# Board Update - October 2026

Every month, the different departments of Norwalk Public Schools will provide an update to the Board of Education of the work they've been doing to ensure an excellent and equitable education for all our scholars. We're also sharing that update with our entire community!

## Communications

**Brief Overview:**

Communications organized two major district-wide events this month — the Middle School Showcase on Oct. 7 and the 5th Annual Hispanic Heritage Festival on Oct. 22. The department also finalized the 2026 State of the Schools publication and launched the next video in the "We Are Norwalk" series, featuring Dave Kuban, owner of Dave's Hometown Deli.

**Key Highlights:**

* Full production of Hispanic Heritage Festival
* Spotlights for Principals Month in coordination with **Leadership Development** (see NPS social media channels)

**Upcoming Work or Next Steps:**
We will market the first Community Forum focusing on AI and screentime in schools, scheduled for Nov. 10. We are also preparing for the High School Showcase on Dec. 2



# Business & Operations

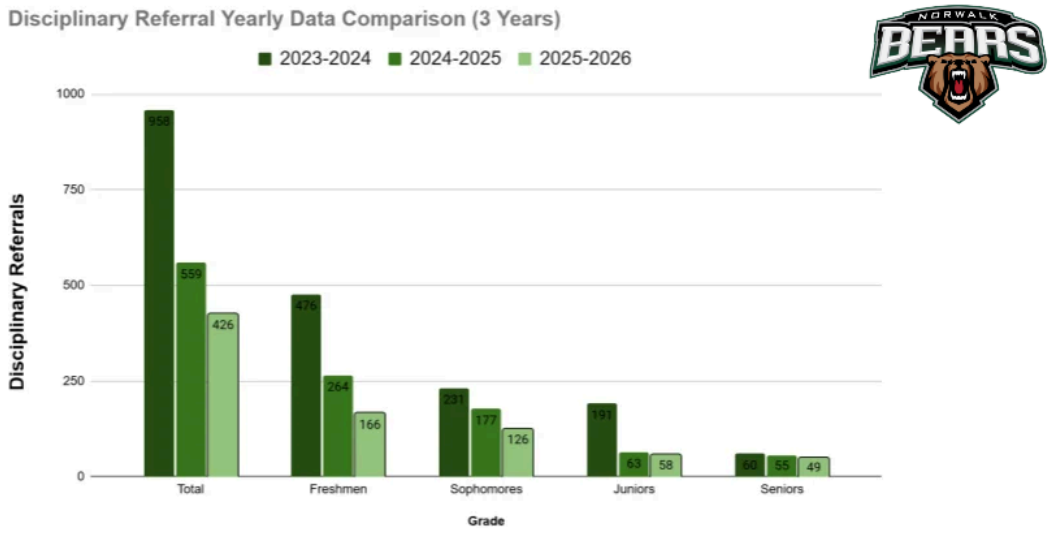
## School Safety

**Brief Overview:**

The School Safety and Preparedness Department is pleased to report that districtwide incident data has decreased by 29% compared with this point last year. We attribute this progress to the safe, inclusive cultures fostered across our schools, with a strong focus on belonging and building meaningful relationships with students. Norwalk High School has emerged as a leader in this work, demonstrating the positive impact of an intentional, relationship-centered approach to school culture.

**Key Highlights:**

* Suspensions are down district-wide by nearly 30%
* Norwalk High School has seen a decrease of 22% compared to this time last year
* Schools have engaged in creating action plans to increase belonging, promote attendance, and improve school culture




There were 426 Disciplinary referrals written in (2025 - 2026) compared to the 559 written in (2024-2025), a decrease of 133. This is a decrease of 23%. When compared to the 958 written in (2023-2024), a decrease of 532. This is a decrease of 55%.

**Upcoming Work or Next Steps:**

- Identify and share effective practices from Norwalk High School and other schools demonstrating strong results.

- Expand opportunities for student, staff, and family feedback to better understand their experiences and strengthen school-based strategies.

# Curriculum, Instruction & Specialized Learning

## Humanities (ELA, Social Studies, World Language)

**Brief Overview:**

Building on our foundational start to the school year, the Humanities Department focused on advancing student-centered instructional practices, enhancing curriculum alignment, and establishing key assessment baselines across all grade levels. Key department initiatives spanned curriculum development, targeted professional learning, and the completion of Beginning-of-Year (BOY) testing to drive data-informed instruction across the district.

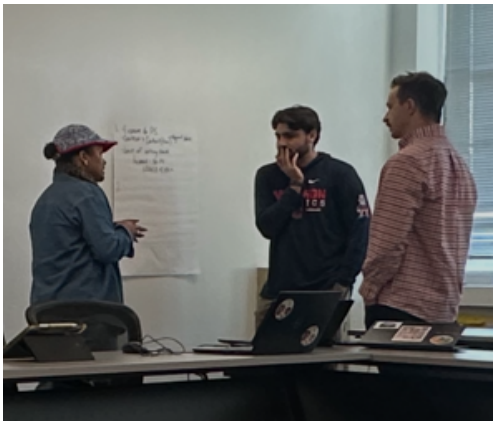
**Key Highlights:**

* **High school Social Studies educators** collaborated to align and strengthen the sequence and coherence across World History and US History.
* **Secondary ELA teachers** engaged in dedicated professional learning sessions centered on fostering the self-directed learner. Teachers explored instructional strategies that encourage student agency, independent goal-setting, and reflective learning practices within reading and writing units as they relate to this Portrait of a Graduate competency.
* **Secondary World Language teachers** participated in professional learning around the national and state language standards and reflected on ways to strengthen student proficiency in daily instruction.


Self-Directed Learning sessions







Professional learning for high school educators around literacy and social studies curriculum

**Upcoming Work or Next Steps:**

In the coming months, the department will focus on monitoring classroom implementation of *NPS Look Fors* through District Learning Walks, paying close attention to Portrait of a Graduate competencies to evaluate instructional impact, identify trends, and design targeted professional learning. Collaborative curriculum coherence work will continue through November with World Language and US History teams to prepare updated units of study for the 2027–2028 school year. Additionally, department leaders will partner closely with school teams to support the alignment and execution of their School Improvement Plans using recent Beginning-of-Year assessment data.

## Science, Technology, Engineering & Math (STEM)

**Brief Overview:**

October has been a very busy month!  The second district professional learning day was October 13th.  Elementary teachers had a focus on mathematics professional development,

with grades 1-5th all participating in a math session.  Alongside professional learning, our Marine Science Pathway continues to provide real-world, hands-on fieldwork that connects classroom concepts directly to maritime industry skills and coastal ecology.

**Key Highlights:**

* **High schools** are completing the first math pilot resource and preparing to switch to EnVision.
* BTC practices, self-directed learner strategies, and the math vision have been the focus of learning for **elementary and secondary teachers**.
* **Middle school science educators** engaged in professional learning on Khan Academy for Science, exploring how its standards-aligned video lessons, interactive practice modules, and real-time student progress tracking can support differentiated, mastery-based science instruction.
* **The Marine Science Pathway** introduced new field-based learning: BMHS Marine Trades and Engineering students visited SoundWaters, gaining hands-on experience using industry-standard tools and fabrication techniques essential to marine engineering and maritime trades.







Brien McMahon engineering students working with SoundWaters

**Upcoming Work or Next Steps:**

We are about to support schools with their Professional Learning Communities, related to their School Improvement Plans. Additionally, the elementary schools that did not pilot the new science curriculum yet have training the week of Oct. 19 to allow for implementation of two units for this school year. Marine science initiatives will continue expanding seasonal field experiences and coordinating ongoing project work with regional partners.

## School Counseling & Workforce Development

**Brief Overview:**

Our Pathways to Construction Trade Class is underway for interested NPS high school students. This free, two-day Trade Exposure Program is held on two Saturdays in Norwalk and is open to students Ages 16 and older. Throughout the program, students gain hands-on exposure to a variety of construction trades, learn about career and apprenticeship opportunities, and connect with local trade professionals. Participants also develop valuable industry knowledge, ask questions, and begin building professional networks with community partners. Additionally, participating juniors and seniors are registered for OSHA 10 Construction Training, providing them with valuable workplace safety knowledge and an industry-recognized credential.

Key Highlights:
* Trade Exposure Programming
* Industry and Trade Networking
* OSHA 10 Construction Training provided for Juniors and Seniors

**Upcoming Work or Next Steps:**

The Pathways to Construction Trade Program will host another cohort in Spring 2027.




High school students at the Pathways to Construction Trade class

# School Improvement

**Brief Overview:**

This month, the School Improvement team focused on supporting Gifted & Talented teachers as they prepared for and began universal screening for Grade 3 students and students new to the district in Grades 4 and 5. The team also created the first progress monitoring workbooks of the school year, providing schools with data to monitor progress toward their School Improvement Plan goals and examine performance across student groups.

**Key Highlights:**

* Supported Gifted & Talented teachers in preparing for and beginning Naglieri testing, which is the universal screening for Grade 3 students and students new to Norwalk Public Schools in Grades 4 and 5.
* Prepared to open the middle school G&T recommendation window, during which both teachers and families may recommend students for the program. Additional information is available on the Norwalk Public Schools Gifted & Talented website.
* Created the first progress monitoring workbooks of the year. Middle schools received workbooks containing NWEA and curriculum-based assessment data for ELA and mathematics.

**Upcoming Work or Next Steps:**

The team will release the elementary progress monitoring workbooks for Grades 2–5 and support schools in using the data to monitor progress toward their improvement goals. Student Share meetings will also be held with each elementary school to make Gifted & Talented identification decisions based on multiple measures, including results from the recent universal screening.

## Testing and Accountability

**Brief Overview:**

This month the Testing Office focused on the fall administration of the following districtwide assessments: DIBELS8 for grades K-3, NWEA reading and math for grades 1-8, and College Board PSAT for grades 8-11. NWEA and DIBEL8 summary reports have been shared with district leaders.  PSAT results will be available in late October.

**Key Highlights:**

* In fall 2026, a higher percentage of students performed above the 60th national percentile in NWEA reading and math, compared to both fall 2025 and fall 2024.
* Fewer students performed below the NWEA's 21st percentile in fall 2026 compared to prior years (fall 2022 through fall 2025) for both reading and math.
* Spring 2027 Smarter Balanced proficiency projections based on fall NWEA outcomes are higher than they were in fall 2025.
* Fall NWEA individual student reports have been shared with NWEA Building Test Coordinators. These reports were distributed to families via ParentSquare.
* A higher percentage of students in grades 2 and 3 reached the fall DIBEL8 benchmark, compared to district results from fall 2021 through fall 2025.

**Upcoming Work or Next Steps:**

Detailed analysis of fall NWEA and DIBELS8 results will continue and include results by major groups. Upon request, school teams are being supported in their review of fall NWEA results. Preparation for the State release of 2026 Next Generation accountability reports continues as results for additional indicators are released. The final release is anticipated in early November. After the release school level accountability trend reports will be prepared and distributed.

# Digital Learning & Innovation

**Brief Overview:**

On Oct. 7, NPS Library Media Specialists and Digital Learning Coaches gathered together for a day of planning, collaboration and sharing of best practices to facilitate ongoing alignment across the district. They were joined by Ralph Valenzisi, Assistant Superintendent of Digital

Learning and Innovation, and Mary Yordon, President of the Norwalk Federation of Teachers, to discuss current initiatives, curriculum work, community engagement and library management.

**Key Highlights:**

* LMS and Digital Learning Staff discussed the current community dialogue regarding screen-use with our youngest learners, highlighting the importance of intentional technology use and the “Educator in the Lead” philosophy around instructional technology in the district.
* Staff shared ongoing discussions on the K-2 Tech and Screentime Operational Framework, district AI use and the screen-use pilot taking place in the district.
* LMS staff continue to work on the PK–5 District Library Media Program Scope & Sequence to align with the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) standards as well as the NPS Portrait of a Graduate framework.

**Upcoming Work or Next Steps:**

Digital Learning Coaches are planning for the EdCamp day of professional learning scheduled for November 3. Digital Learning Coaches, LMS’s, and teachers have signed up to share their expertise and best practices with other teachers, following an often-requested suggestion by staff. Workshops will include both tech and non-tech instructional practices.

# Human Resources

**Brief Overview:**

Human Resources continues to focus on strengthening substitute staffing, onboarding new employees, and expanding departmental support. Kelly Services is working directly with school leaders to address substitute vacancies, while the District has hired 39 additional candidates since the last update, bringing the total number of new hires since August to 159. The department is also preparing to welcome Margaret Halpin as its new paralegal on November 9, 2026.

**Key Highlights:**

* **Substitute Services:** Kelly Services continues to visit schools and meet with school leaders regarding substitute staffing needs in their respective buildings. Kelly has also hired a new account manager, Julie Tigranyan, who will work closely with Human Resources and the schools to fill substitute vacancies. Ms. Tigranyan will be on site in District three days per week.
* **Onboarding Stats:** The team continues to hire and onboard new employees. Since our last update, an additional 39 candidates have been hired, bringing the total number of new employees hired since August to 159.
* **HR Paralegal:** We are excited to share that Margaret Halpin will be joining the HR Team as a paralegal on November 9, 2026. In this role, she will work closely with the Legal Counsel and

Executive Director of Human Resources to support the department's legal and labor relations work.