

September 6, 2024

Dear Newton Families,

Welcome to the new school year! I hope your summers were relaxing, restorative, and joyful.

As we enter a new school year, you will see and hear me talk more about the vision for the Office of Student Services: **All NPS students will have opportunities to excel in all content areas across all grades**¹. This vision is grounded in three core components:

1. **All Students Are Known and Valued:** Every student in our district is recognized for their unique strengths and contributions. We are committed to fostering a sense of belonging and ensuring that every student feels seen, heard, and valued.
2. **Access to Grade Level Curriculum (or beyond):** We believe that all students have the potential to excel. Students must receive necessary support and accommodations to learn knowledge and skills at grade level (or beyond). Students with disabilities receive carefully designed instruction that accelerates their growth towards learning goals.
3. **Individualized Supports:** We understand that each student's journey is different. We are committed to providing supports tailored to students' academic, physical and mental health, and social-emotional needs.

In Newton Public Schools, we are incredibly proud of the comprehensive services and programming provided to support every student. Our [Special Education](#) services are robust and designed to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities, ensuring they have access to a high-quality education. Our **Guidance and School Counseling** services are integral in promoting equity and meaningful access for all students, helping them navigate their academic and personal journeys with confidence.

In addition, we offer **comprehensive supports to schools** to address every student's academic, physical, and mental health needs. This holistic approach is further strengthened by our commitment to promoting **social, emotional, and behavioral learning**, which is essential for fostering well-rounded, resilient individuals.

We will continue our work on dismantling structural and cultural ableism in our district and ensuring that our systems and practices are inclusive and supportive of all students, including those with disabilities. Our district's longstanding commitment to inclusive education provides a strong foundation for this work, and we are eager to build upon it.

We will continue to explore what it means to see our work through an anti-ableist lens and to reframe disability as an identity. I encourage you to join me in these important discussions as we strive to create a learning environment where every student's identity is embraced and affirmed.

¹ Adapted from MA DESE's Educational Vision
<https://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2023/2023-05/item7.1-educational-vision.pdf>

With guidance and support from the Disability Advisory Group (DAG) and Newton's Special Education Advisory Council (SEPAC), we plan to create an online resource library from which the entire community can learn. I invite you to send recommendations to me as well for the resource library.

Families play a crucial role in this journey. Your partnership is vital in setting the tone for true inclusion and in ensuring that all students have meaningful access to every aspect of the school community. Together, we can create a learning environment that affirms each student's unique identity and meets the needs of every learner.

With the implementation of the newly proposed Personalized Electronic Device policy, please note that all students with documented needs for personalized electronic devices for the purposes of access to instruction, curriculum and/or the life of the school will be considered and where appropriate, honored. Accommodations with electronic devices listed in Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and Section 504 Plans will still be implemented and are exempt from the policy.

Lastly, I encourage you to learn more about [Newton Special Education Parent Advisory Council \(SEPAC\)](#). SEPAC is a group of caregivers of students in special education who collaborate to share information, resources, and advice on policy and practice. All are welcome to join monthly Open Board Meetings and the SEPAC listserv.

If you have questions or feedback, please feel free to reach out to your school-based team from the Office of Student Services.

I wish you all a wonderful and successful school year.

With gratitude,

Casey Ngo-Miller