.](#)

## ... And We Won Some Awards

NPS Communications earned nine Publications & Digital Media Awards from the National School Public Relations Association for 2024 including five Awards of Excellence.

NSPRA's Publications and Digital Media Excellence Awards recognize outstanding education publications and marketing/informational materials (print and electronic), video/TV/radio programs, social media and websites.

NPS Communications received recognition in the follow categories:

### Award of Excellence

- Excellence in Writing, [“Silvermine 3rd Grader Inspired by Norwalk Mayor’s Hearing Aid”](#)
- Financial Production, [“Budget in Brief”](#)
- News Release, [“NPS Cuts the Ribbon on New NCHC School-Based Health/Wellness Centers”](#)
- Video Produced In-House Single, [“Tough for a Girl”](#)
- Video Series Produced In-House, [“21 Strong”](#)

### Award of Merit

- Annual Report, [“NPS State of the Schools 2023”](#)
- Social Media, [“Women’s History Month”](#)
- Special Purpose Publication, [“The Norwalk Education Foundation Impact Reporter 2023/24”](#)

## Award of Honorable Mention

- Video Series Produced In-House, [“Inside NPS”](#)

## In Case You Missed It

NPS Features presents “Keira Cunniffe is 2024's Kevin M. Eidt Scholarship Award Winner!” (VIDEO)



## Teacher Appreciation Celebrations (VIDEO PLAYLIST)



## Why I Teach (VIDEO PLAYLIST)



## Superintendent Book Club - "Rainbow" (VIDEO)



### Important Dates

- July 15-18 - NPS Leadership Retreat at Center for Global Studies
- July 22-23 - Central Office Retreat at Center for Global Studies
- Wednesday, Aug. 21 - Convocation
- Monday, Aug. 26 - First Day of 2024-25 School Year

### Upcoming Events

#### Norwalk Night Out

Thursday, Aug. 1 from 5 to 8 p.m.

Norwalk Police Department, 1 Monroe St. in Norwalk

Norwalk Night Out is an annual community-building campaign that promotes police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie. Join the NPD for family fun, activities, games, and giveaways all on the plaza in front of police headquarters.

## CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION & SPECIALIZED LEARNING

### Humanities

The Humanities Department has been working with teachers on revising the K-8 units of study in ELA. There was a need to create clear connections for critical thinking for teachers as they begin to plan. Middle School ELA teachers created a new Historical Fiction unit for ELA that will support some of the learning in the revised social studies curriculum.

Social Studies teachers in grades K-8 worked in teams to create NEW units of study grounded in the new state standards. They worked on deepening their understanding of the standards and developing inquiries that students will engage in for the fall.

Music teachers gathered to work on aligning the music curriculum. This work will bring NPS teachers more cohesion as students move from one level of music to the next.



Professional Learning kicked off this week as well. Teachers from across the district dove into what inquiry looks like in the classroom. This shift to an inquiry-based learning model in social studies is a new structure for teachers. The energy in the room was contagious.



We are also planning for an inquiry experience for school administrators during the leadership retreat next week.

### Mathematics/STEM

The STEM department has been working with coaches and teachers to enhance aspects of the curricula. Enhancements made include (so far):

- Revised 3-8 end of unit math assessments
- Day to Day pacing and support for Algebra 2 with a focus on Pre-Calculus readiness
- New “Setting the Math Mindset” units focused on BTC practices that ready students for engaging in math thinking and collaborative practices to tie into Portrait of a Graduate work
- Building goals on what students will know and can do in the new Physical Education units (K-8) and additional activities.

## Multilingual Learners



The MLL department is thrilled to share information about the MLL accelerated program. We have 192 MLL scholars eager to learn and enrolled in the summer program. Our scholars can earn 1-2 initial credits, and we look forward to our August graduation ceremony scheduled for July 31, 2024.

Our summer school staff participated in a professional learning session focused on engaging students in academic discourse and providing meaningful feedback. These strategies will enhance the learning experience for our students and help them succeed academically.



In addition, we are partnering with the Student Dream Organization to support our Multilingual Learners graduates with college access programs. This collaboration will provide our students with valuable resources and guidance as they transition to higher education.

MLL Department is currently conducting Dual Language Professional Learning Community focused on planning elementary units 1-3 and its alignment with (ELA).

## School Counseling

A School Counselor committee has been convened, and school counselors have written a Social-Emotional Learning curriculum for Grade 7. In the attached photo, you will see this year's committee members, Ayesha, Debbie, Fabby, Grace, Lilli and Polly. For the 2024-25 school year, scholars in Grades 6-7 will receive districtwide Developmental Guidance in Social-Emotional Learning monthly.





A meeting was held between a university in which we will partner with for School Counselor Practicum and Internship Students. The team has had a RISE Reflection meeting on this years' work and has begun planning for next year. The School Counselor Scholar Meeting system is being refined for more specific feedback of scholar needs. The work on the Portrait of a Graduate continues while the committee met again for implementation planning. The district attendance committee is working to explore attendance protocols and policies, and some members have attended a LEAP Training.

### Workforce Development

A School Counselor committee has been convened, and school counselors have written Workforce Development curriculum for Grade 2. In the attached photo, you will see this year's committee members, Ayesha, Fabby, Grace and Polly. For the 2024-25 school year, scholars in Grades K-2 will receive districtwide Developmental Guidance in Workforce Development monthly.



CT State Norwalk and NPS Workforce Development continue to partner to offer our Junior and Senior scholars Workforce Certification Courses for the Fall. We are identifying courses for the fall and will start updating the scholar application in June. CT State Norwalk and NPS have further partnered on their "College for Kids" Summer Programming. This is a great place for scholars in Grades 2-12 to take some light and fun summer classes across many career clusters! The NPS Internship Program is looking to expand its internship placements and types of placements. The NPS Workforce Development Website has been updated. *For all NPS Workforce Development Opportunities and more, visit [www.norwalkps.org/careertraining](http://www.norwalkps.org/careertraining). Please be sure to bookmark the site and check back regularly for new and exciting opportunities!*

### Specialized Learning

Extended School Year (ESY) began on July 1. Our students are receiving their specialized services in their least restrictive environment during summer academy. The students are also receiving their related services (OT, PT, Speech) as outlined in their IEP's. The students started going to the Maritime Aquarium this week and had a great time! The special education administrators have been on site offering support.

The department is also updating its Norwalk Special Education Manual. This is adapted from the state's manual that outlines all policies and procedures related to special education law. In addition, the department is also updating a website where we will share all special education related forms, agendas, and protocols in one spot so it will be easily accessible for staff. The department is looking forward to the leadership and Central Office retreats over the next few weeks where we can collaborate with other departments.

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

### Reimagining Leader and Educator Evaluation and Support

This summer, all district and school administrators will attend a two-day orientation to understand the new evaluation and support plans for leaders and educators. The first day of training took place on July 10 and focused on the following objectives: (1) understanding the vision for the new evaluation and support plans and how they are aligned with the NPS strategic priorities, (2) developing a shared understanding of the [Professional Standards for Educational Leaders](#), and (3) understanding the processes and elements of the new evaluation and support plan for leaders.

### Summer Leadership Retreat

Each summer, we facilitate a Summer Leadership Retreat for all district and school administrators. This year, the retreat is scheduled for July 15-18 and will be held at the Center for Global Studies. The theme for this year's retreat is *Leading for Change and Innovation*. During our time together, we will launch our work for the 2024-25 school year. Leaders will engage in professional learning, reflective activities and collaborative discussions focused on the Portrait of a Graduate, equity-driven leadership and school improvement planning.

## DIGITAL LEARNING & TECHNOLOGY

### Enterprise Software/Data

We have identified and documented software titles for each Central Office department in a shared template. This will enable continuous support and integration of platforms, assessments and instructional software for department administrators.

### Infrastructure/Operations

We will be conducting a test cutover for the new firewall system early next week. Additionally, we have recently replaced an aging centralized switch at Central Office, significantly improving efficiency and reliability.

### Digital Learning

We are actively supporting the Verizon Innovative Learning Schools (VILS) initiative and are excited to collaborate with the high schools and Roton to distribute devices to students at the start of the school year. Amy Fusarili, one of our Digital Learning Coaches, has been selected as a VILS mentor and will assist in training new Digital Learning coaches for the upcoming school year. The Summer Twilight program is in full swing, working alongside the day Summer School program to ensure all eligible August graduates are enrolled in the appropriate courses.