



**Board Report**  
**August 23, 2024**



# BOARD UPDATE

From the desk of Dr. Alexandra Estrella, Superintendent  
*August 23, 2024*

## EXCELLENCE, EQUITY & INCLUSION

### Communications

#### Convocation 2024



Our teachers absolutely rocked their school spirit at Convocation 2024! Mother Nature treated us to a gorgeous morning to celebrate the start of the new year with teachers from all 22 schools and programs, principals, district leaders, state and local dignitaries, community partners and our stellar cast of school mascots.

We were thrilled to announce and recognize our outstanding Teacher of the Year - West Rocks Middle School's band director Nicole Jean. With a stirring introduction from her principal Dr. Adam Reynolds, Jean paid tribute to the educators who inspired her growing up and led her to pursue a career in music education. Jean is in contention for the Connecticut Teacher of the Year and we wish her the best of luck!

Students played a big role in hyping up their teachers including the Brien McMahon High School drumline, color guard and cheerleaders as well as Senior Class President Rodelin Constant. Superintendent Dr. Estrella also invited three students -- BMHS senior Cameron Rice, Nathan Hale Middle School eighth grader Sophia Pogany, and Silvermine Dual Language School third grader Grace Alejos -- to join her on stage and share what they most appreciate about their teachers.

## Roton Celebrates VILS Expansion



Roton Middle School celebrated its distribution of new Chromebooks to students on Tuesday with a Rams Family Day. After collecting their new devices, students and their families enjoyed a beautiful day outside, testing their strength, speed and agility on obstacle courses from The Grit Ninja then eating pizza, popcorn and cotton candy.

[Click here to see all the fun!](#)

Roton is one of five schools in the district to become a Verizon Innovative Learning School this school year alongside Brien McMahon High School, the Center for Global Studies, Norwalk High School and P-TECH Norwalk.

In partnership with Digital Promise, the Verizon Innovative Learning Schools program works side-by-side with schools and districts to get internet-connected devices into the hands of students and to enhance how teachers use technology in the classroom.

## School Supply & Backpack Giveaway

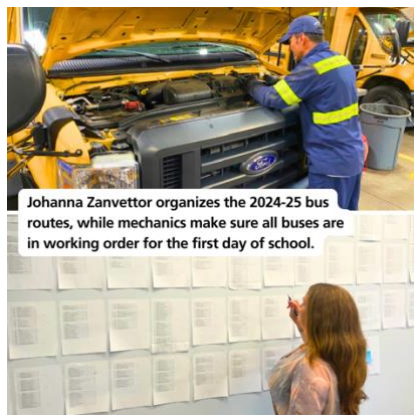


We had so much fun celebrating Back to School season at our School Supply and Backpack Giveaway event on Thursday. We were able to register 300 families to participate and walk away with a backpack full of the essential supplies and tools their children will need to succeed in the classroom.

Norwalk Public Schools extends its heartfelt gratitude to our generous sponsors, Xerox and Parish Court, for their support in making this event possible.



## The Work Behind the Work - Preparing for the New Year



Johanna Zarvettor organizes the 2024-25 bus routes, while mechanics make sure all buses are in working order for the first day of school.



NPS School Counselors developing new Workforce Development and SEL lessons.



Operations personnel, Jimmy and Miguel, hard at work with maintenance projects around the district.

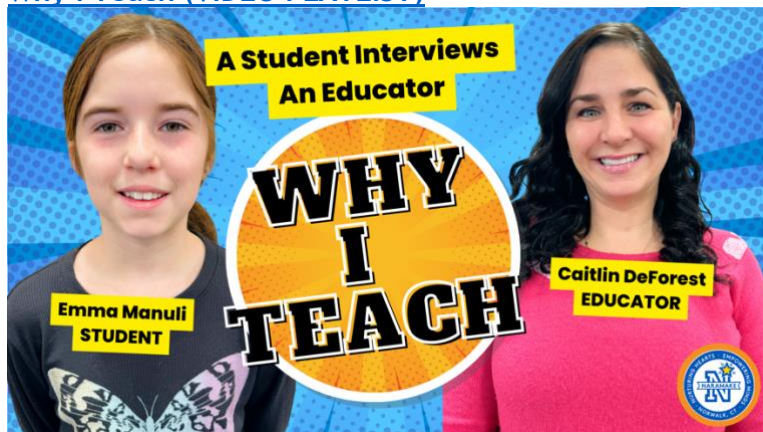
Norwalk Public Schools has been hard at work this summer, preparing for the 2024-25 school year. We cannot wait to welcome everyone back on the first day of school!

Follow us on [Facebook](#) and LinkedIn to see all The Work Behind the Work!

### In Case You Missed It

Senate Majority Leader Bob Duff Announces Recent State Monies Appropriated to Norwalk (hosted at Marvin Elementary School)

### [Why I Teach \(VIDEO PLAYLIST\)](#)



### Important Dates

**Monday, Aug. 26** - First Day of 2024-25 School Year

**Monday, Sept. 2** - Labor Day (No School; Central Office Closed)

**Monday, Sept. 25** - Staff Professional Development (2-Hour Early Release)

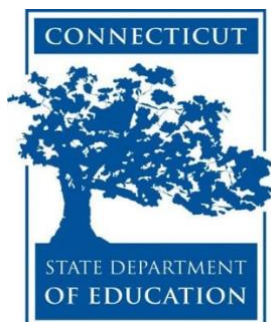
### *Back to School Nights*

**Monday, Sept. 9** - High School Open Houses

**Wednesday, Sept. 11** - Middle School Open Houses

**Thursday, Sept. 12** - Elementary School Open Houses

## Testing & Accountability



The release of 2024 testing results and accountability indicators for performance and growth is anticipated by the end of month. As preliminary results are made available, school and district trends are being examined. A preliminary review indicates an increase in ELA and math growth for all students and high needs students, compared to Norwalk's 2023 results. Growth results are part of the Next Generation Accountability reporting. The change in a student's matched Smarter Balanced vertical scale scores is compared to the student's growth target, from Connecticut's growth model. Student growth targets for 2024 were based on 2023 results. After the statewide release, we will compare Norwalk's gains to State results and to other large cities in Connecticut. We will also look at trends in proficiency and performance indices.



In preparation for the October PSAT, work is underway with the College Board. Assigned school leaders will have access to their student roster files on the College Board platform in early September. Students in grades 8-11 will take a version of the PSAT that is appropriate for their grade level.

## School Quality Review (SQR)



For the 2024-25 school year, 13 schools will receive a School Quality Review. Currently, the schools who have their reviews before January have received training at the SQR Institute in May 2024. The remaining nine schools will receive training in September 2024, for the principals plus four team members who will help turnkey the information to the rest of the staff.

Since the educators and administrators' evaluation programs have changed according to the Connecticut State Department of Education, the SQR Rubric is undergoing an update to remain in alignment.

### Research & Analytics

The team presented to New Teachers at their orientation session on Monday. The topics were Portrait of a Graduate, Data-Driven Instruction and the power of assessment. Additional training will be delivered this week to elementary school math teachers in collaboration with the Curriculum department.

Systems are being updated to prepare for the school year's launch. New dashboard licenses are being assigned to school leaders according to Principal specifications. Dashboard rollover to the new school year is ongoing. Otus assessments have been adjusted based on feedback from school leaders and teachers and licenses have been updated to reflect staffing changes.



Collaboration is occurring with the Director of Grants to launch the Learner Engagement & Attendance Program (LEAP) at South Norwalk Neighborhood School, Brien McMahon and Norwalk High School. The state program, which will be run out of the Family Center, targets chronic absenteeism through relational home visits. Districts across the state gathered this week to learn more about the program and from each other.

## CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION & SPECIALIZED LEARNING

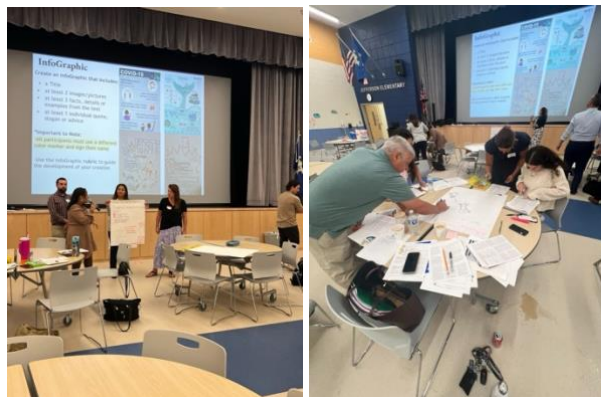
### Humanities

The last two weeks have been filled with 6 professional learning experiences for teachers across NPS. Teachers engaged in learning about discourse, inquiry, design thinking, the writing process and unpacking the curriculum. There was a lot of excitement as teachers took off their teaching hats and stepped into the role of learner. Teachers then thought about ways to modify/adapt the protocols for the students in their classrooms. The first edition of the Curriculum Corner was completed and the scheduling for the last leg of LETRS (Science of Reading) training was booked. We are excited to start off the school year!



### Multilingual Learners

The Multilingual Learner department is excited to welcome back all our teachers to the 2024-25 school year! We began the work with new teachers at orientation and introduced them to Quality Teaching for English Learners (QTEL). New teachers engaged in many tasks designed to engage students in academic discourse and literacy.



Additionally, the Multilingual Learner department met with our elementary MLL teachers to engage in additional training with HD Word, a resource to support our Multilingual Learners with foundational reading and writing skills. Parent Coordinators will be engaged this week on strengthening the school-home connection in a parent engagement workshop.

### Counseling/Support Services

NPS has submitted a proposal to present the SHAPE Assessment work at the CT State Performance Matters Conference and is proud to announce its acceptance. This means the SHAPE Team will present at the CT State Conference in October, spotlighting the work being done at Norwalk Public Schools! The NPS Risk Assessment & Intervention Guide has been revised and is currently waiting for approval. The work continues with 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. In Partnership with the RISE Network, FAFSA Clinics were held this summer at our high schools for the Class of 2024 and their families. There was a great turnout for the clinics, as many scholars and their families were able to apply for financial aid



(photos below). The Attendance Team has convened and is providing great resources to the schools. 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 to 12 School Counseling Team. We have come together to further deepen the work for our NPS Portrait of a Graduate. The district Comprehensive Mental Health and Wellness Committee convened with its district team.



### Workforce Development

Workforce Development is excited to share that its preparation is underway for a Fall 2024 Semester of Workforce Development Certification Course Offerings with CT State Norwalk for Juniors and Seniors. The Workforce Development Guide is currently being updated, and the opportunities on our Workforce Development website. 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. The Internship Program is growing and looking to expand into more Career Clusters for the upcoming school year. A system is being developed for PowerSchool to note our Seniors selected Career Pathway. *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

Specialized Learning has been busy getting ready for the school year and welcoming our students on Monday! We welcomed all the new teachers on Monday and gave them an overview of the department. It was great meeting our new teachers!

On Thursday, Aug. 22, 2024, we offered professional learning for our elementary teachers. We offered four sessions from which to choose two. The sessions included various topics including updates to CT SEDS (our IEP Data platform), Co Teaching, Behavior Interventions, and Literacy Assessment Administration. Below are some pictures of our teachers engaged in learning!

We are looking forward to seeing our students on Monday!





## SRBI

The student data sheets are ready for intervention students. For the 2023-24 school year, 61% transitioned out of formal intervention for Reading and 51% for Math. We are very happy with the student growth and are continuing with the same approaches to start the 2024-25 school year.

Reading Buddies is also getting started. Liaisons attended to meet and review the program. Fluency for 3rd grade is going to continue to be the focus. We are excited to continue to partner with NEF for this.

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

### School Improvement Plans

Our school leaders have done a wonderful job of working collaboratively to conduct a robust analysis of their data to develop their School Improvement Plans. Each plan consists of Rigorous Instruction goals in Mathematics and ELA/Literacy, Equity and an additional school priority goal. The additional school priority goal may focus on becoming an International Baccalaureate school, strengthening their foundational literacy systems and structures, strengthening instructional practices for Multilingual Learners, etc. We have completed a comprehensive review of the School Improvement Plans and principals are working with their teams to make any adjustments or revisions.

### NPS Leadership Handbook

Over the past several months, we have been working with various departments to create a Leadership Handbook. The handbook's intention is to ensure systems, procedures and resources are memorialized and centralized for easy access by our school leaders. We will be sharing the draft handbook with school leaders shortly to gather feedback before finalizing the handbook for distribution.

## BUSINESS & OPERATIONS

### Food Services



Norwalk is in its third year of CEP and students will continue to eat for free!

Chartwells would like to share the [Welcome Back Newsletter](#) for the 2024-25 school year.



Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program will begin on Sept 9 for our 10 schools that received the grant:

Jefferson Elementary  
Tracey Elementary  
Marvin Elementary  
Brookside Elementary  
Kendall Elementary  
Silvermine Elementary  
Sono Elementary  
Ponus Steam  
Side By Side Charter  
Fox Run Elementary

### Health Services

School Health Services is in full-swing and fully prepared for the new school year; schools are fully staffed, new nurses are undergoing orientation and training, and all emergency medications are being replenished in each nurse's office. Nurses will attend biennial CPR recertification on 8/22.

### Transportation

We are excited to wrap-up our bus runs this week:

Wednesday, Aug. 21 - PM dry runs will be conducted

Thursday, Aug. 22 - AM and PM dry runs will be conducted

Friday, Aug. 23- MOCK day of operation - all buses will roll out in full operation



The buses were thoroughly cleaned inside and out last week. The mechanics performed preventative maintenance all summer.



[Webquery](#) is up and running on the website and is reflecting live changes. Families can use this to see bus assignments and details about bus times and stop location.

## Grants



Several grants have been acquired this summer to support schools for the 2024-25 School Year. New this year is our Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (L.E.A.P) Grant, which will provide \$289,000 in funding to decrease chronic absenteeism and promote strong school-home relationships in our high schools as well as South Norwalk School.

STRONGER  
Together

We are also eager to bring the Stronger Connections Grant to Norwalk. This \$414,000 competitive grant will support the Drug and Alcohol Counselors in our high schools, LGBTQ+ Counselors in our secondary schools, and enhancing our school mental health supports through partnership with Mid-Fairfield Community Care Center. Next week we will begin work on our Alliance, Priority School, Summer School, and Extended School Hours Grants, which provides a sustainable source of funding for our schools.

## DIGITAL LEARNING & TECHNOLOGY

### Enterprise Software/Data

The Edgenuity platform has been updated, ensuring that all courses now align with the NPS Program of Studies. In collaboration with Human Resources, we are continuously working to enhance processes related to new hires. As the new school year approaches, new applications are being implemented, and current applications are undergoing crucial integration steps, with activations scheduled for the first day of school. Additionally, the SAT and PSAT data are being meticulously prepared for import to the College Board, ensuring a smooth transition and accurate reporting.

### Infrastructure/Operations

The team has successfully assigned and deployed Chromebooks to all students in grades 1 through 5, marking a significant milestone in our efforts to enhance digital learning. In preparation for the upcoming school year, we are diligently deploying VILS Chromebooks for the secondary schools, ensuring that all students have the necessary tools for success.

As part of our commitment to cybersecurity, we are currently testing our new online phishing and security training software. We anticipate full deployment by the end of September, which will further bolster our defenses against potential threats.

### Digital Learning

We are thrilled to announce that our Verizon Program is officially underway for the 2024-25 school year. Chromebooks are being deployed across all new sites, each of which now has a dedicated digital learning coach in place. Teachers at these sites have already begun their professional learning through Digital Promise, preparing them to integrate new technologies effectively into their classrooms. This week, we celebrated the program's kickoff with an event at Roton Middle School, where the excitement for the upcoming year was evident:





## FINANCE

### Accounts Payable

The Accounts Payables team has been actively working on closing out FY24 accounts in preparation for the new fiscal year. This effort is essential to ensure a seamless transition and accurate financial management as the new year begins.

### Budget

The Budget team has started work on the Education Financial System (EFS) reporting. The EFS is a financial reporting system utilized by school districts that provides a standardized set of processes for capturing, managing, auditing, and reporting financial and statistical information. The team is focused on ensuring that all data is accurately reported and in compliance with the required standards.

In addition to EFS reporting, the Budget team is beginning the preparation of the FY25-26 Budget development calendar. This calendar will be critical in guiding the budget planning process and maintaining alignment with key deadlines for the upcoming fiscal year.

### Payroll

Meanwhile, the Payroll team is preparing for the first payroll of the school year. Their efforts are centered on ensuring that all employees are paid accurately and on time as the new school year commences.