

The Business Meeting of the New London Board of Education was held on April 7, 2025 in the New London Public Schools' Welcome Center and via Zoom Webinars.

1. Call to Order

President Maynard-Adams called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Present for the Board of Education: President – Elaine Maynard-Adams

Board Members Present: Alisha Blake
Secretary - Nathan Caron
Susan Hambey

Board Members Absent: Vice President – Bianca Alexis – Sylvain
Karen Bergin
Danni Cruz

Present for the administration: Dr. Cynthia Ritchie, Superintendent of Schools

2. Public Comment

Caitlin Flynn, New London, - ***This comment was submitted in writing and read aloud by Ms. Francolino during this portion of the meeting. It can be found in its entirety at the end of these minutes.***

3. Reports and Communications

- Board Chairperson's Report

Ms. Maynard-Adams reported that she attended the most recent Birth to Age 8 event during which she and Val Tamano, of the New London Education Foundation, gave away pairs of pajamas to all children in attendance! It was a great event. The theater program at the high school campus put on a presentation of *Sister Act*, and they did an amazing job. She shared that Nathan Hale will be putting on its performance of *Aladdin Kids* this upcoming Thursday, but that she and Board members will unfortunately have to attend a meeting of the City Council. She shared that the Parks & Recreation Department has offered the opportunity to Board Members to tour the new Community Recreation Center. Additionally, Ms. Maynard-Adams noted that a letter had been received from the U.S. Secretary of Education advising the district that in order to continue receiving Title I funding, DEI programs need to be stricken, and this needs to be certified by CSDE. Dr. Ritchie added that the CT Education Commissioner has received

additional information, and that it should be shared with the superintendents this week.

- Superintendent's Report
 - NLPS Child Nutrition Program Department Updates
 - Ms. Samantha Wilson, and Chef Alex Leigh gave a presentation to the Board outlining the department updates of the Child Nutrition Program. This presentation included the following highlights:
 - SY24-25 Priorities
 - Staffing Evolution
 - Training Program
 - Menu Philosophy
 - Farm to School
 - Meal Numbers and Participation

A copy of this presentation is available in its entirety upon request.

4. Approval of the Minutes

Motion by Ms. Blake, seconded by Ms. Hambey, to approve the minutes of the March 24, 2025 Business Meeting.

Motion carried, 4-0

5. Approval of the Consent Agenda

Motion by Ms. Maynard-Adams seconded by Ms. Blake, that the following items, as set forth on the Consent Agenda for the Business Meeting of April 7, 2025 be approved unless removed by a Board member or the Superintendent of Schools:

- A. Superintendent's Written Report
 - I. Academics
 - II. Human Resources
 - III. Student & Family Support Services
- B. Action Item
 - I. Approve the Revised SY2024-2025 District Calendar
 - II. Approve the Revised SY2024-2025 Year-Round Calendar
 - III. Approve the Healthy Food and Beverage Participation for New London Public Schools for the Time Period of July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026
 - Pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the New London Public Schools Board of Education certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1,

2025, through June 30, 2026. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups.

IV. Approve the Healthy Food and Beverage Exemptions Certification for New London Public Schools for the Time Period of July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026.

- The New London Public Schools Board of Education will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverages not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food and beverage items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An "event" is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The "regular school day" is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. "Location" means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the food and beverage sales.

Motion carried, 4-0

6. Items Pulled from Consent Agenda

- Superintendent's Written Report – Business & Finance

Motion by Ms. Maynard-Adams, seconded by Mr. Caron, to receive the Business & Finance report for the record.

Ms. Maynard-Adams clarified that she wanted to pull this item to ask Mr. Funk to provide a summary of the ESSER funds quandary, and how we have ESSER funds that may or may not be available.

Please see the statement read by Mr. Funk in full at the end of these minutes.

Motion carried, 4-0

- Superintendent's Written Report – Operations – Includes Magnet Pathways, Athletics, Facilities and Technology

Motion by Mr. Caron, seconded by Ms. Blake, to receive the Operations report for the record.

Mr. Caron noted that under the technology department, there was mention of a meeting with Apple and a plan for elementary schools to move to the use of iPads. Mr. Gautier, Executive Director of Operations, clarified that currently students in grades K-3 are using iPads, and grades 4 & 5 are using Chromebooks. The savings of shifting totally to iPads will be found in having devices that will last for five years, a reduction in damages to the devices, and the ability to track devices. There was a question about whether Mr. Gautier had quotes and if they will be honored with the expected tariff increases, and he shared that he does have a current quote in writing, and expects that it will be.

Motion carried, 4-0

- Approve the Proposed SY2025-2026 District Calendar

Motion by Ms. Blake, seconded by Mr. Caron, to approve the SY2025-2026 District Calendar.

Ms. Blake asked about the calendar and what the development process was to create the draft. Dr. Jennifer Hills-Papetti, Assistant Superintendent, explained that there were a multitude of staff on the committee. The opportunity to join the committee was shared through the Superintendent's Monday Memo in December, and there was an opportunity to join through February. Some of the discussions that occurred in the committee meeting were that: April Break should be universal, and that weeks should be full as that has been most successful for consistent attendance. There have been some concerns about having the start date for staff on August 20, but this is partially to compensate for an extensive break in December due to the way the New Years Day and Three Kings Day holidays fall. Ms. Kristea Francolino, Manager of Executive Support Services, also noted that when looking at attendance patterns to develop the calendar, it was not only student attendance patterns that were reviewed, but staff attendance as well. She also clarified, as it had been raised as a potential concern, that the Year-Round calendar is based off of the District's calendar, not the other way around. Ms. Blake thanked Dr. Hills-Papetti and Ms. Francolino for the clarification.

Ms. Maynard-Adams stated that she does not like going back to school before Labor Day, as it is still summer, but she has no solution to make this calendar better. She stated that she will be voting against this calendar, as she knows others will be voting in favor to approve it. Ms. Maynard-Adams also noted that she did receive some emails from teachers expressing discontent with the draft, but that she spoke with the Union and they did not take an official position, as opinions throughout the unit were split based on a survey that was taken.

Motion carried, 3-1

Voting no: Ms. Maynard-Adams

- Approve the Proposed SY2025-2026 Year-Round Calendar

Motion by Ms. Blake, seconded by Ms. Hambey, to approve the proposed SY2025-2026 Year-Round Calendar.

Ms. Maynard-Adams stated that she has the same comments for this calendar as she does for the previous.

Motion carried, 3-1

Voting no: Ms. Maynard-Adams

7. Board Comments, Questions

Ms. Blake thanked Ms. Wilson and Chef Leigh for their presentations.

Ms. Maynard-Adams stated that the City Council and Board of Finance had requested copies of the salary schedules for NLPS staff. She explained that there was a great level of discomfort and that she sent an email to the City Finance Director. She stated that she does not know how the Board cannot provide this information as uncomfortable as it may be, since this information is public information. Ms. Blake stated for the record that she does not agree with this and is not comfortable with it, and does not believe that the unions should be comfortable with it. She sides with the unions and the district's employees and workers.

8. Adjournment

Motion by Ms. Blake, seconded by Ms. Hambey, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried, 4-0

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nathan Caron
Secretary, Board of Education

From: [Flynn, Caitlin](#)
To: [Francolino, Kristea](#)
Subject: Public Comment for BoE meeting on April 7, 2025
Date: Friday, April 4, 2025 1:14:24 PM
Attachments: [Outlook-io4tc203.png](#)
[Outlook-zu03zxih.png](#)
[Outlook-nyvnh5c5.png](#)
[Outlook-ioraqhpv.png](#)
[Outlook-fzglqx1w.png](#)
[Outlook-aphrmvko.png](#)

Hi Kristea,

Below is my public comment addressing the SY25/26 calendar being proposed.

I am reaching out over my concern of the proposed calendar for SY25/26 to be discussed at the BoE meeting on 4/7/25.

The staff start date of 8/20/25 and students starting for a full week before Labor Day is something I really cannot support, as a staff member and a parent of a student entering K.

There are many reasons I feel this is not necessary:

1. Surrounding districts are not doing this - making childcare for staff an issue.
2. Starting school before Labor Day, as a coastal community in New England cuts off the best part of the year here - in addition to impacting summer working hours for staff and students who benefit from our seasonal businesses.
3. Kindergartners starting 5 full days is developmentally a challenge/inappropriate - speak with any K teacher and I am sure they will echo this.
4. The district has proposed closing buildings to save money in the summer - and opening the entire district up 2 weeks before Labor Day directly conflicts this cost saving initiative.
5. Starting this early is unnecessary - as we have been significantly less impacted by winter weather closings with climate change. Additionally, we do not have a February break. Between less snow and no Feb break we are out very early in June (spring). Summer is June 20 - September 20, summer break from school should more closely align to the season.
6. If this start date is to support alignment with year round programming - I feel that the majority of staff/students are being negatively impacted by this calendar shift for a small portion of our school district.



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ESSER Funds Liquidation Extension Revocation

ESSER Funds had a period end date of 9/30/24. We knew this well in advance.

Liquidation is generally required within 120 days. The state provided very specific parameters for what constitutes as liquidated. In short it allowed us to receive contracted services and supplies during the liquidation period. We also had to pay the vendors for them during the liquidation period. The guidelines specifically disallowed expenses for any internal payroll where the time worked was after 9/30/24, or for rent for periods after 9/30/24.

The majority of the ESSER grant was to be used for payroll. This was in part because we had to use ESSER funds to cover CBA contractual increases over the past few years using ESSER funds since the funding increases in other sources (including General Fund) were insufficient to cover these costs increases (even when maintaining the same staffing and service levels).

ESSER 2 had the same guidelines that were provided for ESSER 3, and the ESSER 2 liquidation extensions were granted. We devised a strategy to use ESSER funds during FY25 to pay for the cost of wages in certain ESSER funded positions through 9/30/25. Shifting to coverage of other positions with ESSER funds would have required new approval from SDE.

We then planned to use the remainder of ESSER funds for certain contracted services as allowable – primarily these services were student transportation, with some funding to be used for MLL tutors through the High Dosage Tutoring grant – restricted to being used for

MS grades, and therefore in order to provide equity across the district, we were unable to spend all of these funds by 1/28/25 (120 days after the 9/30/25 grant period end date). In total, we planned to use all ARP ESSER funds by 6/30/25 except the High Dosage Tutoring grant which we planned to expend in full by 8/31/25

On Feb 24, 2025 we were officially granted the extension for the liquidation period to March 28, 2026. On March 29 we received a communication from SCDE stating that that extension had been rescinded, and the new extension date had been changed to March 28, 2025 - One day prior to the date that we received notification. To be clear, we were aware for quite some time that we would be facing a fiscal cliff with the expiration of ESSER funds. When we - once again - received a General fund increase (for FY25) that was considerably lower than inflationary and contractual increases, we devised the plan to utilize ESSER funds as per what the guidelines allowed, to fully expend the balance of ESSER funds to help us operationally in FY25 rather than to use the funds for one time projects that would provide less overall benefit to our students than continued programming would.

The CSDE changed their grant drawdown policy in the last year to require that grant funds can only be drawn down in arrears, after the district has paid for expenses, and that we must provide proof that we have paid these expenses. Previously their policy was to allow us to draw down funds based on the upcoming month's estimated expenses.

On January 29 we submitted a drawdown request for all expenditures that had been paid for and items/services received by 1/28/25. Since

then, we have received other services and paid for many of them. We had planned to submit another drawdown at the end of March or the beginning of April. The communication about the liquidation extension came with no warning on a date just prior to when we intended to submit the drawdown requests.

Additionally, we had some facility work at a cost of \$350k that was completed by Feb 28, 2025. We had not been able to process payment for this work as of March 28 due to billing and system issues. This was work that was expressly approved in the liquidation extension that we previously were granted.

We had planned to draw down \$1,175,492 in ARP ESSER Funds as well as \$46,561 in funds from the ARP High Dosage Tutoring grant at the end of March or beginning of April, for items/services that had already been paid for and received. It is unclear now whether these funds will be allowed to be drawn down. Typically, “liquidated” means product or services received, vendor paid, and funds reimbursed to the district by the grantor. Since the final drawdown date was determined to be a date earlier than the date that when we were informed, it is our hope that we will still be allowed to draw down funds that were spent for products and services that were received by 3/28/25. If we are able to draw down the funds that were expended by March 28, 2025, plus the funds that were to be utilized to pay for the facility work that was completed and billed for prior to that same date, we would be able to draw down an additional total of \$1,222,072. The amount of funding potentially in jeopardy (published by CSDE) as a result of the rescinded liquidation extension is \$1,961,395.

Therefore if we are allowed to draw down the above mentioned funds (that we paid out prior to March 28 of this year, that would leave an inaccessible amount of the $\$1,961,395 - \$1,222,072 = \$739,323$.

If we are able also to draw down the portion of the STMHS Boiler that was completed but not billed, that would bring the inaccessible amount of funds down to \$579,342

Note: of the \$350k for STEM Boiler replacement, \$180,018.52 has been billed and is in cue to pay. The remaining \$170k work has been done but we have not been billed yet – the remainder includes retainage.