



Board Report
October 4, 2024



BOARD UPDATE

From the desk of Dr. Alexandra Estrella, Superintendent
October 4, 2024

EXCELLENCE, EQUITY & INCLUSION

Communications

Norwalk BOE Town Hall: FY 2025-26 Budget



THE NORWALK BOARD OF EDUCATION
INVITES YOU TO PARTICIPATE IN A

TOWN HALL MEETING

FOCUSING ON THE FISCAL YEAR

**2025-26 OPERATING
AND CAPITAL BUDGETS**

THURSDAY

October 10, 2024



EVENT START TIME

6:30 PM



**NORWALK CITY HALL,
3RD FLOOR, ROOM A300**

125 East Ave.
Norwalk



www.norwalkps.org

For more information:
communications@norwalkps.org

The Norwalk Board of Education invites the community to participate in a Town Hall focusing on the FY 2025-26 BOE Operating and Capital Budgets. The Town Hall will be held in person on Thursday, Oct. 10 at 6:30 p.m. at Norwalk City Hall, Third Floor in Room A300.

Participants will learn more about the budget process and have the opportunity to add their voice to the development of the FY 2024-25 Operating and Capital Budgets. The Norwalk BOE and Norwalk Public Schools want to hear feedback from our community and what they believe should be the priorities when putting together next year's budget.

In Case You Missed It

[Superintendent's Book Club feat. Davari Shavers \(VIDEO\)](#)



Dr. Estrella is inviting some of our best young readers to be part of her Superintendent Book Club this school year. Her first guest reader was Davari Shavers, a fifth grader from Fox Run Elementary School, who is reading “All Are Welcome” by Alexandra Penfold and Suzanne Kaufman.

VILS Brings NASA to West Rocks



West Rocks Middle School students were in and out of their Verizon Innovative Learning Lab last week to connect with folks at NASA and to learn about the amazing opportunities the space program can offer them in the future, some as soon as high school!

[MBK/MSK Mentors Retreat \(VIDEO\)](#)



My Brother's Keeper and My Sister's Keeper held their first-ever Joint Mentor Retreat on Sept. 30. The training was designed to prepare mentors in supporting some of our most vulnerable students and to provide students with a positive connection with at least one adult in their building. This retreat allowed

the mentors to develop a shared definition of mentorship, review expectations for students and mentors, and collaborate on our program calendar for the year.

StoryFest at NPS High Schools



Authors featured at The Westport Library's seventh annual StoryFest made an early stop at Brien McMahon High School, Norwalk High School and Brookside Elementary School last month to share their upcoming work with our students.

Important Dates

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

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

Upcoming Events

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, 300 Highland Ave. in Norwalk

Norwalk Public Schools wishes to invite you to our third annual Hispanic Heritage Festival on Thursday, Oct. 24 from 5:45 to 8 p.m. at Brien McMahon High School.

Inspired by the national theme, "Pioneers of Change: Shaping the Future Together," experience captivating performances that bring to life the stories of Hispanic pioneers who shaped America's future. Enjoy student performances showcasing dance, music, visual art, theater, and spoken word, all highlighting the vibrant spirit of Hispanic heritage and culture.

There will also be student presentations, a live DJ and traditional cuisine to take away.

All City String Festival

Wednesday, Oct. 30 at 7:30 p.m.

Norwalk Concert Hall, 125 East Ave. in Norwalk

Did you know that the All City String Festival has occurred every year in Norwalk Public Schools since 1980? That's a lot of incredible performances!

We can't wait to celebrate this year's festival on Wednesday, Oct. 30 at 7:30 p.m. at the Norwalk Concert Hall. Admission is FREE! The festival will feature string students from across the district including the 5th grade orchestra, the middle school orchestras and the high school orchestras.

Testing & Accountability

CT-SAT Proficiency for Connecticut Cities						
Population over 70,000						
	ELA			Math		
City	2022	2023	2024	2022	2023	2024
Bridgeport	27.7%	23.9%	26.7%	9.8%	8.3%	7.5%
Danbury	37.7%	34.7%	35.2%	15.3%	14.6%	10.9%
Hartford	32.3%	26.3%	28.5%	13.6%	12.3%	12.6%
New Britain	29.3%	22.4%	29.9%	9.7%	8.4%	7.6%
New Haven	28.0%	26.8%	35.3%	10.3%	11.4%	10.7%
Norwalk	46.0%	41.8%	44.1%	27.7%	22.4%	24.3%
Stamford	52.0%	46.9%	49.6%	27.4%	29.2%	23.5%
Waterbury	22.7%	21.1%	26.4%	4.4%	8.7%	8.5%
State	55.6%	52.4%	54.8%	34.8%	34.1%	29.5%



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On Sept. 20, the Board of Education reviewed 2024 state testing results. Proficiency trends were reviewed for Smarter Balanced ELA and math (grades 3-8) CT-SAT ELA and math (Grade 11) and Next Generation Science results (grades 5,8, and 11). Norwalk leads other large Connecticut cities in ELA and math proficiency and ranks number 2 in science. A review of performance and growth indicators from Next Generation Accountability indicators was also provided. In math Norwalk also ranked first among large Connecticut cities for math performance and growth. On Sept. 25, families received 2024 individual student reports from state testing through the Parent Square secure document transmittal.

NWEA fall testing window closed on Sept. 30. 97% of students in grades 1-10 took NWEA math and 95% of students in grades 3-10 sat for reading. The percentage of students in the high achievement bands (above the 60th percentile) increased each year from 2022 to 2024 for both reading and math. School and district level achievement and growth reports will be distributed to district and school leaders.

School Quality Review (SQR)

Nine of the 13 schools receiving a School Quality Review this year attended the School Quality Review Training Institute. This all-day training provided a refresher course for these school teams because their last SQR was in 2022-23. The school teams include principals, assistant principals, coaches, teachers, and an NFT Union Steward. Members of the Curriculum and Instruction team facilitated the school team tables. Currently, meeting and working with West Rocks Middle School, the first school receiving an SQR mid-October 2024.

Research & Analytics

Support to school leadership on data tools and their use continues to be provided. The first set of English checkpoints assessments are being given this week and next. The data from these assessments will help teachers to adjust instruction and school leaders to measure the impact of recent efforts. With the NWEA MAP testing window closed, preparations are being made to integrate the data within the NPS data dashboards. School leadership will receive updated data shortly and the dashboards will also be presented to improvement teachers. The research agenda is being defined, focusing on program evaluation for key district initiatives.

Data from a Norwalk Public Schools family survey on the types of data families want publicly available is currently being analyzed. The analysis will help identify which data and disaggregation are most important to families and guide decisions on what data to make publicly accessible.

CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION & SPECIALIZED LEARNING

Humanities

Teachers from across the district participated in the first training session of LETRS last week. We welcomed 38 returning teachers to kick off the second year of this training. Principals and APs were supported at their respective meetings by AEAs and the EA. We continue to support teachers and admins across the district in the planning of social studies and the use of the inquiry design model. There have been 2 model lessons to support teacher practice. There is a continued focus on the unit plans and supportive instructional materials. The second unit for ELA has been posted for grades K-8.

Mathematics/STEM

The STEM department has been preparing for the Oct. 15 Professional Learning Day by identifying areas of professional learning for the district, working with professional learning partners to create and design learning experiences, and scheduling with the curriculum department. Additionally, meetings with math coaches have been conducted in a blend of different 1:1 experience as well as a full math coach meeting in the afternoon of the September leadership meeting. We have been continuing to support schools with different aspects of planning for improvement. Planning and support continue with Marine Science with new lab areas being implemented at Jefferson and West Rocks.

Multilingual Learners

The MLL Department has completed all initial meetings with schools for MLL Support and Data. A presentation on MLL & QTEL strategies was done at Wolfpit Integrated Arts School on Sept. 23. Additional presentations will be made at Rowayton, Tracey, Marvin and Fox Run in October.

MLL & Dual Language coaching cycles have begun at Tracey, Naramake, Brookside, and upcoming at Silvermine and SoNo. At Kendall & Nathan Hale, meetings with the MLL teachers will be held on a bi-weekly basis.

On Wednesday, we had the launch of the beginner Spanish classes for adults at the Family Center and classes will meet weekly through December. The Dual Language PLC starts next Tuesday and will be held bi-weekly at the Family Center. The first workshop was held at the Family Center on Sept. 26 hosted by the Specialized Learning Dept. and it was well attended by families.

Upcoming events at the Family Center are:

Oct. 10 -Parent Square/PowerSchool Workshop for parents
Oct. 17 - Portrait of Graduate: Critical Thinker Workshop for parents
Oct. 28 - Spooktacular Halloween Drive thru Event

School Counseling/Workforce Development

The CT Automatic Admissions Program will be made available again this year to our seniors who are electing to apply to college/university. There have been state guidance changes made to this program, and the details are being updated in PowerSchool. Norwalk Public Schools had the honor to be invited to participate in the CT Legislative Testimony relative to our work with the Behavior Health Grant and the SHAPE Assessment. Robert Pennington, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, testified to the importance of the work and the need for sustainable funding. The work continues on the Scholar Meeting Tracker, in which we are able to use data outcomes to provide more support to scholars and faculty/staff as we refine the information based on School Counselor feedback. The NPS Risk Assessment and Intervention Guide has been revised with stakeholder feedback for ease of use for our support staff. The SHAPE Team will present at the CT State Conference in October, spotlighting the work being done at Norwalk Public Schools!

The Workforce Development Tech Summit was attended to explore industry-recognized credentials in higher education. Scholars who applied to the CT State Norwalk Certification Program and qualified and have an available seat have been invited to an advising session for course registration. The Workforce Development Guide has been updated along with all the opportunities on our Workforce Development website. The work continues on the NPS Internship Program and the Fall application should be ready to share with our scholars sometime in October.

Workforce Development will be a panelist at the CT State Conference in October, spotlighting the work being done at Norwalk Public Schools!

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

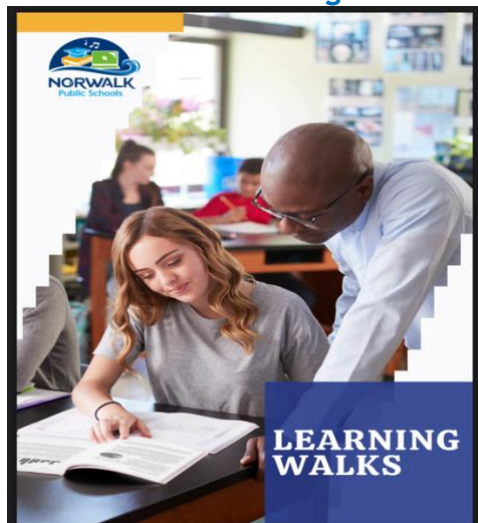
The Specialized Learning department held an event at the Family Center last Thursday on the PPT process. We went over the initial referral and PPT 1 (Initial PPT) process. The event was well attended, and the parents/guardians were extremely grateful for the support. We are excited to host more events in the future.

The Specialized Learning department is looking forward to the Middle School Choice Fair on Oct. 9, 2024, where we will have a table and answer questions from prospective middle school students.

On the same night, Norwalk is hosting the Annual Transition Fair, which is a collaboration with Norwalk, Stamford, Westport, and Wilton Public Schools. The Fair will be held in the City Hall Community Room from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Many local and state agencies will be there, including DDS, BRS, STAR, Ability Beyond, BESB, Norwalk Transit Authority, College Steps, and CT State Norwalk.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

District Wide Learning Walks



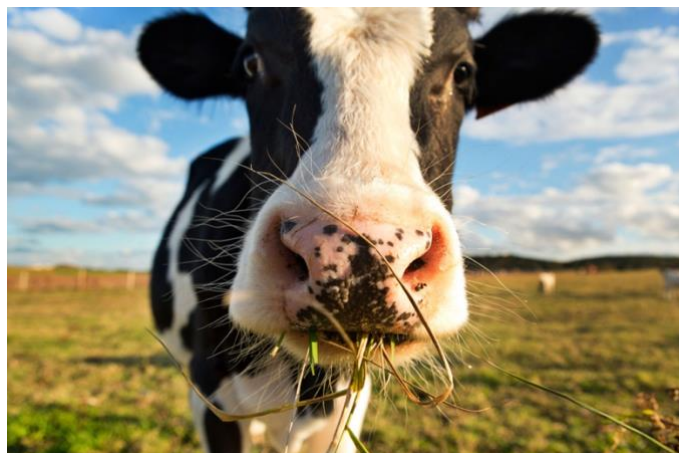
On Oct. 8 & 9, Central Office staff will participate in our first districtwide learning walks for the 2024-25 school year. For the first round, we will collaborate with West Rocks Middle School, Nathan Hale Middle School, Kendall College and Career Academy, Marvin Elementary School, Center for Global Studies High School, Concord Magnet School, and Cranbury Elementary School. The remaining 14 schools will conduct their own learning walks with their school-based teams. The purpose of the learning walks is to establish a shared set of high-quality instructional practices that align with the NPS Portrait of a Graduate.

Early Career Principal PLC

This PLC is dedicated to exploring key leadership moves that drive success during the critical early years of the principalship. Experienced NPS principals, Dr. Damon Lewis and Jane Wilkins, will provide invaluable mentorship and a collaborative environment where emerging leaders can learn and grow. Our mission includes offering differentiated leadership support tailored to the unique needs of early career principals. Through shared insights, practical strategies, and ongoing guidance, we strive to equip early career principals with the tools they need to navigate challenges, inspire their teams, and create positive change in their schools. Our first gathering will be held on Oct. 7.

BUSINESS & OPERATIONS

Food Services



Drumroll, please... The Adopt a cow winner has been selected and. Congratulations to Michelle Suda and her fifth-grade class at Marvin Elementary School. There were 33 Norwalk entries for the Adopt a Cow [New England Dairy](#) and Mrs. Suda's class is the lucky winner of a Dairy farmer who will visit Mrs. Suda's class to talk about life on their farm, share photos and answer questions.

Chartwells and the Food Service department will be holding an Advisory meeting for families and staff to discuss menu guidelines, choices and restrictions on Oct. 21 at Cranbury School from 6 to 7:30pm please join us for a brief presentation of the program and Q&A.



[Pink October](#) Food Service Staff for October can donate \$10.00 to wear pink with their Jeans on Fridays in October.

October National Apple Month

October is National Farm to School Month and National Apple Month! What better way to celebrate both than serving CT Grown apples on the school breakfast and lunch menus, district-wide, all month long. Serving up happy, healthy, and local!

The countdown begins only 5 days until **CT Grown for CT Kids week** Oct. 7 to 11.

We will host a special event at Tracey Magnet School where there will be special guests, a community lunch, garden activities and a local tomato panzanella salad.

A local apple photo contest across all elementary schools where classes can submit a photo of them enjoying their CTR Grown Apples for a chance to win an apple themed dessert party for their class.

National School Lunch Week

Oct. 14-18 is National School Lunch Week. The Middle and High Schools will have a new menu concept, and elementary students can look forward to fun activity sheets throughout the week.

Chartwell's award-winning Mood Boost Program is kicking off this month with its tour across all Norwalk Elementary Schools. Chartwells is partnering with FoodCorps and will start the journey at Fox Run Elementary school Oct. 29.



The temperature is dropping so it's time to warm up with some [Chocolate Milk](#) stop by one of our Middle or High schools during breakfast for a sip.

A sole source request has been presented to the City's Purchasing Dept. for approval of a new Refrigerated Truck for the Food Service Dept.

School Safety

All NPS schools and locations have conducted one Lockdown drill and one Evacuation drill in the first month of the 2024-25 school year to ensure students and staff are familiar with these emergency protocols. In addition to these drills, schools have established their School Safety Committees and have held their first meeting which included reviewing new protocols and updating the School Safety Plan for 2024-25.

[NPS Safety Video - Lockdown Procedures \(youtube.com\)](#)

[NPS Safety Video - Evacuation \(youtube.com\)](#)

Transportation

The Wellness Committee and Transportation Office have partnered with the Bike/Walk Commission, Health Department, Nuvance Health and Safe Routes to School Office to participate in National Bike, Walk & Roll to school event which takes place annually in the month of October. This year we are celebrating Oct. 21 to Oct. 25, which coincides with National School Bus Safety Week. Please stay tuned for more information.

Health Services

On Sept. 23, School Health Services met with both school-based health partners, Human Services Council and Norwalk Community Health Center, for a sit-down meeting and collaboration. Discussion of program and services was discussed to best services NPS students and families.

In the month of September, the HSC school-based health centers had 275 student visits at NHS and West Rocks Middle School; for the same period, the NCHC school-based health centers had 402 student visits at BMHS and the Ponus/CMS campus. Services provided by these SBHCs are in addition to those provided by the primary care provider, and include physicals, immunizations, sick visits, and behavioral health services.

Click [here](#) to sign your child up for school-based health center services with HSC if your child attends NHS or WRMS.

Click [here](#) to sign your child up for school-based health center services with NCHC if your child attends BMHS, Ponus, or CMS.



Outfitting of the NCHC Family Health and Wellness Center at the Family Center is complete. DPH license is pending before the clinic may be open to provide services.



How Sick is Too Sick - *When is sick too sick for school?* flyer - this is a helpful resource for schools/families to understand when to stay home and when to go to school.

[Attendance-When is sick too sick for school? \(ct.gov\)](#) - English

[attendance_sick_for_school_flyer_spanish.pdf \(ct.gov\)](#) - Spanish

COVID-19 Information

For additional information on COVID-19, please [click here](#).

DIGITAL LEARNING & TECHNOLOGY

Enterprise Software/Data

With the first assessment window closed, data analytics have begun. Our NWEA platform will be refreshed with the most current demographic student data and shared with Testing and Assessment for their next steps. Assessment scores will also be compiled and shared with all building administrators, Literacy and Math Coaches. Software analytics at the Central Office level will be shared with each department leader in the next two weeks.

Infrastructure/Operations

We are currently working with our E-rate consultant to apply for the FCC Cybersecurity Pilot. This pilot program aims to help schools secure their networks, as cybersecurity is not currently covered under E-rate. We are also planning to upgrade wireless access points at Brookside and Marvin this weekend.

Digital Learning

Elementary Digital Learning Coaches will be attending an AI conference on Oct. 11, hosted by EdAdvance. Additionally, they are participating in an ISTE course focusing on AI. After both training sessions, we will develop ways to support the district through professional development or school-specific training.

Library

The Library Media Specialists will engage in their first whole group PD on Oct. 9, 2024. They will set goals based on district objectives of engagement, critical thinking, and a portrait of a graduate. They will identify their sphere of influence and receive training on a research tool called Noodletools, which will assist students in organizing their research. A Britannica representative will reveal new updates on this research resource. Librarians will also have time to collaborate by school level. It will be a day filled with relevant topics to assist the Librarians in their roles.

Twilight/NAOP/OSS

Last week, Future Ready Programs continued to expand its relationship with Norwalk's Youth Services. FRP staff participated in a presentation of the Level All platform to help students prepare for career readiness. With the assistance of Youth Services Director Darlene Young, we continue to support students in preparing for success. The first semester Virtual & Twilight Application closed on Friday. FRP staff are still interviewing students who applied before the deadline. Current enrollment stands at 40 students, and the remaining applicants should bring the numbers to 50 students.

FINANCE

The request for proposal for replacing orchestra instruments at the high schools and middle schools has been posted, and we received responses. These are currently being reviewed with the stakeholders for selection. Our goal is to finalize the selection by the end of this week so that it can be included on the Common Council agenda for Sept. 26.

In other news, our team met with City Finance to review the process of booking My School Bucks deposits. It has been decided that the Account Payable team will now take over this function to ensure timely posting and reconciliation of transactions. This should help streamline the process and improve efficiency.

HUMAN RESOURCES

HR has implemented new processes to better organize resignations, retirements, and leaves of absence.

We have finalized our Private School years of experience MOU, communicating the updated procedures to all certified staff and administrators.

We are pleased that we were able to collaborate with Carl, Kate, and others on finalizing the internship, student worker, student teacher, and volunteer processes.