



Board Report

September 6, 2024



BOARD UPDATE

From the desk of Dr. Alexandra Estrella, Superintendent
September 6, 2024

EXCELLENCE, EQUITY & INCLUSION

Communications

Portrait of a Graduate



Our world is rapidly changing. Many of our young students will be working in jobs that don't yet exist and solving problems that we can't even imagine. How can we prepare our students to be Future Ready?

Introducing the NPS Portrait of a Graduate!

The NPS Portrait of a Graduate represents our community's dreams for our young people and the essential skills they need to thrive in the future. It is all about helping our students develop the skills they need to succeed in their own unique ways.

[Click here to watch our launch video](https://bit.ly/NPSPoG) and please share this link - <https://bit.ly/NPSPoG> - to the NPS Portrait of a Graduate website with everyone!

First Day of School



The return of pom-poms and mascots marked the beginning of the 2024-25 school year. Dr. Estrella started day one at the bus depot, thanking our dedicated team of bus drivers before heading to the schools to welcome back students and staff.

She and Deputy Superintendent Sandra Faioes joined Principal Ed Singleton and mascot Rammy to wish Roton Middle School students a great start to the new school year. They then took off on a whirlwind trip across the district, stopping to say hello to everyone at all 22 schools.

[Click here to go along for the ride!](#)

[Click here to read the Welcome Back to the 2024-25 School Year message from Dr. Estrella.](#)

Norwalk Health Department Survey

Please help the Norwalk Health Department create a healthier community for all Norwalkers by taking this 10-minute survey! <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/6JDJ6JH>

The health department is working with Nuvance Health and other partners to conduct a Community Health Assessment to help determine what are the biggest health priorities in Norwalk and where do Norwalkers go for health information and services.

In Case You Missed It



Back to School Tips - Shout out to Carol Wiltshire-Toth and Robin Gredinger for curating these helpful tips from our school counselors and social workers.



[Naramake Back to School \(VIDEO\)](#) - Produced by Naramake Elementary School, edited by NPS Communications

[NPS Shorts \(VIDEOS\)](#) - Be sure to watch more of our NPS Shorts (VIDEOS). You'll never miss one if you follow us on Instagram @norwalkschoolsc

- [First Day of School at Roton Middle School](#)
- [Tracey Magnet School Celebrates Multi-Use Track Ribbon Cutting](#)

Important Dates

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

Thursday, Oct. 3 - Rosh Hashanah (No School; Central Office Closed)

Monday, Oct. 14 - Indigenous Peoples/Italian Heritage Day (No School; Central Office Closed)

Tuesday, Oct. 15 - Staff Professional Development (No School)

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 (includes CMS)

Upcoming Events

Cavalcade of Sound

Saturday, Sept. 14 at 6 p.m.

Jack Casagrande Field at Brien McMahon High School, 300 Highland Ave. in Norwalk

The Norwalk High School and Brien McMahon High School marching bands will host a combined home show called Cavalcade of Sound on Saturday, Sept. 15 at 6 p.m. at Jack Casagrande Field at Brien McMahon High School.

Both bands are excited to create a partnership while hosting a competition that brings bands together from all around the region. Join these bands and their communities for an evening of Marching, Music, Fun and Food!

Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$5 for students and seniors. Children ages 5 and under are FREE! All ticket sales are at the gate.

Middle School Showcase

Wednesday, Oct. 9 from 6 to 8 p.m.

Ponus Ridge STEAM Academy, 21 Hunters Lane in Norwalk

The third annual Middle School Showcase will be held on Wednesday, Oct. 9 from 6 to 8 p.m. at Ponus Ridge STEAM Academy.

Each of our five middle schools will have booths set up in the gymnasium to share their amazing programs, and representatives from each school will be available to speak with our current fifth graders and their families. Other NPS departments and community partners will also have booths set up to speak about their services.

Hispanic Heritage Festival

Thursday, Oct. 24 from 5:45 to 8 p.m.

Brien McMahon High School

Norwalk Public Schools will host its third annual Hispanic Heritage Festival on Thursday, Oct. 24 from 5:45 to 8 p.m. at Brien McMahon High School. This year, we're proud to celebrate Pioneers of Change.

Testing & Accountability

On August 27, the State released 2024 results for Smarter Balanced (SBAC), grades 3-8, Ct-SAT, grades 11 and Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), grades 5,8, and 11. Norwalk Public Schools ranked highest among other large Connecticut cities in the Performance Index for math and ELA, and second overall for science. The Performance Index is the best measure of overall average achievement across standard and alternate assessments in a content area. Norwalk Public Schools also ranked first among other large Connecticut cities for academic growth in math and second for academic growth in ELA (science is not measured). Academic growth is a leading indicator of student achievement as it measures the pace of student learning in a school year. A report for the Board of Education has been prepared and will be presented on Tuesday, September 10.

Research & Analytics



The Portrait of a Graduate campaign is being launched this week. This campaign's focus is to inform students and families of the work NPS is undertaking around the Portrait of a Graduate. The campaign includes an updated website and a [video](#) featuring students from across the district. Additionally, NPS will be partnering with Digital Promise to run multiple pilots throughout the district that will help determine how best to measure student progress towards Critical Thinking.

CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION & SPECIALIZED LEARNING

Humanities

Social Studies

Introduction of New Standards: On October 4, 2023, Connecticut adopted new Social Studies standards. With their strong focus on inquiry-based learning, these standards encourage students to explore, ask questions, and engage deeply with sources, fostering a more active and meaningful learning process.

Curriculum Development: Our district wrote new K-8 Social Studies units this summer in response to adopting these new standards. A team of dedicated teachers collaborated to write the new Social Studies units, each centered around a core inquiry. This approach aligns with the state's new emphasis on inquiry and provides our students with a more engaging and meaningful learning experience.

Professional Development: We offered a series of professional development opportunities over the summer to support our teachers in this transition. During these sessions, teachers participated in an inquiry experience, allowing them to immerse themselves in the process firsthand. They also received training on the Inquiry Design Model, a framework that will guide them in effectively implementing inquiry-based learning in their classrooms.

Looking Ahead: As we continue to implement these changes, our commitment is to provide ongoing support to teachers, monitor the new curriculum's effectiveness, and make any necessary adjustments. We are dedicated to ensuring our students receive a high-quality, inquiry-driven social studies education.

Mathematics/STEM

We are busy implementing an updated version of Illustrative Math in grades K-Algebra 1, as well as supporting instructional practices that promote student engagement. Training on those practices was offered this summer and given to departmentalized 4th and 5th grade math teachers. Due to the new curriculum resource in math, there is a lot of continued updating being done to support instruction in the schools.

A new science curriculum resource is being rolled out in most middle schools and at NHS. We are excited to be promoting the state model science curriculum and gathering information on the implementation to plan for work next year. This is also being woven into our Marine Science curriculum thanks to work done by the Marine Science coordinator and teachers over the summer.

Multilingual Learners

The Multilingual Learner department is continuing to support schools through the beginning of the school year Multilingual Learner Data & Support meetings. We are scheduled over the next couple of weeks to review important MLL data and share the different supports the MLL department will provide to each school this year. These meetings provide administrators and teachers with the opportunity to plan for and support our Multilingual Learners with instructional support.

Counseling/Support Services

K - 8 School Counselors attended Professional Development in August, and it was a nice opportunity for them to come together in personal and professional partnership (picture below). The Attendance Team has convened and is providing attendance 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 - 12 School Counseling Team. 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 has been digitized and finalized in hard copy.

It has been shared with our school counselors in Grades 6 - 7th in August and will continue to be shared this week with Building Leadership. The RISE Collaboration work is underway with the district, and the Senior Survey has been shared with the Class of 2025 so that their Post-Secondary Plans can be supported and realized. The NPS Risk Assessment and Intervention Guide is being revised for our support staff's use. NPS is excited at the opportunity to present some Social Emotional District work in Hartford in September. The SHAPE Team will present at the CT State Conference in October, spotlighting the work being done at Norwalk Public Schools.



Workforce Development

Workforce Development is excited to share that the Workforce Development Certification Course Offerings with CT State Norwalk for Juniors and Seniors Application is Now Open! I also met with the Red Fashion School to work on NPS Scholar Programming for the upcoming school year, which will include a High School Class and Middle School visits for Art Pathway scholars. The Workforce Development Guide is currently being updated, as well as all the opportunities on our Workforce Development website. The work continues on the School Counseling Grade K - 2nd Developmental Guidance Lessons in Workforce Development, as the curriculum that our school counselor committee has written has been digitized and finalized in hard copy. It has been shared with our school counselors in Grades K - 2nd in August and will continue to be shared this week with Building Leadership. The Internship Program is growing and looking to expand into more Career Clusters for the upcoming school year.

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!

Specialized Learning

The opening of the 24-25 school year went very well. Education Administrators and Special Education administrators visited all schools within the first two days and had an opportunity to welcome staff and students! The department is planning the first New Teacher Academy and preparing to welcome parents to an informational event at the Family Center on the evening of September 26. The Bridge CT Grant work has started off strong, with the identification of staff members and additional members of the State Advisory Work Group. Several members of the Administrative Team will be attending the CSDE Back to School event for Special Education leaders in Hartford on Friday, September 6, 2024.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Principal Goal Setting Meetings

Beginning the week of September 9th, principals will be meeting with primary evaluators to create their leadership goals for the 2024-2025 school year. As part of the new goal setting process, principals will identify an area of leadership that will be their focus for learning and growth that will have a direct impact on student achievement.

2024-2025 Leadership Development Cohort

We are excited to announce that we are now accepting applications for the second NPS Leadership Development Cohort! Aspiring administrators and/or APs in Years 1 or 2 are encouraged to apply. Applications and resumes are due by September 13th. We look forward to developing our next cohort of leaders!

BUSINESS & OPERATIONS

Food Services

The Food Service department is preparing our ten Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program grant winners for a new updated delivery system. One student from each class will pick up the classroom basket in the cafeteria and bring it back to class for students and the teacher in the s room. We are also informing our families to [pick 3 and it's free!](#) We hope this will make it easier for the community to understand how simple it is to get a free breakfast and lunch every day.



Chartwells and NPS are training staff to begin a supper program at Marvin, Kendall, and Fox Run! This will provide our community with access to free meals after the school day.



The chance to adopt a cow is back for our elementary school students! Classes can register to [Adopt a Cow](#) and win a visit from the dairy farmer.



Five Weeks until Connecticut Grown for Connecticut Kids Week! Save the date October 7-11, 2024.

Facilities

We had a very busy summer readying our schools for the start of the school year! In Rowayton, the cafeteria flooring and new asphalt driveway were completed and turned over to the school for full use. Classroom C9 at Brookside was successfully completed to include this classroom in the Montessori program. At Kendall, the entire parking lot and driveways were milled, paved and properly stripped.

Numerous summer projects were instituted across the district from renovations of classrooms and offices to replacing flooring to painting with a focus on curb appeal. Our facilities were clean and beautiful, so our staff, families, and students could have a fresh start!

Transportation



We rolled into a new school year last week servicing over eleven thousand students including public, parochial, private, magnet, PreK and specialized learning programs to nearly thirty campuses throughout Norwalk and Stamford. We have fifty-five big buses and twenty-two door-to-door buses traveling throughout the city (over 245 routes and approximately 3,100 miles traveled).

Buses arrived at schools with 98% on time arrival. Traffic patterns continue to shift as the days go by with school start up. Families are adjusting to the new year, and we continue to work on tweaking those routes (within the 2%) that may need additional timing.

We continue to Eb and Flow with driver staffing. Durham welcomed a newly licensed driver, Edinson on August 29, we are grateful to have him on board!

If you need additional information, you may contact Norwalk Public Schools Transportation Office at 203-854-4074 or send an email to transportation@norwalkps.org.

Health Services



On August 22, all school nurses attended CPR/BLS recertification at Westport EMS.

Nurses have provided OSHA/Bloodborne pathogens safety training to all staff as part of the many trainings provided by school nurses at the beginning of the year.

School-based health centers continued to provide robust medical and behavioral health services over the summer at WRMS and BMHS: 121 student physicals were performed, numerous vaccines administered, and behavioral health services provided.



The Norwalk Community Health Center Mobile Medical Unit was at Kendall College and Career Academy on August 26 and August 27 to promote their school-based health center services in preparation for its opening there this school year. NCHC school-based health center consent for services can be found [here](#).



In A Heartbeat

BMHS will be hosting In a Heartbeat, a cardiac screening event for middle school and high school-aged students on November 14, an early dismissal day, from 12:30pm-5:00pm. This foundation works to identify students at risk for cardiac arrest. More information can be found [here](#), and sign up [here](#).



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SUPPORTS FOR NORWALKERS

Struggling with isolation, stress, depression, or substance use? Help is here.

In collaboration with The Norwalk Partnership, 2024 Norwalk mental health resources have been released. Please find them in English and Spanish:

[Norwalk BH Resources Aug 2024 828 \(1\)](#)

[SPAN Nwk BH Resources August2024 828 \(1\)](#)

Grants

Several State grants have been released, including the Alliance and Priority School District Grant, which provides support for many programs including our Future Ready Programming. We are working with our MLL Department to secure funding by means of the State Bilingual Grant and Title III Grant, which ensures that English learners and immigrant students attain English proficiency and develop high levels of academic achievement in English. Competitively, NPS has received an additional \$42,000 in funding to support our mental health efforts for students throughout the summer month. We have also received an additional \$25,000 through Federal funding to extend our FAFSA counseling throughout the summer months

DIGITAL LEARNING & TECHNOLOGY

Enterprise Software/Data

Our team has been working diligently to roster new applications for the 2024-2025 school year and provide our community partners with updated student data for the new year.

We are offering daily support to new and existing staff as they navigate the startup processes for the school year—something we tackle every year.

Infrastructure/Operations

We have successfully completed the transition of Cranbury School to the new online Wi-Fi management system, which has been running smoothly for the past two weeks without any issues. We are currently developing a plan to begin migrating the other buildings.

All students in grades 1-9 have received their devices for the school year, and our team is now working closely with the high schools to replace current devices with new devices for students in grades 10-12.

Digital Learning

We had a successful launch of our Verizon Innovative Learning Schools (VILS) device rollout. Local dignitaries and district leadership were at Roton Middle School, and to date, every 9th grader has picked up their device.

Our Elementary Digital Learning Coaches have been supporting schools district-wide with the kindergarten iPad rollout and assisting teachers in setting up the technology needed to create engaging classrooms. Over the summer, they were also busy updating the Digital Citizenship curriculum for our elementary and middle schools.

Additionally, we are excited to announce that all Digital Learning Coaches will participate in a monthly professional development series focused on digital learning. This series will kick off with a book study on Integrating Technology in the Classroom.

Library Media Specialists

Our Elementary Library Media Specialists participated in a professional development session during the August 22nd PD Day. Lynn provided an overview of the goals and expectations for both the district and the department. Audra Good, the Brookside librarian, presented information on Destiny software updates, CLC, and other resources, while Renee Neiger, the Cranbury librarian, shared insights from the ISTE Conference, including a presentation on digital citizenship called Digital

Detectives. The Digital Learning Coaches also presented the new ISTE Digital Citizenship resources. The day concluded with a survey to gather feedback.

FINANCE

Budget

The Education Financial System (EFS) state report for the 2023-24 fiscal year has been completed and certified ahead of schedule. This report collects financial data using the Uniform Chart of Accounts (UCOA), including per pupil figures, which incorporates In-Kind City expenditures, allowing for consistent statewide comparisons. The next step is a financial audit to be conducted by the City's external auditor, scheduled over the coming months.

Final journal entries and budget transfers have been completed and processed to close period 13 of the 2023-24 fiscal year. Encumbrances for expenditures have been set up for the 2024-25 school year and will continue throughout the next few months.

The budget process for 2025-26 has officially commenced. A preliminary budget calendar has been created to align with the city's calendar. The first step involves verifying personnel rosters sent to school and central office administrators. Accurate roster data is crucial since over 80% of the school budget is allocated to salaries and benefits. Upcoming internal meetings will focus on reviewing budget documents and instructions to ensure clarity throughout the process.

Purchasing / Accounts Payable

The RFP for the replacement of orchestra instruments at the high schools and middle schools has been posted, and responses are due on Tuesday, 9/10. We have allocated \$300,000 in capital funding for this project. Additionally, the initial round of audits has been completed, and we have been compiling documentation for their selected items over the past couple of weeks.

HUMAN RESOURCES

HR will seek help from the Communications Team with staff engagement and external marketing strategy. The staff engagement roll out will include an Employee/HR newsletter and the redesign of the internal Intranet HR website.

The external marketing and branding strategy will include the redesign of the recruitment website, an aggressive online marketing / awareness campaign to capture more applicants and the development of marketing materials.

Further, HR is implementing a process to send out quarterly letters to certified staff, reminding them to update and maintain their certifications.