



Board Report
May 3, 2024



BOARD UPDATE

From the desk of Dr. Alexandra Estrella, Superintendent

May 3, 2024

EXCELLENCE, EQUITY & INCLUSION

Testing & Accountability

The Panorama Survey results were shared with school leaders. Stakeholder groups include students in grades 3-12, teachers, school staff and families. Student topics include perceptions of skills and competencies, and perceptions of school climate and culture. Teacher and staff topics focus on support and environment. Family topics survey family-school relationships. Topics are measured by the percent of favorable responses. Compared to 2023 results, the 2024 percent of students responding favorably has increased for both emotional regulation and growth mindset. Students' sense of school belonging has increased at all levels, elementary, middle school and high school. The perception of staff-leadership relationships has positively increased across the district. All topics included in the family survey show positive increases compared to 2023 results. An in-depth presentation will be shared with the community during the May 7 Board Workshop where we will have our School Governance Council co-chairs in attendance.

State testing for students in grades 3-8 begins on May 7. This includes Smarter Balanced ELA, mathematics and Next Generation Science (grades 5 and 8 only). To ensure that the tests are accessible to all students, the Testing Office is working with the Specialized Learning Department and MLL Department to verify students' state approved testing supports and accommodations.

School Quality Review (SQR)

The final 2023-2024 School Quality Review was completed last week at Nathan Hale Middle School. On Thursday, May 2, 2024, the five schools who have an SQR before January 2025 attended the School Quality Review Institute full-day training. The principal plus up to four team members will engage in hands-on interactive training to support their turn-keying the information to the remainder of the staff. The SQR Institute training focuses on the SQR Rubric, Handbook, and identifying school practices and impact to demonstrate evidence of the 10 SQR Rubric indicators.

Research & Analytics



The Portrait of a Graduate development continues to be a large focus of the team's work. A meeting was held with Digital Promise, which is an organization focused on helping districts to implement a Portrait of a Graduate. The organization will be working with the Research and Analytics and Curriculum teams to help articulate how a graduate's portrait can be operationalized within the curriculum by subject area and grade band. The teams will be meeting several times over the next

month to determine the next steps and how the work can be integrated into summertime curriculum writing sessions. An additional meeting was held with Defined Learning to scope work related to creating a continuum and rubric for one of the competencies, Critical Thinker. This work will be embedded within the Gifted and Talented curriculum during the 2024-25 school year.

Training was provided to Reading and Writing Improvement Teachers on using Otus, a data warehouse and common assessment platform implemented during the 2022-23 school year. The training focused on accessing a Student Profile, which provides educators with access to student historical data in an easy-to-read format. The training also included running queries on assessment data to determine which students have cycled into or out of Scientific Research Based Interventions based on their performance on testing screeners such as NWEA and DIBELS.



The team also attended the Strategic Data Project Spring Convening in Boston. Over three days, the team learned from experts doing innovative data work in K12 schools across the country. One of the Strategic Data Project Fellows working in Norwalk presented the results of his capstone project: Building Data Dashboards with school leaders in NPS (Norwalk Public Schools) elementary and middle schools.

Communications

Quick Links

- [Team Chana Wins STEAM Day Cook-Off](#)
- [Kiera Cunniffe Named 2024 Recipient of Kevin M. Eidt Memorial Scholarship](#)

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.

We are excited to continue the Why I Teach campaign, a video series featuring NPS students who chose the educators they most wanted to ask, “Why Do You Teach?” and other questions about their profession as proud educators. We are thrilled to spotlight our amazing educators through these student-led interviews!

- [Kendall College and Career Academy - Jessie Joseph and Ms. Angelidis](#)
- [Jefferson Marine Science Elementary School - Sushen Chen and Ms. Preston](#)

Next Steps Donation



Norwalk Public Schools extended a heartfelt thank you to the families of Jolie Lubin and Samantha Birchard for their donation to the Norwalk Next Steps 18-22 Transition Program in memory of their daughters who tragically died in a fatal car accident in February 2024.

The families graciously donated a portion of the proceeds from the GoFundMe established in memory of Jolie and Samantha. Samantha was planning to pursue a career in the special education field, and both she and Jolie had ties to students in the Next Steps program. Samantha and Jolie were known to the girls in Next Steps as giving the “best hugs.”

[Click here to read more and learn how you can donate to the memorial fund.](#)

Say Yes to a Dress

The NPS Family Center will host its first “Say Yes to a Prom Dress” event for high school seniors to find a gorgeous gown to wear to the prom. Enjoy music and refreshments while choosing the perfect dress, all for FREE!

All students need to do is pre-register for the event! Please feel free to share this link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScDpJNU7jLtDA9fmgZmlpQlrEZ_Xqv-x5krtKON3tZJRduQ/viewform

See the dates and times below:

Thursday, May 9 from 3 to 6 p.m.

Friday, May 10 from 3 to 6 p.m.

Saturday, May 11 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

First Book - Pass the Torch of Reading

In the spirit of the First Book 2024 theme, “Pass the Torch of Reading,” we’re asking our friends across the Norwalk community to share who passed the torch of reading to them and why reading is such an important life skill.

[Episode 1](#)

[Episode 2](#)

Norwalk Earth Day Festival



We had a wonderful day at the Norwalk Earth Day Festival on the Green last weekend. Thank you to everyone who stopped by the NPS table to see our students’ incredible artwork using recycled materials as well as the signs indicating the five celebrated elements.

We were happy to share bookmarks featuring designs by Cranbury first grader Harper and Jefferson fifth grader Nafisa. We also sent some visitors home with seeds and plants thank you to our friends at Ponus Ridge STEAM Academy.

And, once again, the Blender Bike, churning up a delicious fruit smoothie, was a big hit!

Excellence in Education



In anticipation of the 2024 Excellence in Education ceremony hosted by the Norwalk Education Foundation, we are 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.

In Case You Missed It

Superintendent Book Club - "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" (VIDEO)



Important Dates

Monday, May 13 - Staff Professional Development (2-Hour Early Dismissal)

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

Upcoming Events

NHS Presents "The Drowsy Chaperone"

Friday, May 3 at 7 p.m.; Saturday, 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 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.

Some of our students will be speaking at the event, so please come and support!

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 and how to volunteer.](#)

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

CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION & SPECIALIZED LEARNING

The Humanities department has concluded the professional learning series for middle school social studies teachers on the new standards and expectations for next year as per the state. We also created an inquiry experience for 7th graders around the question: Is it ever too late to remember? Students will engage with multiple resources as they explore the need to remember historical events. Work has also begun on a new unit for middle school ELA that will be based on historical fiction and aligned with one of the topics in social studies. The next edition of the Curriculum Corner is also being produced and is slated to be available on May 6th. April 30th concluded the poetry contest. The team will meet and determine the winners of the contest.

Mathematics/STEM

The STEM department has been continuing to work on readying the PE curriculum. Elementary teachers had time together to review elementary units and provide feedback in March. The secondary curriculum will prepare middle and high school teachers for the May early dismissal.

Additionally, we have been working to prepare for summer academy and supporting middle schools by designing a preliminary summer program to support their students primarily in mathematics, tied to the high dosage tutoring incentives and focus supported by the state.

Multilingual Learners

The Multilingual Learner department has been working diligently to support school administrators with their budgets during this busy budget season! The department has met with every school to review data and staffing about our Multilingual Learners. Additionally, the Multilingual Learner department met with the Natalia Rodriguez Scholarship Committee to review scholarship applications and select recipients for the 16th annual award.

The Family Center is gearing up for our first Say Yes to the Dress event next week! Seniors have been signing up to schedule a time slot to come into the Family Center and “shop” for a prom dress. We are excited to help our scholars select a dress of their choice!

Workforce Development

Our College & Career Specialists were showcased at the April 23rd Board of Education Meeting, specifically highlighting their work with scholars in the areas of Post Secondary Planning and Workforce Development.

The work continues on the Career Z Challenge Grant as we attend their community of practice and required working group sessions. This month we focused upon Program Administration. We also participated in their required working group session as well.

CT State Norwalk and NPS have partnered on their “College for Kids” Summer Programming! Our Career Pathway data has worked to inform CT State Norwalk and our partnership in terms of the types of courses our middle school scholars would be most interested in taking this summer. Additionally, some of our NPS teachers have joined their team as well! For these opportunities and so much more, please visit www.norwalkps.org/careertraining. The “College for Kids” information will be found in the Year-Round Area.

The Dual Credit Expansion Grant Committee has created a teacher application and teachers have begun to apply. Qualifying applications are being accepted to receive grant-funded credentialing. We have also attended the required online seminar on Faculty Liaison and Dual Credit Teacher Relationships.

The First Book Planning Committee is well underway and workforce development has focused on booking our organization tables and creating a commercial for the event. We attended the Norwalk Chamber of Commerce Event on behalf of NPS and The NPS Internship Program continues to place our scholars in their internship sites.

The Perkins Grant committee meets bi-weekly to review and revise the grant funding for the Spring 2024 season. The Red Fashion School is currently booking Middle School experiences for our Art Pathway Scholars.

A School Counselor committee has been created for June in which school counselors will write workforce development curriculum. A Workforce Development Workshop was hosted at NHS and P-TECH for upper class students and a visit was hosted with the Virtual Academy for our scholars in Grades 10 - 12.

Counseling/Support Services

Our College & Career Specialists were showcased at the April 23rd Board of Education Meeting specifically highlighting their work for scholars in the areas of Post Secondary Planning and Workforce Development.

The RISE network also visited our College & Career Specialist meeting in which we reviewed the RISE Dashboard data. We are creating a comprehensive mental health and wellness committee for Grades K-8th at the district level and our District Attendance Committee is working weekly on reviewing data and attendance policies in other school districts.

A School Counselor committee has been created for June in which school counselors will write a social emotional learning curriculum. School Counselors are finalizing the High School Career Pathways for Grades 9-11, which is being reviewed. School Counselors are finalizing course selection and continue to meet with their scholars as needed.

As we prepare for a CT State Department of Education visit, we are working on our DESSA Data and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Programming while asking Principals for the SEL feedback. The work continues the SHAPE Assessment in partnership with the Child Health and Development Institute.

Specialized Learning

Specialized Learning held a Board Subcommittee meeting on Monday, April 29, 2024. We discussed the Birth to Three transition process and the requirement that students with disabilities receive FAPE by age three. We reviewed the current NPS Pre-K programs, and the new transition Pre-K 5 program that will open at Fox Run in the 24-25 school year. The subcommittee also reviewed Extended School Year (ESY), including how a student is determined to attend ESY, the location and times for this year's ESY and the program changes for this year. This summer, the general education summer academy will now be offered for grades K-5, so all students with IEPs will have opportunities to be with their general education peers.

The department has been involved in the SBB (school-based budget) process planning for next year. We have been attending each school's meeting, reviewing staffing allocations, and making sure the school is prepared to meet the students' needs for the next school year.

Several members of the Specialized Learning Department will attend LRP's National Institute on Legal Issues of Educating Individuals with Disabilities in Savannah, Georgia, from May 5-8, 2024. Over the three days, we will engage in sessions on evidence-based best practices, case law, and

compliance guidance to help serve students with disabilities most effectively. We are super excited to go and learn as much as we can!

SRBI

We were invited to the Summitt conference with our partners Lexia. Lexia helps support our Science of Reading Training with LETRS. This conference included many school districts from the East coast. We worked on discussing some of our prevalent issues in school problems to support student growth.

We are also wrapping up the year with end-of-the-year conferences and observations for the improvement of staff. We will have one more professional development day and support bridging students to the next level (elementary to high school).

Staff has just finished some of the end-of-the-year benchmarks and we are analyzing data to start our last WIN cycle of the year. DIBELS assessment and state testing is occurring, and we are making sure all student plans are up to date.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

April District Learning Walk

In April, we conducted our third and final district learning walk of the school year. Previous learning walks were conducted in October and December. During this last learning walk, district and school leaders visited classrooms across seven schools using our instructional look fors. From October to April, evidence of standards-based planning grew from 54% to 86% visibility. This is a huge improvement and reflects a shared commitment to planning rigorous learning experiences for all students. Thank you to our school leaders for their professional learning efforts in this area!

Teacher Evaluation Plan, 2024-2025

Next year, we will launch new evaluation plans for teachers and administrators. For the teacher evaluation process, the PDEC (Professional Development and Evaluation Committee) has identified the Danielson Framework for Teaching as the rubric to be utilized. A portion of the May Principal and AP meetings (May 7 and 8) will be used to begin developing a shared understanding of the rubric. In addition to school leaders, NFT Building Stewards and NFT members who serve on PDEC will be invited.

BUSINESS & OPERATIONS

Food Services



Friday, May 3 is Lunch Hero Day! A big thank you to all our cafeteria staff who work hard each day to serve our students healthy, balanced meals.

This past week Chartwells hosted a [Ponus STEAM Day Cook Off](#) the winning recipe was served at the school on April 26.

Congratulations to Team Chana!! Enjoy the winning [recipe](#) from Dorian and Dylan.



The Smoothie Bike is on the move this week. It will stop at Roton Middle School on May 1 and Fox Run on May 2. Be sure to get breakfast at your school every day to get the [Golden Ticket](#) at breakfast for a chance to ride the bike at lunch. Next week the bike will roll into West Rocks on Tuesday, May 7, at Norwalk High on May 8, and Silvermine on May 9.

This week our Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program served delicious green grapes, green beans, and guava. Here are our videos by Ms. Kelly:

[Learning & Tasting: Green Beans](#)

[Learning & Tasting: Guava](#)

Next week the FFVP will feature medley tomatoes and everyone's favorite Dragon Fruit with a bonus day Watermelon.

Facilities

Construction is ongoing with exterior demolition taking place at the South Norwalk School and NHS/PTECH. Here is where the old Testa Field once was located:



There has been a great deal of progress at Cranbury. Check out the new tennis courts:



Here are additional photos and information on our April School Construction updates:

[April School Construction Updates](#)

At the Family Center, we are putting the final changes in place for the Community Health Services renovation project.

In preparation for the underground oil storage tanks removal at Brookside and Tracey, and the Fox Run Abatement, a state reimbursement application is being submitted, and Salamone Associates has begun the design for these projects.

The Brookside Montessori classroom will be in C9. We will convert it into a Montessori classroom and Gill and Gill has prepared construction plans which are in the process of Building Department review. This is another of our summer projects.

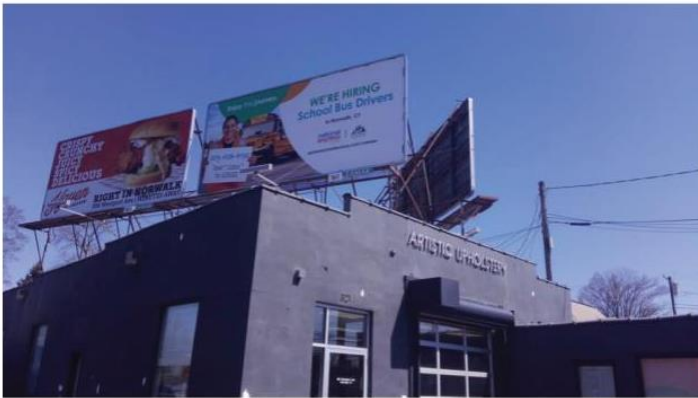
We are also preparing to replace the flooring in the Rowayton cafeteria. The current flooring has separated and come loose in many areas and in need of replacement to a concrete floor with an LVT topping. Gill and Gill has prepared construction plans which are in the process of Building Department review.

There are several other summer projects underway, like new stage doors at Naramake, Tracey and Marvin. CRF Interior Systems will be designing the replacements.

Finally, we are already planning for the Roton locker replacement. The student lockers will be replaced in two phases with a wider locker.

There are countless other summer projects that we will continue to update the BOE on throughout the coming weeks.

Transportation



It's on the move! Check out the latest billboard locations for our city-wide advertising with Durham's hiring campaign.... Where will the billboard show up next??

[Seaview Avenue Location](#)

[Westport Avenue Location](#)

Health Services



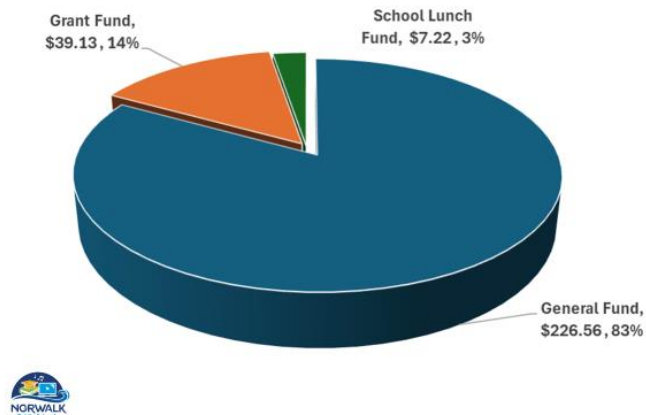
School Health Services continues to collaborate with The Norwalk Partnership; nurses will be joining an evening discussion with parents from the ASPIRE program to discuss various topics regarding child and adolescent development.

School Safety

The Safety and Security Supervisor met with the Norwalk Police Department and Brien McMahon Administration to review and finalize the Safety Plans for both First Book and BMHS graduation. These plans include emergency response protocols, security staffing and posts, as well as NPD, NFD and EMS coverage during the events.

Grants

FY24 All Fund Revised Budget



The grants team continues to work with schools on closing out FY24 grant funding to prepare for our end-of-year audit. We are continuing our work by meeting with each school to strategically plan for FY25 funding needs and opportunities. We recently presented at the [April 23 Board of Education meeting](#) and shared that Norwalk Public Schools has received \$6,380,885.00 in competitive grant funding to support various initiatives aligned to the District's Strategic Plan.

DIGITAL LEARNING & TECHNOLOGY

Enterprise Software/Data

Building leaders have received the latest application usage reports for review. These reports will assist leaders in determining school-specific software renewal agreements for the 2024-2025 academic year.

In collaboration with our SIS manager, we have implemented a device management module within the PowerSchool platform. We continue to refine the setup, enhancing device tracking, status updates, and overall management using this module, aiming to support data for both staff and student devices.

Infrastructure/Operations

Our new firewalls have been approved, with installation tentatively scheduled for June. These firewalls feature enhanced processing power and increased bandwidth, bolstering our network's security.

The VDI (Virtual Desktop Infrastructure) installation is progressing. This technology will provide students with a secure environment to learn coding, notably in programs like PTECH Norwalk. Testing is slated to begin next week, followed by a pilot phase with a selected cohort of students.

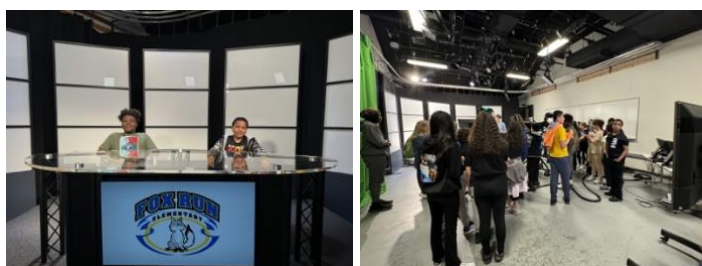
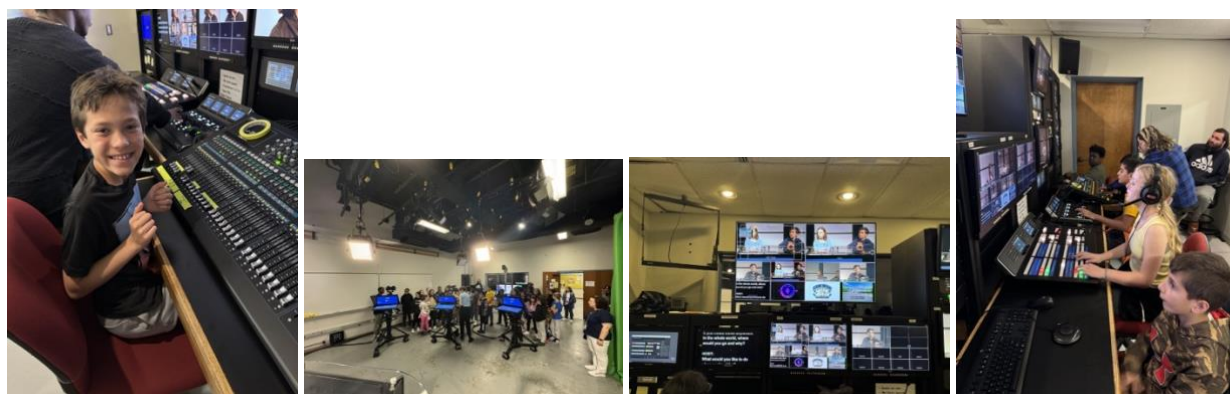
We are currently evaluating new AI-based email scanners to determine if they surpass our existing solution in handling security threats.

Digital Learning

April 16th marked National Librarians Day; please remember to thank your local librarian. Moreover, April is National Library Month, a time to celebrate your Library Media Specialists all month long.

Lisa Marsillio, Library Media Specialist at Ponus Ridge Middle School, is collaborating with Ridgefield School to engage students in a virtual book club. This initiative aims to culminate in an in-person meeting, fostering further student interaction.

Dan Wabno, Jodi Nathanson and Stefanie Dean took 2 classes of Fox Run fifth graders to CT State Community College-Norwalk to learn how to use equipment in the media center. Students learned how to be anchors, camera operators, and broadcast technicians to connect with the Fox Run Digital Media pathway.



Thanks to Maria Naughton for working with Juan Carlos Arango and Rosana Lindoro in the NHS World Language Department. Maria is supporting how to use Canva as a tool for presentation and for students to be able to create digital portfolio of their work.

FINANCE

Budget

The Budget team has made progress conducting the School Based Budget meetings for the upcoming fiscal year. As of today, we have completed the official meetings for the following schools:

- Brien McMahon High School
- Nathan Hale Middle School
- Ponus Ridge STEAM Academy
- Roton Middle School
- West Rocks Middle School
- Brookside Elementary School
- South Norwalk Elementary School
- Fox Run Elementary School
- Kendall College and Career Academy
- Marvin Elementary School
- Naramake Elementary School
- Rowayton Elementary School
- Silvermine Dual Language Magnet School
- Tracey Magnet School

- Wolfpit Integrated Arts School

We are still pending the meetings with the remaining schools, which are scheduled to take place by May 10th.

Purchasing

After meeting with the City of Norwalk representative and our natural gas energy supplier to review the current supply agreement, we were able to lock in guaranteed pricing for natural gas at a 35% decrease for Fiscal Year 2025.

The Food Service Management Company Request for Proposal, RFP, was posted on April 19th. A mandatory pre-proposal conference for interested bidders was held on Monday, April 29th. We are reviewing their questions and posting the responses for clarification for them to put their proposal together.