



**Board Report**  
**July 26, 2024**



# BOARD UPDATE

From the desk of Dr. Alexandra Estrella, Superintendent

July 26, 2024

## EXCELLENCE, EQUITY & INCLUSION

### Communications

#### Leadership Retreat



It was great to see our school leaders working together to improve their leadership skills and prepare for the school year ahead at last week's Summer Leadership Retreat. The intensive four-day retreat proved fruitful for all involved and gave everyone the opportunity to learn from each other and reconnect ahead of the new school year.

On the final day, they heard from keynote speaker Thomas C. Murray, the director of Innovation for Future Ready Schools, who will also serve as this year's Convocation speaker. He presented, "Personal and Authentic: Designing Learning Experiences that Impact a Lifetime," and is most passionate about creating cultures of innovation where teachers are empowered to create the types of learning experiences today's modern learners need to thrive.

#### Central Office Retreat



We also enjoyed stepping back and reconnecting earlier this week with our colleagues, building our own leadership skills at the Central Office Retreat. We hope that the work you did during the two-day retreat will lead to a successful 2024-25 school year!

One of the most memorable moments of our retreat was celebrating our colleagues who have worked in the district for over 25 years! Thank you all for your hard work and dedication to our schools, staff, and students. You are truly appreciated!

[Click here to watch their wonderful celebration.](#)

## In Case You Missed It

### [Teacher Appreciation Celebrations \(VIDEO PLAYLIST\)](#)

### [Celebrating the Retirement of School Resource Officer Chris Holms \(VIDEO\)](#)

## Important Dates

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

Over the last two weeks, the Humanities Department has been working on fine tuning the units of study. In addition, much discussion and work has been had around the crafting and utilization of assessment.

As leaders, we attend the retreats for leadership and central office. We presented an inquiry experience for school leaders and the work that has been done around critical thinking opportunities for students.

### Mathematics/STEM

This week and last have been focused on professional development and planning for the upcoming year with the Administration retreat and the Central Office retreat. We reflected on leadership beliefs and practices, connected with schools and departments, and focused on planning and support for the upcoming year.

Work continues in the curriculum to prepare for the beginning of the school year with core math curriculum units that highlight critical thinking opportunities. Additionally, curriculum is being updated in science, health and physical education.

### Multilingual Learners

We are excited to celebrate the graduation of 39 Multilingual Learners during the graduation ceremony on Wednesday, July 31, 2024, scheduled for 5 p.m.! Many of these scholars were eligible to graduate early due to their enrollment in the Multilingual Learner Accelerated Summer program. We had 192 scholars enrolled in the summer program this year to earn up to two initial credits towards graduation requirements.

The MLL Department worked with our summer graduates on their post-secondary plans. Our graduates had the opportunity to meet with the Norwalk Police Department to learn about the Cadets program and a few have joined. In addition, we set up a meeting with representatives from CT State Community College-Norwalk. During the two informational sessions, scholars learned about different post-secondary options available to them and received support to complete necessary

college applications and college placement. To support our scholars, the college placement tests are being administered to our MLLs on Monday, July 29 at 12 p.m. at BMHS.

### Counseling/Support Services

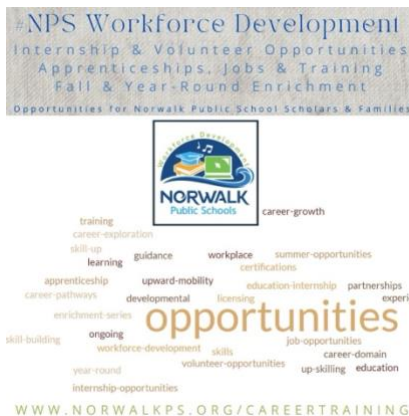
Education Administrators had the opportunity to attend the first day of a two-day training series to learn more about the new NPS evaluation system. In partnership with the RISE Network, FAFSA Clinics are being held this summer at our high schools for the Class of 2024 and their families.



The work continues on the School Counseling Grade 7 Developmental Guidance Lessons in Social-Emotional Learning, as the curriculum that our school counselor committee has written is being synthesized into classroom lessons. I continue to meet with area colleges and universities to expand and grow our School Counselor Practicum and Internship Program in support of our K - 12 School Counseling Team. The Attendance Team has convened to review helpful resources and support for families and staff.

### Workforce Development

Workforce Development, Finance, and Human Resources met to streamline the internship paperwork process for our scholars. The work continues on the School Counseling Grade 2 Developmental Guidance Lessons on Workforce Development, as the curriculum that our school counselor committee has written is being synthesized into classroom lessons. Last week, we attended the Leadership Retreat, and this week, we attended the Central Office Retreat. 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

Our students continue to thrive during the extended school year (ESY). As it winds down, we will reflect on ways to improve for next year.

Specialized Learning administrators attended professional development to learn about the new Norwalk evaluation system and the Leadership and central office retreats. The team engaged in productive collaborative sessions to plan for the next school year.

The department continues to collaborate with building administrators on the hiring of new staff during the summer and planning for new teacher professional learning.

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

### Summer Leadership Retreat

We had an extremely successful Summer Leadership Retreat on July 15 to July 18. Over 120 district, school and teacher leaders were there as we kicked off the 2024-25 school year priorities. The theme for this year's retreat was *Leading for Change and Innovation*. Much of our time together focused on adaptive leadership, the NPS Portrait of a Graduate and developing our students as critical thinkers, and school improvement planning. The feedback was very positive and we thank all the Board members who were able to stop by and speak to our leaders.

### School Improvement Plans

Each year, NPS schools develop a School Improvement Plan that focuses on improving academic achievement, building a supportive environment, and leading for equity. Now that school leaders have attended the Summer Leadership Retreat, they are working with their teams to develop their school-specific plan. In early August, members of the Leadership Development Team review the plans and provide individualized feedback to support implementation.

## DIGITAL LEARNING & TECHNOLOGY

### Enterprise Software/Data

We are aligning the Edgenuity courses with the NPS Program of Studies for clarity and consistency. Special Education (SPED), MLL Accelerated students, and homebound students will continue to have access to their current courses. All other courses will be removed, and only courses aligned with the NPS Program of Studies will be available for enrollment.

Currently, there are multiple customized courses on the platform, whereas our Program of Studies lists only 42. This alignment with the Program of Studies will ensure that our students receive appropriate Edgenuity enrollment opportunities for missing history for graduation requirement fulfillment.

### Infrastructure/Operations

Although not widespread, our district was impacted by the worldwide CrowdStrike outage. Most core systems were back online within a few hours on July 19, with the remainder of a few backend systems back online by July 20. There may still be a few end-user systems (e.g., desktop computers) affected by the outage. The team is working through the schools to identify these outliers.

On July 19, we successfully transitioned to our new Next Generation Firewall (NGFW). We are monitoring for any minor connection issues and correcting them as we discover them.

## Digital Learning

Our Digital Learning coaches have been updating our digital literacy curriculum to include AI lessons. This initiative aims to equip our students with the skills needed to navigate and utilize AI technology effectively.

## FINANCE

### Budget

We had a productive retreat at the central office on Monday and Tuesday, where we discussed our goals and strategies for the next fiscal year. The rest of the week, we have been busy closing out 23-24 with journal entries, budget transfers, and other tasks. We have also started creating 24-25 general ledger summaries and updating 23-24 summaries.

### Purchasing/Accounts Payable

Purchasing and Accounts Payable continue to work with the schools and central office departments to get everything processed, paid and closed out as we end the fiscal year. Two weeks ago, there were 970 purchase orders and \$6.4 million outstanding and we have pared that down to 137 purchase orders and \$541,000 outstanding with 243 checks processed for payment to vendors this week.

The district recently prepared and issued an RFP for Food Services Management Services. The RFP was prepared in accordance with the approved format of the Connecticut State Department of Education. Prior to receiving proposals, the district conducted a pre-bid conference and walk-through to provide all prospective bidders with the information necessary to prepare a responsive proposal. Three (3) Food Service Management Companies attended the pre-bid conference (Whitson's Culinary Group, Chartwells and Aramark), however the incumbent FSMC, Chartwell's, was the lone submission. While it was disappointing that there was only one bid submission, the committee was particularly impressed with the detailed, multi-year implementation plan presented by Chartwells. Chartwells provided the district with a detailed plan of how they would use more fresh foods, provide more ethnic food options, use top-quality ingredients, expand scratch cooking, and improve the dining experience over the next five years. They are fully aligned with the district's strategic food service objectives and have the experienced team necessary to achieve these objectives. Chartwells is a top-tier Food Services Management Company of choice in Connecticut, serving many other Connecticut school districts, including Stamford, Ridgefield and Weston in our immediate area, and other school districts throughout the state. They have a deep bench of culinary and management talent capable of managing and operating the District Food Services operation. They are prepared to step in immediately to manage the district's food service operation, including the Summer Feeding program that began in early July.