

**Please Note: these minutes are pending Board approval.
Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut**

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting held on February 7, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 3 Primrose Street.

D. Zukowski, Chair	C. Melillo
J. Vouros, Vice Chair	A. Uberti
D. Ramsey, Secretary	T. Vadas
D. Cruson	1 Staff
J. Kuzma (left 8:13 p.m.)	1 Public
J. Larkin	
A. Plante	
K. Kunzweiler	
D. Godino (absent)	

Ms. Zukowski called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved that the Board of Education go into executive session for a legal consultation and invite Mr. Melillo and Mrs. Vadas. Mr. Ramsey seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 1 – Executive Session

Executive session began at 6:31p.m. and ended at 6:59 p.m.

Item 2 – Pledge of Allegiance

Item 3 – Consent Agenda

MOTION: Mrs. Larkin moved that the Board of Education approve the consent agenda which includes the correspondence report. Mr. Ramsey seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 4 – Public Participation

Item 5 – Reports

Chair Report: Ms. Zukowski commented on finishing the budget meetings and getting back to the regular meetings again.

Superintendent's Report: Mr. Melillo reported that he has attended some of the sports games as well as the SWC Cheerleading Championships. Pipes burst at the high school on Sunday which caused extensive damage. He was proud of the administration, teachers, facilities and custodial staff who worked nonstop Monday until the end of today. We will open tomorrow with seven classrooms closed. All inspections indicated it was safe to open. The Town also offered help from Public Works.

Committee Reports:

Mr. Cruson reported that the Policy Committee met January 25 and discussed the policies on the agenda. They also discussed the policy on protected classes and the suspension and expulsion policy.

Mr. Ramsey said the Communication Subcommittee met February 6 and reviewed our assignments for the next newsletter regarding the budget process. The also discussed modernizing the district website, the Blackboard form of communication, and school calendar regarding professional development days.

Mrs. Kuzma reported that the Social Emotional Health and Wellness Subcommittee met February 1. Anne Dalton provided an update on Wellness Week and we discussed the

Anonymous Alert APP. Mrs. Dalton also gave an update on the Center for Empowerment giving presentations at schools.

Mrs. Larkin suggested the schools go over how to use this app with the students.

Mr. Melillo agreed.

Mr. Cruson noted he was at Head O'Meadow twice and met with the principal regarding the budget season and see Mrs. Danenberg who was retiring. He also attended a PTA meeting with Mrs. Dreger the new lead teacher where they discussed transportation and the budget. He attended the CAFE Board of Directors retreat in Hartford. Sheila McKay took over as executive director after Bob Rader retired. There is also a webinar coming up regarding an African American/Black and Puerto Rican/Latino Course of Studies.

Student Representative Report:

Ms. Kunzweiler said semester two was underway. January 24 "Choir Palooza" was hosted at the high school. The National English Honor Society is raffling off themed baskets to raise funds for the literary organization First Readers. The National Honor Society hosted a pet food drive and donations were given to the Catherine Violet Hubbard's Senior Pay Project. Athletics continue to have a successful winter season. Students are excited to be back tomorrow.

Item 6 – Presentations

Update on Learning Walks:

Kara DiBartolo provided an update on learning walks of which there were 110 since the start of school.

Mrs. Larkin asked what was being done before these walks began.

Mrs. DiBartolo said they were put into place prior to Covid. Reed has been doing their own rounds. All administrators are on board having teachers visit each other.

Mr. Melillo said he and Mrs. Uberti had the same vision and feels it's beneficial for central office to be involved in the walks.

Mrs. Larkin appreciated empowering people in the school level and asked what areas needed improvement.

Mrs. DiBartolo said teachers are looking at passive engagement and active engagement and what we are providing our students to lift levels of rigor and relevance.

Mr. Melillo said the hardest thing for a teacher is to give up control. Learning involves questioning, conferring, having a dialogue and that's hard for teacher to build in a classroom. We've noticed a Covid lag around instruction.

Mr. Vouros noted that these walks were started prior to the tragedy and then everything stopped. The complexion of these changes from elementary to Reed to the middle school and to the high school. It's very exciting to see it unfold.

Mr. Ramsey complimented the teachers involved and asked how often they are in the schools.

Mrs. DiBartolo said some weeks we are in two schools in one day and in some just one day per week. It varies.

Mr. Melillo has seen some high level work in ELA classes. We look at material teachers need and make data driven decisions for improvement.

Item 6 – Old Business

Strategic Plan Update:

Mr. Melillo reported that on January 23 the committee developed an understanding of the purpose and importance of a portrait of the graduate and began to identify skills, competencies and dispositions most important for Newtown graduates. We set up focus groups for staff, families, community and Board members. The first community group met virtually January 30 and February 2. February 6 the committee discussed next steps in creating the portrait of the graduate, reviewed stakeholder engagement data, and discussed an assignment before the next meeting. He asked that between now and March 8 that each school finds a way of engaging its faculty in the portrait of the graduate discussion.

Item 7 – New Business

Superintendent's Mid-Year Goals:

Mr. Melillo spoke about his four goals. Goal #1 is his entry plan, which is completed. Goal #2 is the strategic plan and portrait of the graduate which are moving forward.

Goal #3 is instructional rounds which involves collecting data and making decisions. They plan to invite other stakeholders to the table with the end game being having students reach their highest potential. Goals #4 is the budget process which we've done with a budget that enhances our instructional core.

Mrs. Plante said Mr. Melillo has done an excellent job keeping the Board informed through this journey and has done a good job giving us transparency, which is much appreciated.

Mr. Ramsey complimented Mr. Melillo on his efforts to keep a good learning environment.

Mrs. Larkin also complimented him for all he does which is much more than what he mentioned tonight and that people are glad he's here.

Ms. Zukowski has heard very positive comments and that he has done a great job.

March 22 Newtown High School Early Dismissal:

Mr. Melillo said this is the second year the high school will proctor the digital SAT to juniors and the PSAT to sophomores. Both tests will end 12:30 and the tests for students with extended time will end by 2:30 p.m. Those students will take the middle school bus home. There are also a number of teachers needed for students who need different environments during testing. Seniors will stay home and work on college applications, capstone and scholarship applications. Freshmen will go to the NYA and the Community Center for an anti-vaping panel, debrief, and activities.

Mrs. Larkin said that regarding seniors being home, not everyone is college bound and she requested he revisit the activities for the seniors.

Mr. Melillo would make sure they have other activities but all students do the capstone project.

MOTION: Mrs. Larkin moved that the Board of Education approve the March 22 high school early dismissal. Mr. Vouros seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

First Read of Policies:

Mr. Cruson noted that Policy 4118.12/4218.12 Freedom of Speech and Use of Media Including Social Media was previously under freedom of speech but was updated to include social media. Policy 4118.5/4218.5 Acceptable Use of Computer Systems and Electronic Communications was discussed with Suzanne D'Eramo and Dennis Colclough and arrived at this policy to cover staff. Policy 9300 Methods of Operation is being rescinded because it's a duplicate of Policy 9311 which was approved in 2019.

Approval of Minutes:

MOTION: Mrs. Larkin moved that the Board of Education approve the minutes of January 17, 2023. Mr. Ramsey seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

MOTION: Mrs. Larkin moved that the Board of Education approve the minutes of January 19, 2023. Mr. Ramsey seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

MOTION: Mrs. Larkin moved that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the January 24, 2023 special meeting. Motion passes unanimously.

MOTION: Mrs. Larkin moved that the Board of Education approve the minutes of January 24, 2023. Mr. Ramsey seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

MOTION: Mrs. Larkin moved that the Board of Education approve the minutes of January 26, 2023. Mr. Ramsey seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

MOTION: Mrs. Larkin moved that the Board of Education approve the minutes of January 31, 2023. Mr. Ramsey seconded. Vote: 5 ayes, 1 abstained (Mrs. Larkin) Motion passes.

Item 9 – Public Participation

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved to adjourn. Mr. Vouros seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 10 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Donald Ramsey
Secretary

Correspondence Report
01/17/2023 – 02/06/2023

Date	Name	Subject
01/17/2023	Ramsey, Donald	Correspondence Report for BOE Meeting 01/17/2023
01/18/2023	Gouveia, Tanja	Fwd: Advertising/Recruiting
01/18/2023	Murphy, Beth	Library Paraprofessional
01/18/2023	Hurley, Suzanne	Budget Cuts to the Elementary Libraries
01/18/2023	Smith, Alyson	Library Paraprofessional Letter
01/19/2023	Rancourt, Lindsey	Library Paraprofessional
01/19/2023	Kiley Gottschalk	Cuts
01/19/2023	Jessie Paulson	Concern over paraprofessional cuts
01/19/2023	Chris Russell	Library educational assistants
01/19/2023	Zukowski, Deborra	Re: My apologies
01/19/2023	Jessica Gibson	Letter of Support
01/19/2023	Carlson, Erika	Elementary Library Positions
01/20/2023	June, Kathy	Strategic Plan Stakeholders Input
01/20/2023	June, Kathy	BOE Agendas
01/20/2023	Zukowski, Deborra	Fwd: Advocacy Highlights – January 20, 2023
01/21/2023	Melillo, Christopher	Budget Information
01/22/2023	Larkin, Jennifer	Bucket Band
01/22/2023	Melillo, Christopher	1/22 Superintendent's Sunday Update
01/22/2023	Melillo, Christopher	Clarifying Information
01/22/2023	Zukowski, Deborra	January 22, 2023 Week in Preview
01/24/2023	Kiley Gottschalk	BOF 1-25-23 Agenda
01/24/2023	June, Kathy	January 26 Agenda
01/24/2023	Anne Uberti	Folder shared with you: "Enrichment_Library Info for BOE"
01/24/2023	DiBartolo, Kara	BOE Focus Groups
01/24/2024	Vouros, John	Current Enrichment Model
01/24/2023	Zukowski, Deborra	Draft 2 on busing issue
01/24/2023	Chris Caram	Busing Disaster

01/24/2023	Tannerfamfive	Document shared with you: "Bus 15 Log"
01/25/2023	Melillo, Christopher	Early Dismissal
01/25/2023	Michaela Morris	Bus Shortage Issues
01/25/2023	Cruson, Daniel	Alternative Suggestion on busing Letter
01/25/2023	Mauro, Katie	Letter to NBOE – Library Paraeducators
01/26/2023	Bucci, Marlene	Budget Letter
01/26/2023	Lisa Keane	Bus 38 route for St. Rose School
01/26/2023	Kiley Gottschalk	Fwd: HAW: 3 Buses Down
01/26/2023	Erin McMurdo	Bus issue
01/26/2023	Bill Hine	Where's the school bus
01/26/2023	'Monica Duncan' via Newtown	Buses
01/26/2023	'del ligouri' via Newtown B...	Buses
01/26/2023	Michael Switser	Bus Issues
01/27/2023	Melillo, Christopher	Fwd: Licensing of bus drivers
01/27/2023	Melillo, Christopher	Fwd: FW: PM buses down
01/27/2023	Kiley Gottschalk	(no subject)
01/27/2023	June, Kathy	January 31 Agenda
01/27/2023	Nicole Moeller	Budget cuts for Newtown School Library Paraprofessional
01/27/2023	Melillo, Christopher	Strategic Plan Information
01/27/2023	Leah Sterry	Possible Budget Cuts
01/27/2023	Melillo, Christopher	Transportation Update
01/27/2023	Kiley Gottschalk	Re: Transportation Update
01/27/2023	Katie Michael	Enough is Enough
01/28/2023	Michelle DeCarlo	Budget Cut – Library Paraprofessionals
01/29/2023	Melillo, Christopher	1/29 Superintendent's Sunday Update
01/29/2023	Zukowski, Deborra	Bus Driver Shortage Concerns – Newtown BoE
01/29/2023	Zukowski, Deborra	January 29, 2023 Week in Preview
01/29/2023	Zukowski, Deborra	Fwd: Bus Driver Shortage Concerns – Newtown BoE
01/30/2023	Reuther, Sheila	Elementary Library Para

		Position
01/30/2023	Nancy Hintz	Petition to Keep Library Paras
01/30/2023	Vouro, John	BUDGET DELIBERATIONS
01/31/2023	Tanner Family	No Bus... again!
01/31/2023	June, Kathy	Motions for Tonight
01/31/2023	Heather Symes	Budget – Library Para
01/31/2023	Laura Rubino	Library Paraprofessional Budget
02/01/2023	Murphy, Beth	Thank you
02/01/2023	Hurley, Suzanne	Superintendent's Budget
02/01/2023	Smith, Alyson	Thank you!
02/01/2023	Carlson, Erika	Thank you Newtown Board of Education Members
02/01/2023	Dzen, Jen	Ellington BOE Legislation Platform 2023
02/02/2023	Tanner Family	Bus 15 cancelled again
02/03/2023	'Luis Moura' via Newtown BOE	Fwd: Asian Studies at high school
02/03/2023	June, Kathy	BOE Mailing – February 7, 2023
02/03/2023	'Melissa Martucci Gome...	Critical thinking skills?
02/03/2023	Melillo, Christopher	Transportation Issues
02/05/2023	Melillo, Christopher	2/5 Superintendent's Sunday Update
02/05/2023	Zukowski, Deborra	February 5, 2023 Week in Preview
02/06/2023	Melillo, Christopher	NHS Emergency Closing
02/06/2023	Melillo, Christopher	Video
02/06/2023	'Nancy Gabrielle White' via Newtown...	Hawley – Property next door
02/06/2023	Melillo, Christopher	High School Update
02/06/2023	Heather Murray	Re: Response to email
02/06/2023	Heather Murray	Scheduling an observation
02/06/2023	Zukowski, Deborra	Tomorrow – Executive session
02/06/2023	Rbowenycp	Fwd: Important Family Update

TO: Chris Melillo, Superintendent
FROM: Suzanne D'Eramo, Director of Human Resources
RE: Superintendent's Report – Staffing Update for **JANUARY 2023**
DATE: February 1, 2023

JANUARY 2023

CERTIFIED RETIREMENTS:

Bonita Cartoun (effective June 30, 2023)

CERTIFIED RESIGNATIONS:

None

CERTIFIED NEW HIRES:

None

CERTIFIED OPEN POSITIONS:

None

ADDITIONAL DISTRICT HIRING NOTES:

Here is a recap of all certified/non-certified staff who began working in January:

Nurse = 1

Paraeducator = 1

NELC = 1

School Security Officer = 1

Bldg. Sub/LT sub = 5

All of the 9 newly hired employees identify as white/not Hispanic.



Learning Walks

Board of Education

February 7, 2023

Kara DiBartolo

Director of Teaching and Learning



The Why: Collective Efficacy

Collective Efficacy defined: Collective belief of the staff of the school/faculty in their ability to positively affect students. (Hattie, 2015)

And in schools, when educators believe in their combined ability to influence student outcomes, there are significantly higher levels of academic achievement (Bandura, 1993).

Collective Efficacy is the #1 influence on student achievement

1.57 effect size on student achievement

Look Back to Learn How to Look Forward

The Timeline

2019-2020

- Administration began engaging in Learning Walks across the district with a lens of CBCI occurring in the classrooms
- The data collected was qualitative in nature and focused on both teacher and student actions.
- A picture began to emerge of strengths and areas of growth across the district.
- Leading into March 2020, close to 200 learning walks had been completed

2020-2022

- Due to the impacts of Covid, it was difficult to reinstitute the Learning Walks as we would not be able to see the instruction we wanted to see

2022-2023

- Because of a normal school year, we are now able to implement our Learning Walks with fidelity and consistency. Leading into February,



Learning Walks - Data Collection and Analysis

- Year end goal is approximately 300 visits - Current count is 106 classroom visits, with 23 overall visits to the schools
- Overall picture of instruction at each school and the district overall
- Calibrate around instructional practices
- Identify areas of strength in instruction
- Identify areas where there opportunities for improvement
 - Resource allocation
 - Professional development
 - Curriculum alignment and gaps
 - Assessment and instructional practices
 - Digital technology integration



Our Noticings

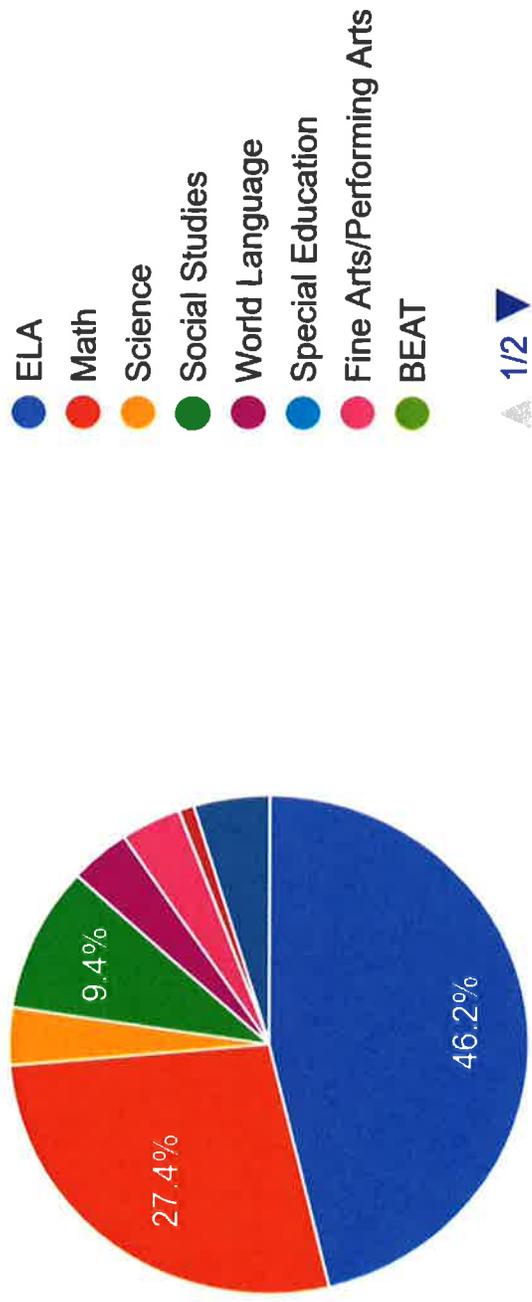
- Pure Joy!
 - Positive classroom learning environments.
 - Students who are engaged, and excited about learning
 - Extremely dedicated and conscientious teachers and staff.
 - Committed team of administrators with a mindset of continuous growth and improvement.
-

The Seven Look-Fors at the District Level

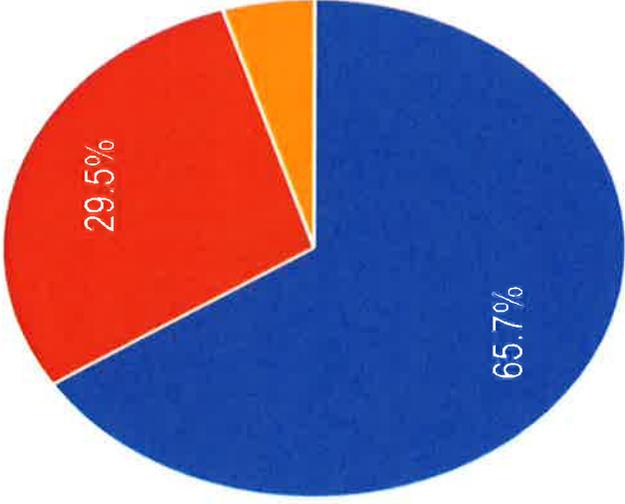
1. **Conceptual Understanding**
2. **Learning Experiences/Rigor: Student Learning Experiences**
3. **Guiding questions**
4. **Time for Thinking: Students grapple with problems, make connections, notice patterns and/or synthesize thinking.**
5. **Ownership of Learning: The classroom learning environment**
6. **Engagement**
7. **The learning environment is responsive to and respectful of the learning needs of all students.**

What does the data tell us?

District Overview



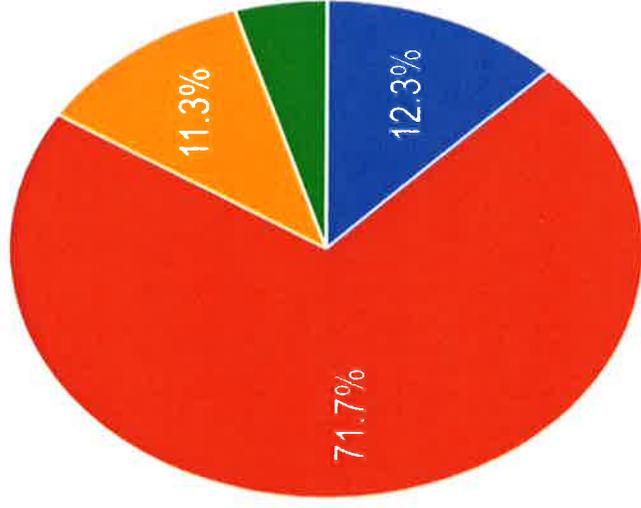
Look For 1 - Conceptual Connections



- Most students are aware of the purpose of the learning.
- Some students are aware of the purpose of the learning.
- Most students are NOT aware of the purpose of the learning.

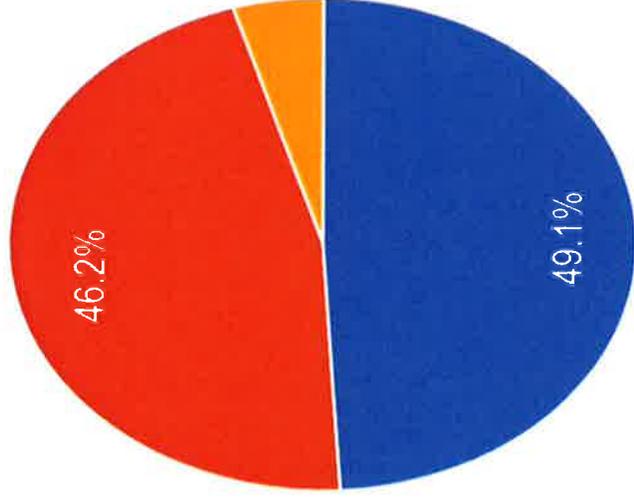


Look For 2 - Learning Experiences/Rigor: Student learning experiences



- The Learning task is best classified as DOK 1 - mostly recall of basic, factual information.
- The learning task is best classified as DOK 2 - basic application of skills and concepts.
- The learning task is best classified as DOK 3 or 4 - strategic or extending thinking
- The learning task cannot be classified.

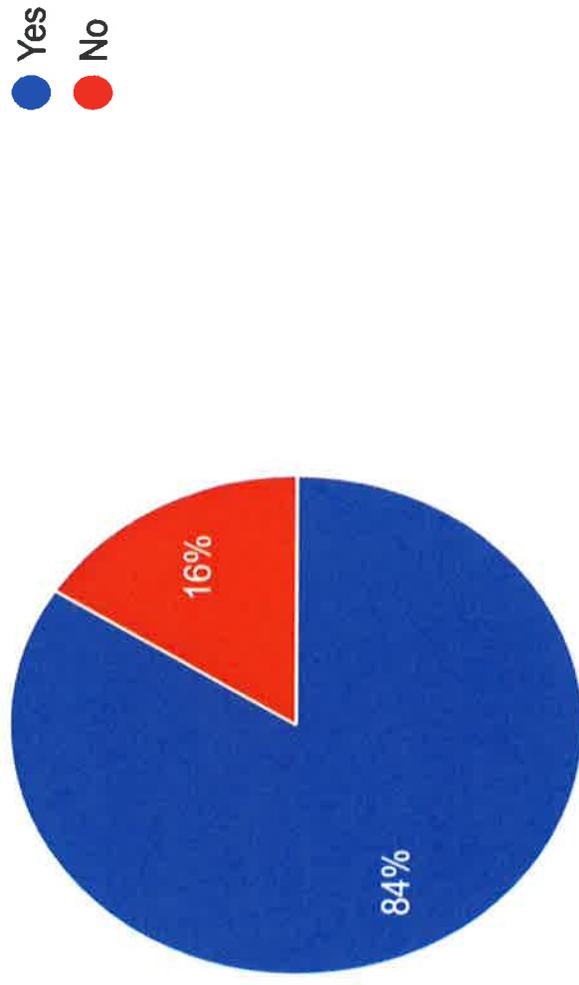
Look For 3 - Guiding Questions: Written and oral questions can best be classified as...



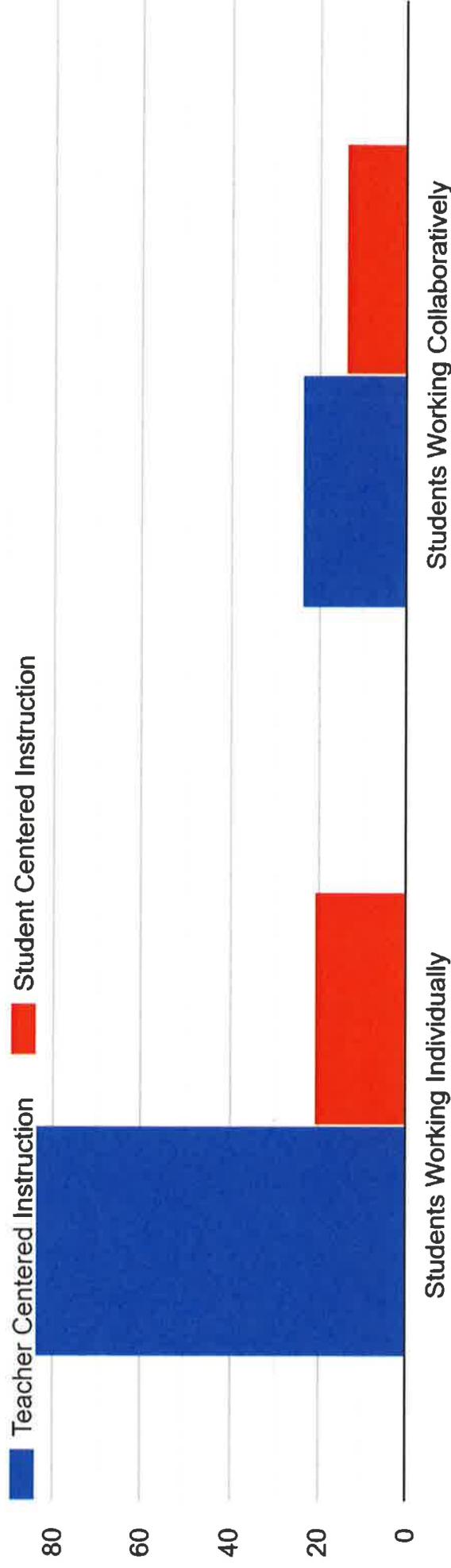
- **Factual Only** - Questions that are topic and information specific, "locked in time"
- Ex. Who were the Allied and Axis Powers during World War II
- **A Combination of Factual and Conceptual** - Factual as defined above, plus questions that transfer across examples, considered "timeless" ex....
- **A Combination of Factual, Conceptual, and Provocative** - Factual and Conceptual as defined above, plus qu...



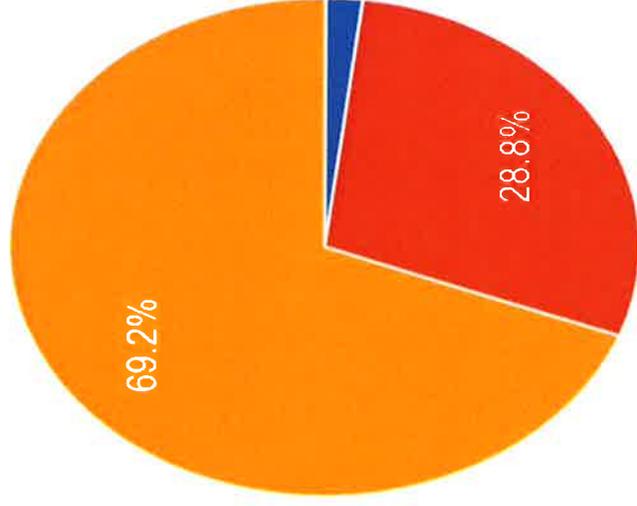
Look For 4 - Time for Thinking: Students grapple with problems, make connections, notice patterns and/or synthesize thinking.



Look For 5 - Ownership of Learning: The classroom learning environment can best be described as...

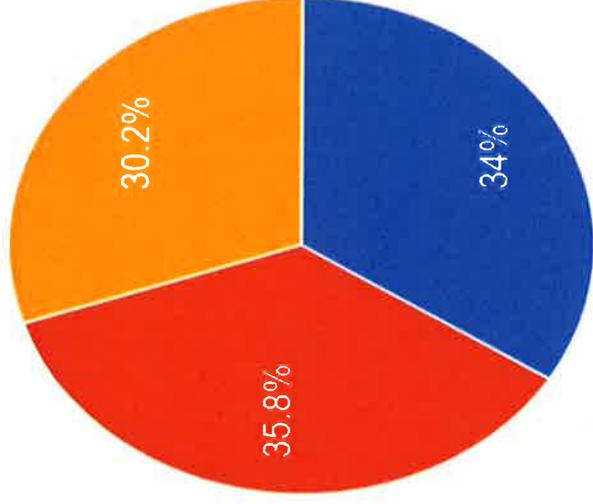


Look For 6 - Engagement



- Most students are not engaged in the learning.
- Most students are passively engaged in the learning.
- Most students are actively engaged in the learning.

Look For 7 - The learning environment is responsive to and respectful of the learning needs of all students.



- The lesson takes into account diverse learners and/or multiple perspectives.
- Some aspects of the lesson take into account diverse learners and/or multiple perspectives
- The lesson does not take into account diverse learners and/or multiple perspectives.

Takeaways

Glows

- Students' active engagement in daily lessons
- Students' knowing the purpose of their learning
- Learning consistently in the DOK 2 level of learning
- Questions consistently a combination of Factual and Conceptual questions
- Students have time to grapple with problems

Grows

- Intentionally plan for DOK 3&4 levels of learning activities
- Begin to shift from teacher centered instruction to a student centered learning environment
- Strengthen knowledge of meeting the needs of diverse learners and multiple perspectives in a classroom setting

Next Steps

- Meet with A-Team and drill down to school based data to identify glows and grows
 - Use the data collected to drive the planning of district-wide professional development
 - Use the data to support the development of Vision of a Graduate and the Strategic Plan
 - Build the capacity of teacher leaders to engage in Learning Walks
 - Release responsibility of conducting Learning Walks to our building administration and the building based teams
-

Superintendent's Mid-Year Goals Report 2022-2023

Goal 1

Superintendent's Entry Plan: An entry plan will allow me to develop a vision, values, goals and beliefs. It challenges me to research the prospective school/district and staff. The goal of the research is to put me into a position to understand the district, community, students, and myself.

Project Goals

1. Ensure focus is on instructional improvements and enhancements with the expectation that EVERY child in our school system can and should reach their highest potential.
2. Develop a strong, collaborative and transparent working relationship with the Board of Education.
3. Build positive, collaborative working relationships with students, administrators, teachers and non-certified staff.
4. Create structures and forums to solicit diverse and comprehensive feedback and build a foundation that will foster trusted partnerships with stakeholders in the Newtown community.
5. Gain a deep understanding of the safety, climate and needs of the district to create systems of support and direction for all schools in the district.
6. Assess operational and financial efficiencies and alignment.

- **Hiring Practices Administration:** Understanding the needs of the district, early on I focused building a team of leaders who will focus on instructional practices and climate. Three important keys were finding the right people to implement our vision. In July, I focused on finding a Director of Teaching and Learning who was well versed in instruction, preferably reading and special education. Kara DiBartolo is a perfect fit for this position. Final Interviews for the position were held on July 7th and after a rigorous process, we were excited for Kara to join our team. Newtown Middle School needed an infusion of energy. We needed a leader who not only had a vision, but also someone who knew the community and could hit the ground running. I also needed to support this person with an assistant who was not only well versed in instructional practices, but also a hands-on leader who could build climate. Jim Ross was selected as the next Newtown Middle School Principal. He was selected through a process which included a committee of stakeholders. Jim was a hands-on AP at NMS he was ready to take the helm in August. We supported Jim with Brian Walsh. Brian is knowledgeable and energetic. He's a hands-on leader and I believe it is safe to say that this team has created a positive culture at Newtown Middle School.

- **Hiring Practices Certified and Non-Certified Staff:** Through the summer and into the early fall I made it a priority to interview and meet every candidate for every open position in the district. I created a list of characteristics that I felt would serve the district well:
 1. Long-Term Potential
 2. Ability to Produce Results
 3. Enthusiasm and Passion
 4. Putting Skills to Action
 5. Engaged with Our Vision
 6. Culture Contribution (Can-Do)
 7. Team Player
 8. Committed to Continuous Improvement
 9. Integrity
 10. Responsiveness

- **Instructional Rounds:** I've worked with Anne Uberti and Kara DiBartolo on implementing and executing instructional rounds protocols in our district. In short, these protocols allow teachers and administrators to view teacher practice, discuss what was observed and highlight what was observed as a means to improve practice. Instructional rounds is a scientifically researched based process which has been proven to improve teaching practices and student outcomes. It is also done in a way that empowers teachers as it includes them in the work through professional learning communities. Instructional rounds and improved teaching practices will be a cornerstone of my strategic plan. (See below for more information)

- **Building a Strategic Plan/Portrait of a Graduate:** I've reached out to The Partners for Educational Leadership (Formerly Connecticut Center for School Change). Partners for Educational Leadership's core practice is partnering with districts and other organizations to strengthen their leadership, systems, and improvement strategies in service of improved outcomes for students. I've worked with Richard Lemons (Executive Director) in the past and he is an excellent facilitator and teacher (see below for more information).

- **Reorganization of DEI:** With the departure of our DEI Coordinator, my team and I provided structure to the position and created a proactive model that builds knowledgeable others at our schools. We look to build a DEI program in Newtown which would build on the following tenets:
 1. Schools should be welcoming and supportive spaces for our students.
 2. Our curriculum should be infused with materials that include diverse authors, protagonists, heroes, and historical figures.

3. When studying topics in our classroom, our students will learn through multiple lenses and points of view.
 4. Schools should embrace kindness and diversity. Any form of harassment or bullying, whether based on race, culture, color, creed or religion, ancestry, national origin, mental and physical ability, age, marital status, physical appearance, family structure, citizenship status, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, economic status, veteran's status, or other distinguishing personal characteristic, will not be tolerated.
 5. As educators, we need to provide all sides to topics and remain apolitical. To encourage critical thinking, we need to develop learning environments that allow students to identify and understand perspectives provided in the material and related discussions, and to draw their own informed conclusions. That's where true learning occurs.
- **CES/Ed Advance Workspace:** I met Executive Director Jeff Kitchings and Boardperson Alison Plante at The Workspace. The Workspace is a building in Bethel that is owned and operated by CES and Ed Advance. We took a tour of the building which has spaces set up for culinary arts, dance, woodworking, agriculture, theater, virtual reality manufacturing, video, robotix labs and music production, and much more. I am interested in leveraging this space to assist in providing career pathways for our Newtown students. I am hoping to help organize a regional program which would provide dual enrollment opportunities for our students. A program which would not only provide marketable skills, but also college credit. Currently, Ed Advance is working with Hamden Public Schools to mirror a program which would allow a regional dual enrollment manufacturing program to exist.
 - **Connecticut Approved K-3 Core Comprehensive Reading Curricular/Programs:** In October the CSDE announced the approved K-3 reading programs that all schools must implement or apply for an approved waiver. You have heard me say in the past that I am an advocate for implementing the "science of reading" and I have been working offline to try to secure funding for the mandate. Consequently, there will be some political wrangling around this law, as it is another unfunded mandate handed down by the State with a very short turnaround time. I'd expect some changes in regards to timing and possibly funding. In response to this, I've directed my team to develop a strong plan to evaluate programs, pilot programs, fund the efforts, and implement the system. I'm looking forward to the work in providing our Newtown students with what they need.

- **Board of Education Retreat:** In October I organized a Board of Education Retreat with attorney Tom Mooney. I thought Tom Mooney facilitated a lot of valuable discussion. I hope you all felt that the time on Saturday was rewarding. Thanks to Kathy June for helping set up the bagels and coffee for us. Tom is chair emeritus of the School Law Practice Group and is active in all areas of school law, including labor negotiations for certified and non-certified staff, teacher tenure proceedings, grievance arbitration, freedom of information hearings, student disciplinary matters, special education disputes and all other legal proceedings involving boards of education. Tom is the author of A Practical Guide to Connecticut School Law (9th Edition, 2018), a comprehensive treatise on Connecticut school law, and two columns, "See You in Court!" which appears in the CABA Journal, and "Legal Mailbag," which appears in the CAS Bulletin. I thought Tom Mooney facilitated a lot of valuable discussion.
- **Agenda Setting Meetings:** Board leadership and I meet monthly to develop a BOE agenda which allows for the school district to meet the needs of the Newtown community.
- **Individual BOE Members:** I've met with every BOE member on a one-to-one basis. I've enjoyed these meetings very much, as I was able to hear your hopes and dreams for Newtown Public Schools, as well as your thoughts about where our district can improve.
- **Open Door/Open Phone Policy:** I have been attentive and responsive to Board of Education concerns. I often answer texts, emails and phone messages in a timely manner. I also offer in person meetings to assist in the problem solving process.
- **Board Chair Communication:** I've worked collaboratively with our Board of Education Chair to schedule weekly meetings to discuss concerns and share information in regards to the inner workings of the school district.
- **Sunday Updates:** I have provided the Newtown Board of Education weekly updates in an effort to instill transparency, and create the most effective, healthiest BOE/Superintendent relationship. These updates gives the BOE insight on how leadership navigates conflict while creating transparency and recognizing the value of individual contributions in an effort to establish and sustain effective board communication. I've also shared personal information with the BOE which I believe results in helping people to know each other better, foster team cohesiveness, and develop a greater appreciation and understanding of their teammates.

- **Administrative Retreat:** On July 14 and July 15 we hosted an administrative retreat at Reed Intermediate School. The retreat included a Superintendent's Roundtable discussion. I used the time to introduce myself and convey my vision of the district. The two-day retreat covered the following topics.
 - Data Analysis
 - PD Calendar
 - Creating a Positive and Productive School Climate and Culture
 - Creating a Culture of Continuous Improvement
 - Evolution of K-4 and 6-12 SEL plans
 - Team Building

- **Individual Meetings:** Since May, I made it a point to meet individually with every administrator and department chair. I organized coffee talks with each and learned about their hopes and dreams for the district. I offered in person meeting with all staff members and spent significant time in the buildings introducing myself to staff and listening to their stories about the school district and the community at large.

- **Convocation:** It was a day of celebration and preparation for another successful year at Newtown Public Schools. Faculty and staff gathered on August 29th in person. The goal was to introduce myself with a unifying message "Unleash the Potential."

- **Cabinet:** Cabinet-level work builds on the foundation of work the BOE and Superintendent have done to set the direction for the district. The Cabinet works to support the district's focus and strategic framework of core beliefs, effective practices, and goals for improving student achievement.

- **A Team:** I meet bi-monthly with administrators to provide professional development, relay important information and solve issues that may arrive in the district.

- **Climate and Culture:** I attend monthly meetings with the Paraprofessionals' Union and the Teachers' Union. In January we will begin a Climate and Culture meeting with the Secretaries Union. These meetings are collaborative exchanges between district administration and the bargaining units. We use this time to take the pulse of the district and to proactively resolve issues before they impact the climate and culture of the district.

- **Visits:** I spent time visiting classrooms and meeting staff in their classrooms and buildings. I made sure I was present in school and at night events. Through these visits I have had many opportunities to speak

with faculty and staff. I used this time to not only observe practice, but to also develop relationships with our community.

- **Bargaining Unit Presidents:** I had one-to-one meetings with Marlene Bucci (Para Union President), Trent Harrison (NFT President), Erin Ardino (Secretary Union President). These meetings were very productive meetings. I was able to learn and understand some of the stressors and strengths of the district through the lenses of the bargaining units. I look forward to working collaboratively with these groups, proactively solving issues.
- **Climate and Culture:** I attend monthly meetings with the Paraprofessionals' Union and the Teachers' Union. In January we will begin a Climate and Culture meeting with the Secretaries Union. These meetings are collaborative exchanges between district administration and the bargaining units. We use this time to take the pulse of the district and to proactively resolve issues before they impact the climate and culture of the district.
- **Newsletters:** Currently, I create a monthly superintendent's newsletter and I create content for the BOE Communications newsletter.
- **Website Design:** I have directed my team to create a more up to date website. I believe we need a more modern design, one that is easy to use, appealing to see, and promotes our programs.
- **Office Hours:** I hold regular office hours every Wednesday from 7:30 AM - 9:00 AM. In these meetings I have met with over 30 parents and community members. My door is always open during this time and the topics of discussion are varied. The office hours provide a convenient time for families to contact me before their work day begins.
- **PTA Presidents Council:** I hold a monthly meeting with representatives from the PTA. These meetings are sessions where PTA executive boards can share ideas, solve problems, learn district information, and find unique ways to support our students, families, and teachers.
- **Teachers Union Meeting:** I meet monthly with Trent Harrison to discuss issues. It is also a time for me to communicate with the union decisions that are being made which might impact the bargaining unit.
- **Department Leadership Meeting:** This group incorporates town and school leaders that provide mental health, food security, financial assistance and support to our families.

- **Social Media:** I created a Twitter and Instagram account. I am very active in providing information which promotes our district.
- **PEAC:** I met with the PEAC committee in November and December. During the meetings we discussed the future of PEAC, what do we want it to be? Currently, we have 18 remaining members who are interested in continuing the work. We talked about collectively working on developing a marketing strategy to promote our district. We also discussed increasing membership. I will work with Sarah and put out a call to anyone who is interested in participating.
- **Meeting and Greeting:** As part of my entry plan, I've been committed to learn all that I can about the Newtown community, while building those essential relationships which will assist me in positively leading the district. Below is a summary of some of my progress as this is just a sample of work that I have done to build relationships.
- **First Selectman:** I met with Dan Rosenthal on multiple occasions. We have already developed a working relationship. He introduced me to Tricia Pinto who serves as Victim Care Advocate at the Newtown Center for Support and Wellness. On June 14th, I joined Dan at the Newtown Senior Center for his monthly coffee talk. It was great interacting with the community and having positive discussions about our wonderful school district.
- **Bargaining Unit Presidents:** I had one-to-one meetings with Trent Harrison (NFT President) to discuss logistics around the Hawley project. We want to ensure that our staff has the time necessary to set up for the school year. From Maddy Allen (Nurses Union President) I was able to learn and understand some of the stressors and strengths of the district through the lenses of her bargaining unit and how we can work together to solve problems.
- **Newtown Youth and Family Services:** I met with Candice Bohr, director of the Newtown Youth and Family Services. She provided me with an understanding of the organization's mission and goal.
- **Newtown Community Center:** Director Matt Ariniello provided a summary of the programs offered and the collaborative history between the community center and NPS. We will of course continue this relationship as it is one that benefits the community at large.
- **PTA Presidents:** I've met all of the PTA leaders in individual meetings. We discussed how we can work collaboratively in supporting our students and families. We discussed fundraising ideas and I also offered my

experiences with PTA's, while learning about some of the historical activities that occur annually.

- **EverWonder Children's Museum:** I went on a field trip to visit the EverWonder Children's Museum. I met Niki Giordano and checked out the facility. We spoke about future field trips and opportunities for enrichment for our students. I even got to hold their Ball Python snake, Casini.
- **Newtown Bee:** I met with editor John Voket, he stopped in just to say hello. I discussed opportunities to promote the programs in our schools.
- **Newtown/Brookfield American Legion:** I met with Donna Monteleone, Post Commander for American Legion Post 202. We had conversations focusing on improved communication to the community about upcoming events. Continuing efforts to support our students through programs offered by the American Legion (Valentines for Troops, Veterans' Day program at NHS, Children's Fishing Derby, Constitutional Quill, & Oratorical Contest). We discussed ways we could avoid conflict that often occurs with other activities, especially at the High School. I participated in the Veterans Days Ceremony and created a pilot color guard at our elementary schools.
- **Family Assistance Coordination:** I met with both Genia Brockett and Tricia Pinto on multiple occasions. Through their guidance I have been able to support our families who have been impacted by 12/14. I need to understand all aspects of the community and how to best support our families. Both Tricia and Genia have been invaluable in this process.
- **Rotary Club:** I met with Alex Villamil and Stu Beane from the Newtown Rotary Club. I will be attending their annual membership picnic on August 9th and also speaking at their membership meeting on September 13th. We spoke about continuing the Rotary Writing Project and expanding it to include submissions of artwork. We are looking to restart the Interact Clubs at both NHS and NMS and also restart the Student of the Month recognition program. I've attended monthly Rotary Club meetings where students have been awarded the Rotary Club Student of the Month awards.
- **Registrar of Voters:** I sat down with Erica Canfield and LeReine Frampton and discussed logistics for the upcoming primary election and how we can work together to ensure that we can coexist sharing facilities during elections. We also discussed opportunities to increase civic opportunities for our students at Newtown High School by giving them volunteer hours at our polls.

- **State Representative Mitch Bolinsky and Senator Tony Hwang:** I've met on multiple occasions Representative Bolinsky and Senator Hwang. We have developed a working relationship and have reached out for their support for our school system. We talked about my vision for NPS and the work that needs to be done. They are very supportive and I intend to continue having conversations with our representatives in Hartford as they can/will become allies to our work.
- **Director of Booth Library:** I met with Doug Lord and he offered his support for programming and collaboration. I look forward to working with him to provide collaborative programming for our students.
- **Nursing Supervisor:** I met with Karen Powell to discuss the role of the nursing supervisor position and understand the issues impacting the nurses especially through the pandemic and beyond.
- **John Reed:** I had a phone conversation with Superintendent John Reed. As you may know he is retired and living in Florida, but he is Newtown through and through. He offered advice and support in my work and wants very much for my tenure to be a success. It was a pleasure to speak with him and learn from his experiences.
- **NYA:** I met with Maggie Conway, President of NYA. We spoke about collaboration opportunities and brainstormed about how we can engage our pupils after school at the facility.
- **The Wheels on the Bus Go Round and Round:** On the first day of school, I made it a point to ride the school bus. I started my morning at Buttonball Drive and met 3 separate families at the bus stop. We ate muffins and took pictures together. We spoke about backpacks and the first day of school outfits. I met stuffed animals and learned about their summer vacations. It was a tremendous experience. I then had the privilege of getting on Mr. Tomesetti's bus. Mr. Tomassetti is celebrating his 50th year driving! He is loved in our community and at every stop, parents and students took time to talk with him. I arrived at Sandy Hook School and assisted the staff with bus duty, but to be honest, they didn't need any help as it was a well oiled machine.
- **Labor Day Parade:** On Labor Day I attended the Newtown Labor Day Parade. The weather held out and it turned out to be a wonderful event where the community was able to come together!
- **Veterans War Time Medal Ceremony:** On Wednesday I attended the Veterans War Time Medal Ceremony at Newtown High School. Any Connecticut Veteran, living or deceased, with qualifying wartime military service is eligible to receive the Connecticut Veterans Wartime Service

Medal; a small "thank you" from a grateful state. State Senator Tony Hwang, State Representative Mitch Bolinsky, First Selectman Dan Rosenthal, and others will be at the Newtown HS Auditorium for the CT Wartime Veterans Service Medal ceremony. Boy Scout Troop 370 presented and retired the colors. The Newtown HS Band played the National Anthem. Newtown HS student Grace Lynch was the guest vocalist. Click the link for more information.

- **Coffee Talk:** I attended an open forum in October with the Board Chair to discuss the opening of school. The two hour event consisted of robust discussion and allowed the Newtown community to get to know me more.
- **Custodian Appreciation:** On October 5th the district hosted a custodian appreciation luncheon at Newtown High School. We wanted to thank the custodians for all of their hard work, especially their efforts over the summer. It was great to meet in an informal setting.
- **Three Sport Athlete/Thank You Coaches Breakfast:** On October 7th I attended a breakfast to honor the three sport athletes and the coaches at Newtown High School. This celebration recognizes those student athletes that participate in three sports and also thank our coaches for their dedication to our students. It was wonderful to meet the students and coaches and talk to them about their accomplishments and future aspirations.
- **Joseph P. Grasso Marching Band Festival:** I attended the Grasso Marching Band Festival at Blue and Gold Stadium. Bands from the surrounding areas participated and were judged on their performance. The festival was named in honor of the founder of the band program in the Newtown school district.
- **Newtown Education Foundation:** On November 10th, I met with Lisa Dievert and Jamie Pacuk to discuss the Newtown Education Foundation. The Newtown Education Foundation promotes and supports innovative education programs for the benefit of students in the Newtown Public Schools. They have awarded over \$30,000 in grants to teachers in the Newtown Public School!
- **Legislative Breakfast:** On December 8th, Newtown hosted the Legislative Breakfast for the area BOE members, Central Office personnel, CAFE, CAPSS and local State Representatives. The meeting focused on three topics: Legislation regarding the Science of Reading, HVAC Grant, and Excess Cost Formula. The discussion was fruitful and it resulted in future meetings with our delegates, BOE and central office personnel. As you know, I am a believer in the Science of Reading. I

believe a new reading program will be a positive change for our children. I am advocating for funding and a timeline that works.

- **Monthly Newsletter:** I publish a monthly newsletter that highlights the district accomplishments. It also gives the community information about important topics, such as the strategic plan and instructional rounds.
- **Police Chief:** I sat down with Chief Kulgren on multiple occasions and we discussed how NPD can support our schools and how we could also support NPD. We discussed possibly having some future collaborations which would allow for our families to interact and build relationships with our police officers. Over time we addressed issues such as traffic at the High School and ensured that their security concerns around 12/14 were addressed appropriately.
- **DSSC:** An active member of The District's Safety Committee includes several building and district-level teams. Each team is strategically organized based upon recommended practices from national, state and local school safety authorities. Each group plays a significant role in the district's approach to safety preparedness including activities associated with: Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response and Recovery, or simply put, school safety activities before, during, and after an incident.
- **Climate and Culture:** I attend monthly meetings with the Paraprofessionals' Union and the Teachers' Union. In January we will begin a Climate and Culture meeting with the Secretaries Union. These meetings are collaborative exchanges between district administration and the bargaining units. We use this time to take the pulse of the district and to proactively resolve issues before they impact the climate and culture of the district.
- **Instructional Rounds:** I use the instructional rounds protocol to also gauge school climate. I use this time to speak with students, staff and families about their experiences at their school.
- **Review of Procedures and Documents:** Effective policies and procedures, including the emergency response plan as a whole, are living documents that must grow and adapt with a district. While the core elements and the intent of a policy will likely remain the same while keeping people, equipment, assets, and information safe. I reviewed all emergency response plans and processes with Mark Pompano.
- **School Climate Surveys:** Newtown Public Schools completed School Climate Surveys at the end of the 21-22 school year. I reviewed all school climate data with Anne Uberti and also shared this data with the Teachers' union.

- **Needs Assessment:** Through the budget process, we conducted a needs assessment to ascertain what are the wants and needs of our district. The needs assessment measured individual school and department needs for personnel, materials, supplies, programming, and capital improvements.
- **COVID Guidelines:** Implemented new transition CDC COVID guidelines that allowed for the relaxation of COVID mitigation programs. DPH released new COVID guidelines for school opening. The guidelines are in line with our current plans to provide a safe environment for our school community. The district will continue to monitor virus transmission trends, CDC guidelines and mitigation strategies. According to the Connecticut Department of Health, vaccinations are the first and most important line of defense in preventing respiratory diseases like COVID-19 and influenza. We will continue to implement a multifaceted, layered approach to reduce the risk of indoor airborne transmission of COVID-19
- **Cenergistics:** Bob Gerbert and I met with Cenergistics on 4 separate occasions. I am interested in investigating if Cenergistics would be a good fit for Newtown. In short, it is an organization that assists districts in lowering their energy consumption. I have worked with this company in my prior district and I have first hand knowledge of their effectiveness. When partnering with Cenergistic, a district can expect to see improved energy efficiency, healthier air quality in buildings, optimization of existing equipment which often results in increased budget flexibility. The savings gained from this program will both pay for their service and allow us to not only reduce our carbon footprint, but also provide budget flexibility to reinvest in our equipment or whatever else we feel is a priority. Cenergistics presented their program and projections to the town's Energy Commission. Currently we are interested in creating an RFP for this type of work.
- **All Star Transportation:** We are maintaining communication with the transportation provider. They are currently pushing hard to find new drivers (see below). The driver shortage is a statewide/national issue and I understand how this will negatively impact our families. I've asked Tanja to continue the open lines of communications, so that we may effectively message parents so that they may plan. Dan Cruson has volunteered to evaluate the routes and I am taking him up on his offer when we get them. Below is a list of the transportation provider's advertising campaign. We worked with All-Star to develop an incentive and recruitment plan. We consolidated routes in response to the driver shortage.
- **Electric School Bus Grant:** I attended a meeting with Sustainable Fairfield County. I was informed that the EPA is offering a competitive

grant for electric school buses. The grant will cover a minimum of \$190,000 to a maximum of \$250,000 towards the purchase of a bus. Currently, the average price of a full-size electric school bus is close to \$400,000. The grant will also provide \$13,000 for a charging station. This was just an informational session, I would still need to do some homework around our transportation contract, the ability to install a charging station, and of course the cost. With that being said, Connecticut passed the Connecticut Clean Air Act. Currently, our propane school buses meet the criteria for clean transportation.

- **HVAC Grant Application:** Safe schools are a priority in Connecticut. Students spend half of their day inside school buildings. Improving indoor air quality helps students learn in the healthiest environment possible. In 2022, Governor Lamont signed [Public Act 22-118](#), establishing a new grant program that encourages public school districts to install, replace, or upgrade heating, ventilation, or air conditioning (HVAC) systems. The act also funds other projects that improve indoor air quality. We have applied for this grant to help offset the cost of the Hawley project and potentially save taxpayer dollars by doing so.
- **Extension of Free Lunch:** We with our food service provider to extend free lunch services through the holidays. We used a food service account which allowed us to reinvest savings to help support our families.
- **New Food Service Provider:** We transitioned Chartwells into our district, updated our cafeterias and worked to ensure a smooth transition from Whitsons to Chartwells.
- **Non Lapsing Account:** Presented rationale to our Legislative Council and Board of Finance. Tanja Vadas, Deb Zukowski and myself presented the needs of our district and why it was important to transfer our remaining budget funds into the non-lapsing account which eventually was approved by both governing bodies.
- **Teachers Union Contract:** Our negotiation team met for mediation and settled a fair contract that was below State average in salary and settled a lot of language that we felt would be a benefit for the students.
- **Regionalized Special Education Transportation:** I am currently working with Ed Advance to develop regionalized special bus routes for out placed special education students. We are hopeful that this program when implemented will reduce transportation costs for these programs.

Goal 2

Strategic Plan/Portrait of the Graduate: The district will begin the process in creating a strategic plan. In essence, strategic planning is the process of setting goals, deciding on actions to achieve those goals, and mobilizing the resources needed to take those actions. A strategic plan describes how goals will be achieved through the use of available resources. Strategic planning requires community support at the school district level, both functionally and legislatively. Newtown Public Schools will use strategic planning to achieve the broad goals of improving student outcomes and responding to changing demographics while staying within the given funding box.

This work will also include creating the district's Portrait of a Graduate. The Portrait of a Graduate serves as a north star for system transformation. Providing strategic direction for the redesign of the overall educational experience for students, this collective vision reinvigorates and re-engages students, educators, and community stakeholders.

Project Goals:

1. Ensure focus is on instructional improvements and enhancements with the expectation that EVERY child in our school system can and should reach their highest potential.
2. Ensure the overall process is effective and inclusive of all stakeholders.
3. Develop a plan that provides a framework that helps to guide continuous educational improvements that grow student outcomes.
4. Prioritize strategic efforts across different areas including district leadership; teaching and learning; district culture; and recruiting and operations.
5. Engage a diverse group of stakeholders to help district leaders understand stakeholders' perceptions of district performance and identify the needs of the district.
6. Guide stakeholders through each step of the strategic planning process, from setting achievable goals to developing a fully-formed plan.

The Strategic Planning Group is made up of administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, secretaries, parents and Board of Education members. The Strategic Planning Committee has set meetings on:

- Oct 24
- Nov 12
- Nov 21
- Nov 28 - Canceled
- Jan 9
- Jan 23
- Feb 6
- Mar 13
- April 3
- May 8

The Newtown Public Schools Board of Education recently launched a strategic planning process, creating a committee with representation of the board, administration, staff and parents. The purpose of the committee is to work within the guidelines of the board to engage stakeholders in (1) conducting a needs assessment of the district, (2) refining or

crafting essential artifacts for telling the improvement story of Newtown Public Schools, and (3) identifying a small number of priorities for the coming years.

On November 21, the committee held its second meeting, during which it:

- Reviewed the results of a SWOT analysis conducted in our first meeting. SWOT analyses are simple ways to gather perspectives on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of an organization.
- Discussed plans for gathering additional evidence to inform and guide the needs assessment.

S

- Professional staff who always want to do right by the kids
- Strong institutional knowledge
- SEL and parent support
- SEL woven through school
- Materials/programs/resources/technology
- Stable staff (including admin)
- Active community engagement/communication
- Students who participate in extracurricular activities
- District offers a wide variety of activities
- Lower absenteeism, higher graduation rate

W

- SEL Support
- Scope and sequence
- Consistency/alignment between levels and schools
- Meeting needs of all students
- School transitions
- Climate (Bring back joy/engagement)
- Staffing challenges (bus drivers, subs)
- Staff not experienced in working with non-English speakers
- Lingering effects from the pandemic
- Students impacted by immediate gratification

O

- Interested staff/connected parents
- Community at large wants to be successful
- Involving retired community members
- Opportunity to plan what we want a Newtown graduate to look like
- Changing demographics influx of ELL
- Find new ways to engage learners
- Rethink use of time in a school day
- Increasing representation (DEI) into curriculum

I

- Acceptance of opinions
- Scheduling time
- Fatigue/stamina of staff/retirement
- Budget/sustainability
- Behavioral concerns
- Technology/social media
- Parent concerns that don't reflect the community
- Devise political environment including BOE
- Staffing challenges negatively influencing school environment

S

- Alignment between bridges into math, fine arts, sports, and opportunities for club offerings
- Admin support
- Math program K-5
- Dedication/open mindset/growth mindset
- Bond between teachers

W

- Demands keep increasing, time remains the same
- Dedication of staff can overwhelm/burn them out
- Recruiting diverse staff with cultural responsiveness/vocabulary
- Decrease in viable candidates
- Staff unwilling to try new things
- Connectivity/cohesiveness between schools

O

- Leverage diversity of our families to our schools
- Teachers understanding why behind initiatives curriculum
- Test scores
- Shift in ELA/best practice
- Co-teaching/PD

I

- Higher incidents of parental leniency and lack of accountability for kids (enabling)
- State mandates – more requirements every year
- Declining enrollments – increase in EL/SPED (short staffed)
- Community pushback on DEI and district initiatives
- Budget/inflation
- Change in elementary certifications

Themes of the meetings:

- Newtown possesses vast assets and resources to build upon.
- We need to solicit additional voices and authentically engage various stakeholders in the process. This is essential for developing a fuller picture of our current reality and for enhancing the strength of the ultimate plan.
- Two-way communication between the committee and stakeholders is critical throughout the entirety of the process, not just in the needs assessment.

Output of the meetings:

- Richard Lemons will synthesize the discussions today and bring to the committee a plan for how to gather additional perspectives from various stakeholders. The dates and times picked for the focus group are listed below. These will be virtual and will be communicated to the community. The focus groups times and dates are listed below:
 - January 18th 6:30 PM
 - January 26th 6:30 PM
 - January 30th 6:30 PM

Goal 3

Instructional Rounds: Instructional rounds is a practice adapted to education from the field of medicine. It offers a structure for educators to work together to identify and solve common problems related to learning and teaching. The model has been used within schools, across schools, and across districts to raise the quality of instruction for all students. The instructional rounds process provides a disciplined, collaborative way for schools and districts.

Project Goals:

1. Increase the level of engagement within each classroom.
2. Develop a common understanding of high quality teaching and learning.
3. Foster a collaborative culture that supports learning.
4. Improve climate by stimulating excitement and energy among faculty members.
Build instructional coherence and consistency across all classrooms in the district.

We have implemented instructional rounds from November 1st to December 8th. During this time our team has visited 80 classrooms in all of the schools. We created a focus form (Look For) which helps the observers take notes on important parts of the lesson. The focus sheet allows observers to target in on:

- Relevant problems of practice to keep in mind during this observation session
- Specific things to look out for, such as student engagement, teaching and learning instructional strategies, classroom management and student on and off-task behaviors
- Types of notes teachers should take while observing — Teachers should be encouraged to only note what they observed during the instructional period and not to make any inferences or annotate their personal opinions. We only

document the teacher's instructional strategies and the student's response to instruction.

Attached please find the documentation from the 80 classrooms that we visited.

Once the observation session is over, our team debriefs with each other. As we debrief, we focus on improving student achievement, and on addressing the problems of practice listed on your Focus Sheet. Try to avoid dwelling on the negative parts of the lesson, and instead emphasize the strong points of the lesson, teaching strategies, and student engagement. What specific strategies had a direct impact on student achievement.

Goal 4

District Budgetary Process : Building a budget is not just another task; rather, it is the task upon which all other district operations depend. I will focus on the importance of budget-building leadership and maintaining financial accountability and budget integrity.

Project Goals:

1. Develop the budget-building process which will encourage access, involvement, known procedures, representation, communication and documentation.
2. Accentuate and clarify the communication and leadership decision-making systems within the district.
3. Review the management organizational structure and recommend potential improvements.
4. Deliver regular administrative training on the District budget, budget operations, and budget development.
5. Oversee and maintain a budget process that is timely and understandable to the public, including regularly published budget documents.
6. Bring accurate information and recommendations to the Board of Education.
7. Develop a wide-ranging coalition of budget support which will provide insight into the budget process.

As a new superintendent I quickly realized that the budget is pervasive. Therefore, the manner by which I approached the fiscal responsibilities of the office presented both a challenge and an opportunity with inherent risks and rewards.

Building a budget is not just *another* task; rather, it is the fundamental task upon which all other district operations depend. While the concept of budgets is common across professional sectors and fields, the budget process in public schools has noticeable differences that impact how districts allocate and prioritize their funds.

When creating the 2023-2024 budget, I decided it was most important to focus on improving instruction by focusing teaching and learning as a means to create long-term positive change in our schools. According to Harvard University professor, Dr. Richard Elmore, educators can best serve their students by actively engaging them in classroom instruction that emphasizes rigorous and relevant content, taught by highly skilled teachers. This model of improved student learning is referred to as the “instructional core.” Most importantly, by protecting and enhancing the instructional core and strengthening our practice children become more engaged in student-centered classrooms where they are encouraged to generate and apply content in an active manner. Thus creating the tagline of “Protecting the Instructional Core” served as a mantra for my team.

Currently, my team has logged countless hours in creating a budget that not only addresses the fiscal hurdles presented to us. We have collaboratively analyzed our practice as a means to ensure that our students will receive the necessary support to address interrupted learning. The obstacle we face while creating this year’s budget are as follows:

- Sunsetting of Grants: The ESSERS grants will be sunsetting this upcoming school year. Many of the supports to address learning loss are supported by these grants.
- Increase in Special Education Services: The cost of Special Education services continues to increase higher than the year to year increase that our district has received.
- Managing Contractual Increases: Contractual increases for our employees and for services are increasing at rates higher than the year to year increase that our district has received.
- Rising English Language Learners: Newtown has seen an influx in English Language Learners. Although ELL services are classified as Tier I support, many of the supports require knowledgeable educators to meet the needs of the students.
- Reduction in Excess Cost Funding: The State of Connecticut reduced the Excess Cost Grant for Newtown by 5%.
- Addressing Interrupted Learning: Although the ESSERS funding is ending, we know that interrupted learning will need to be addressed moving forward.
- Accounting for Unfunded Mandates: Specifically the new science of reading legislation could approximately \$500,000 to our budget.
- Managing the Labor Shortage: We have shortages in many areas of our staff which forces the district to use outside contractors to support our families. This is true in transportation, special education, and substitute coverage.

•Economic Climate: The annual inflation rate for the United States is **7.1%** for the 12 months ended November 2022 after rising 7.7% previously, according to U.S. Labor Department data published Dec. 13. Federal COVID-19 stimulus and relief funds allotted to education have largely protected state governments and schools from grappling with the rising costs related to inflation so far. But these federal dollars will dry up in 2024 and then school districts will have to sustain whatever commitments they may have made using their traditional revenue sources.

We need to be prepared for economic downturns. School budgets, including labor and pension costs, should be built to withstand the pressures that come with recessions and inflation. Rather than relying on federal relief funds and rosy forecasts, state and local policymakers involved in public education need to prioritize long-term budget sustainability over short-term cost pressures.

•Enrollment Shift: In years past the district has relied upon declining enrollment to help offset cost. COVID has shifted migratory patterns. Many have abandoned the cities in favor of suburban towns like Newtown. We are estimating a slight increase in students next year and forecast of increasing enrollment over the next ten years.

Our team is currently in the process where we are working with the administrators and their staff requests, moving to the Superintendent for review and a final proposal to the Board. Following BOE deliberations, the budget (with adjustments) moves on to the Town boards.

Personnel – Certified/Non-Certified

Freedom of Speech and the Use of Media Including Social Media

Public Communications by Employees

The Newtown Board of Education (the “Board”) recognizes and respects the First Amendment Rights of all of its employees to make public statements relating to matters of public concern and to otherwise participate in the public discourse through any and all media, including social media. Additionally, the Board recognizes the importance and utility of social media and networks for its employees. The laws regarding social media continue to evolve and change. Nothing in this policy or regulation is intended to limit an employee’s right to use social media or personal online accounts under applicable law, as it may evolve. The Board of Education also recognizes that inappropriate content authored by educators that is made available for public consumption can interfere with educational effectiveness. Therefore, Newtown Public School employees shall be expected to strike an appropriate balance between exercising their right to freedom of speech and maintaining their effectiveness and credibility as educators. The Board will resolve any conflict between this policy and applicable law in favor of the law.

Ordinarily, the use of public discourse and social media by employees, including employees’ use of personal online accounts, will not be a legal or policy issue. While a policy cannot address every instance of inappropriate public discourse or use of social media, employees must refrain from discourse or social media use that:

- 1) interferes, disrupts or undermines the effective operation of the school district;
- 2) is used to engage in harassing, defamatory, obscene, abusive, discriminatory or threatening or similarly inappropriate communications;
- 3) creates a hostile work environment;
- 4) breaches confidentiality obligations of school district employees; or
- 5) violates the law, board policies and/or other school rules and regulations.

The Board of Education, through its Superintendent, will adopt and maintain administrative regulations to implement this policy.

Legal Reference:

U.S. Constitution, Amend. I
Conn. Constitution, Article I, Sections 3, 4, 14
Electronic Communication Privacy Act, 18 U.S.C. §§ 2510 through 2520
Conn. Gen. Stat. § 31-40x
Conn. Gen. Stat. § 31-48d
Conn. Gen. Stat. § 31-51q
Conn. Gen. Stat. §§ 53a-182; 53a-183; 53a-193 through 52a-200, 53a-250

Keyishian v. Board of Regents, 395 U.S. 589, 603 (1967)

Perry v. Sindermann, 408 U.S. 593 (1972)

Pickering v. Board of Education, 391 U.S. 563 (1968)
Connick v. Myers, 461 U.S. 138 (1983)
Garcetti v. Ceballos, 547 U.S. 126 S.Ct. 1951 (2006)
Sterzing v. Fort Bend Independent School District, 376F. Supp.
657 (S.D. Tex 1972)
Grayned v. City of Rockford, 408 U.S. 104 (1972)
Miller v. California, 413 U.S. 15 (1973)

Policy adopted: September 21, 2021

NEWTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Newtown, Connecticut

Personnel – Certified/Non-Certified

Freedom of Speech and use of Media, Including Social Media

The **Newtown** Board of Education (the “**Board**”) recognizes and respects the First Amendment Rights of all of its employees to make public statements relating to matters of public concern and to otherwise participate in the public discourse through any and all media, including social media. Additionally, the Board recognizes the importance and utility of social media and networks for its employees. The laws regarding social media continue to evolve and change. Nothing in the Board’s policy or this regulation is intended to limit an employee’s right to use social media or personal online accounts under applicable law, as it may evolve. The Board of Education also recognizes that inappropriate content authored by educators that is made available for public consumption can interfere with educational effectiveness. Therefore, Newtown Public School employees shall be expected to strike an appropriate balance between exercising their right to freedom of speech and maintaining their effectiveness and credibility as educators. The Board will resolve any conflict between this policy and applicable law in favor of the law.

Ordinarily, the use of social media by employees, including employees’ personal online accounts, will not be a legal or policy issue. While a policy or regulation cannot address every instance of inappropriate social media use, employees must refrain from social media use that:

- 1) interferes, disrupts or undermines the effective operation of the school district;
- 2) is used to engage in harassing, defamatory, obscene, abusive, discriminatory or threatening or similarly inappropriate communications;
- 3) creates a hostile work environment;
- 4) breaches confidentiality obligations of school district employees; or
- 5) violates the law, Board policies and/or other school rules and regulations.

Definitions:

The rapid speed at which technology continuously evolves makes it difficult, if not impossible, to identify all types of social media.

Thus, the term Social Media includes a variety of online tools and services that allow users to publish content and interact with their audiences. By way of example, social media includes, but is not limited to, the following websites or applications, including an employee’s personal online account using such social media:

- (1) social-networking (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, Classmates.com);
- (2) blogs and micro-blogs (e.g. Twitter, Tumblr, Medium);
- (3) content-sharing (e.g. Scribd, SlideShare, DropBox);

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Freedom of Speech and use of Media, Including Social Media

- (4) imagesharing, videosharing or livestreaming (e.g. Snapchat, Periscope, Flickr, YouTube, Instagram, Vine, Pinterest);
- (5) other sharing sites or apps such as by sound, location, news, or messaging, etc. (e.g. Reddit, Kik, Yik Yak, SoundCloud, WhatsApp).

Board of Education (“Board”) includes all names, logos, buildings, images and entities under the authority of the Board of Education.

Electronic communications device includes any electronic device that is capable of transmitting, accepting or processing data, including, but not limited to, a computer, computer network and computer system, and a cellular or wireless telephone.

Personal online account includes any online account that is used by an employee exclusively for personal purposes and unrelated to any business purpose of the Board, including, but not limited to electronic mail, social media and retail-based Internet websites. Personal online account does not include any account created, maintained, used or accessed by an employee for a business, educational or instructional purpose of the Board.

Rules Concerning District-Sponsored Social Media Activity

1. The Superintendent or designee will determine acceptable district sponsored social media activity platforms. In order for an employee to use social media sites as an educational tool or in relation to extracurricular activities or programs of the school district, the employee must seek and obtain the prior permission of his/her supervisor.
2. Employees may not use personal online accounts to access social media for classroom activities without express permission of the employee’s supervisor. Where appropriate and with permission, district-sponsored social media accounts should be used for such purposes.
3. If an employee wishes to use social media sites to communicate meetings, activities, games, responsibilities, announcements etc., for a school-based club or a school-based activity or an official school-based organization, or an official sports team, the employee must also comply with the following rules:
 - The employee must receive the permission of his/her immediate supervisor.
 - The employee must not use his/her personal online account for such purpose, but shall use his/her Board-issued account.
 - The employee must ensure that such social media use is compliant with all Board of Education policies, regulations, and applicable state and federal law, including the provision of required legal notices and permission slips to parents.

Personnel – Certified/Non-Certified

Freedom of Speech and use of Media, Including Social Media

- The employee must set up the club, etc. as a group list which will be "closed" (e.g. membership in the group is limited to students, parents and appropriate school personnel), and "monitored" (e.g. the employee had the ability to access and supervise communications on the social media site).
 - Parents shall be permitted to access any page that their child has been invited to join.
 - Access to the page may only be permitted for educational purposes related to the club, activity, organization or team.
 - The employee responsible for the page will monitor it regularly.
 - The employee's supervisor shall be permitted access to any page established by the employee for a school-related purpose.
 - Employees are required to maintain appropriate professional boundaries in the establishment and maintenance of all such district-sponsored social media activity.
4. Employees are prohibited from making harassing, defamatory, obscene, abusive, discriminatory or threatening or similarly inappropriate statements in their social media communications using district-sponsored sites or accounts or through Board-issued electronic accounts.
 5. Employees are required to comply with all Board of Education policies and procedures and all applicable laws with respect to the use of electronic communications devices, networks, Board-issued accounts, or when accessing district-sponsored social media sites or while using personal devices on the district's wireless network or while accessing district servers.
 6. The Board of Education reserves the right to monitor all employee use of district computers and other electronic devices, including employee blogging and social networking activity. An employee should have no expectation of personal privacy in any communication made through social media, including personal online accounts, while using district electronic communications devices.
 7. All communications through district-sponsored social media or Board-issued electronic accounts must comply with the Board's of Education's policies concerning confidentiality, including the confidentiality of student information. If an employee is considering sharing information and is unsure about the confidential nature of the information, the employee shall consult with his/her supervisor prior to communicating such information.
 8. An employee may not link a district-sponsored social media page to any personal online account or sites not sponsored by the school district.

Personnel – Certified/Non-Certified

Freedom of Speech and use of Media, Including Social Media

9. An employee may not use district-sponsored social media or Board-issued electronic accounts for communications for private financial gain, political, commercial, advertisement, proselytizing or solicitation purposes.
10. An employee may not use district-sponsored social media or Board-issued electronic accounts in a manner that misrepresents personal views as those of the Board of Education, individual school or school district, or in a manner that could be construed as such.

Rules Concerning Personal Online Accounts

1. The Board understands that employees utilize social media and the web for personal matters in the workplace. The Board of Education reserves the right to monitor all employee use of district electronic communications devices, including a review of online and personal social media activities. An employee should have no expectation of personal privacy in any personal communication made through social media while using district computers, district-issued cellular telephones or other electronic communications devices. While the Board reserves the right to monitor use of its electronic communications devices, employees may engage in incidental personal use of social media in the workplace so long as such use does not interfere with operations and productivity, and does not violate other Board policies.
2. An employee may not mention, discuss, reference or link to the Board of Education, the school district or its individual schools, programs or teams using personal online accounts or other sites or applications in a manner that could reasonably be construed as an official school district communication, unless the employee also states within the communication that such communication is the personal view of the employee of the school district and that the views expressed are the employee's alone and do not represent the views of the school district or the Board of Education. An example of such a disclaimer is: "the opinions and views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the position or opinion of the school district or Board of Education." For example, except as may be permitted by Board policy, employees may not provide job references for other individuals on social media that indicate that such references are made in an official capacity on behalf of the Board of Education.
3. Employees are required to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with students, parents, and colleagues. For example, absent an unrelated online relationship (e.g., relative, family friend, or personal friendship unrelated to school), it is not appropriate for a teacher or administrator to "friend" a student or his/her parent or guardian or otherwise establish special relationships with selected students through personal online account, and it is not appropriate for an employee to give students or parents access to personal postings unrelated to school.

Personnel – Certified/Non-Certified

Freedom of Speech and use of Media, Including Social Media

4. In accordance with the public trust doctrine, employees are advised to refrain from engaging in harassing, defamatory, obscene, abusive, discriminatory or threatening or similarly inappropriate communications through personal online accounts. Such communications reflect poorly on the school district's reputation, can affect the educational process and may substantially and materially interfere with an employee's ability to fulfill his/her professional responsibilities.
5. Employees are individually responsible for their personal communications through social media and personal online accounts. Employees may be sued by other employees, parents or others, and any individual that views an employee's communication through social media and personal online accounts as defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, libelous or creating a hostile work environment. In addition, employees should consider refraining from posting anything that belongs to another person or entity, such as copyrighted publications or trademarked images. As all of these activities are outside the scope of employment, employees may be personally liable for such claims.
6. Employees are required to comply with all Board of Education policies and procedures with respect to the use of electronic communications devices when accessing personal online accounts and/or social media through district computer systems. Any access to personal online accounts and/or personal social media activities ~~while on school property or using school district equipment~~ must comply with those policies, and may not interfere with an employee's duties at work.
7. All communications through personal online accounts and/or social media must comply with the Board's ~~of Education's~~ policies concerning confidentiality, including the confidentiality of student information. If an employee is considering sharing information and is unsure about the confidential nature of the information, the employee shall consult with his/her supervisor prior to communicating such information.
8. An employee may not post official Board of Education material using a personal online account without written permission of his/her supervisor.
9. All of the Board's ~~of Education's~~ policies and administrative regulations apply to employee use of personal online accounts in the same way that they apply to conduct that occurs in the workplace and off duty conduct.

Access to Personal Online Accounts

1. An employee may not be required by his/her supervisor to provide his/her username, password, or other means of authentication of a personal online account.
2. An employee may not be required to authenticate or access a personal online account in the presence of his/her supervisor.
3. An employee may not be required to invite or accept an invitation from his/her supervisor or required to join a group with the employee's personal online account.

Personnel – Certified/Non-Certified

Freedom of Speech and use of Media, Including Social Media

Use of Crowdfunding Activities

OR

~~*Prohibition on Crowdfunding Activities*~~

Use of Crowdfunding Activities

Prior to engaging in any crowdfunding activities (e.g. DonorsChoose, Kickstarter, GoFundMe, etc) for the Board of Education, its schools, classes, or extracurricular teams or clubs, an employee must first apply in writing to the building principal and receive approval for the crowdfunding activity. Such written application must include the name of the website or application to be utilized, a full description of the reason for the crowdfunding activity, a copy of the proposed personal profile to be listed on the site/application, and the proposed content to be uploaded to the crowdfunding website or application, including images. Any money received from crowdfunding activities must be deposited directly into a school activity fund and may not first be received by the employee. Crowdfunding activities must comply with all Board of Education policies, regulations and procedures, and shall not include photos of students or the sharing of any confidential student information.

OR

~~*Prohibition on Crowdfunding Activities*~~

~~— Employees are prohibited from engaging in crowdfunding activities (e.g. the use of websites or applications such as DonorsChoose, Kickstarter, GoFundMe, etc.) on behalf of the Board of Education, its schools, classes, or extracurricular teams or clubs.]~~

Disciplinary Consequences

Violation of the Board's policy concerning the use of social media or these administrative regulations may lead to discipline up to and including the termination of employment consistent with state and federal law.

An employee may face disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment if an employee transmits, without the Board's permission, confidential information to or from the employee's personal online account.

An employee may not be disciplined for failing to provide his/her username, password, or other authentication means for accessing a personal online account, failing to authenticate or access a personal online account in the presence of his/her supervisor or failing to invite his/her supervisor or refusing to accept an invitation sent by his/her supervisor to join a group affiliated with a personal online account, except as provided herein.

Personnel – Certified/Non-Certified

Freedom of Speech and use of Media, Including Social Media

Notwithstanding, the Board may require that an employee provide his/her username, password or other means of accessing or authenticating a personal online account for purposes of accessing any account or service provided by the Board for business purposes or any electronic communications device supplied by or paid for, in whole or in part, by the Board.

Nothing in this policy or regulations shall prevent the district from conducting an investigation for the purpose of ensuring compliance with applicable state or federal laws, regulatory requirements or prohibitions against work-related employee misconduct based on the receipt of specific information about an activity on an employee's personal online account or based on specific information about the transfer of confidential information to or from an employee's personal online account. During the course of such investigation, the district may require an employee to allow the district to access his or her personal online account for the purpose of conducting such investigation. However, the employee will not be required to provide his/her username and/or password or other authentication means in order for the district to access the personal online account.

Legal References:

U.S. Constitution, Amend. I

Conn. Constitution, Article I, Sections 3, 4, 14

Electronic Communication Privacy Act, 18 U.S.C. §§ 2510 through 2520

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 31-40x

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 31-48d

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 31-51q

Conn. Gen. Stat. §§ 53a-182; 53a-183; 53a-250

Personnel – Certified/Non-Certified

Acceptable Use of Computer Systems and Electronic Communications

Computers, computer networks, electronic devices, Internet access, and electronic messaging systems are effective and important technological resources. The Newtown Board of Education (the “Board”) has ~~installed~~ provided computers and a computer network(s), including Internet access and electronic messaging systems, on Board premises and may provide other electronic devices that can access the network(s) and/or have the ability to send and receive messages with an operating system or network communication framework. Electronic ~~D~~devices include but are not limited to personal computing devices, laptops, tablets, cellular phones, ~~S~~smartphones, network access devices, radios, personal cassette players, CD players, ~~tablets,~~ walkie-talkies, personal gaming systems, Bluetooth speakers, personal data assistants, and other electronic signaling devices. Electronic messaging systems include mobile, chat, and instant message; cloud collaboration platforms, including internal chat, peer-to-peer messaging systems, and draft email message transfer; and products that have the ability to create duration-based or subjective removal of content, such as Snapchat, and security focused platforms, such as Signal. The Board’s computers, computer networks, electronic devices, Internet access, and electronic messaging systems are referred to collectively as “the computer systems” and are provided in order to enhance both the educational opportunities for our students and the business operations of the district.

These computer systems are business and educational tools. ~~As such, they are made available to Board employees for business and education-related uses.~~ All users of the computer systems must restrict themselves to appropriate district-related educational and business purposes. The Administration shall develop regulations setting forth procedures to be used by the Administration in an effort to ensure that such computer systems are used for appropriate business and education-related purposes.

In accordance with applicable laws and the ~~A~~administrative ~~R~~regulations associated with this ~~P~~policy, the system administrator and others managing the computer systems may access electronic messaging systems (including email) or monitor activity on the computer system or electronic devices accessing the computer systems at any time and for any reason or no reason. Typical examples include when there is reason to suspect inappropriate conduct or there is a problem with the computer systems needing correction. Further, the system administrator and others managing the computer systems can access or monitor activity on the systems despite the use of passwords by individual users, and can bypass such passwords. In addition, review of electronic messaging systems (including email), messages or information stored on the computer systems, which can be forensically retrieved, includes those messages and/or electronic data sent, posted and/or retrieved using social networking sites, including but not limited to, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube.

Personnel – Certified/Non-Certified

Acceptable Use of Computer Systems and Electronic Communications

Incidental personal use of the computer systems may be permitted solely for the purpose of email transmissions and access to the Internet on a limited, occasional basis. Such incidental personal use of the computer systems, however, is subject to all rules, including monitoring of all such use, as the Superintendent may establish through regulation. Moreover, any such incidental personal use shall not interfere in any manner with work responsibilities.

Users should not have any expectation of personal privacy in the use of the computer system or other electronic devices that access the computer system. Use of the computer system represents an employee's acknowledgement that the employee has read and understands this policy and any applicable regulations in their entirety, including the provisions regarding monitoring and review of computer activity.

Legal References:

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 31-40x

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 31-48d

Conn. Gen. Stat. §§ 53a-182b; 53a-183; 53a-250

Electronic Communication Privacy Act, 18 U.S.C. §§ 2510 through 2520

Personnel – Certified/Non-Certified

Acceptable Use of Computer Systems and Electronic Communications

Introduction

The Board of Education (the “Board”) has installed provided computers and a computer network(s), including Internet access and electronic messaging systems, on Board premises and may provide electronic devices that can access the network(s) and/or have the ability to send and receive messages with an operating system or network communication framework. Electronic devices include but are not limited to personal computing devices, laptops, tablets, cellular phones, ~~S~~smartphones, network access devices, radios, personal cassette players, CD players, ~~tablets~~, walkie-talkies, personal gaming systems, Bluetooth speakers, personal data assistants, and other electronic signaling devices. Electronic messaging systems include mobile, chat, and instant message; cloud collaboration platforms, including internal chat, peer-to-peer messaging systems, and draft email message transfer; and products that have the ability to create duration-based or subjective removal of content, such as Snapchat, and security focused platforms, such as Signal.

The Board’s computers, computer networks, electronic devices, Internet access, and electronic messaging systems are referred to collectively as “the computer systems” and are provided in order ~~electronic devices~~, to enhance the educational and business operations of the district. In these regulations, the computers, computer network, electronic devices, Internet access and email system are referred to collectively as "the computer systems."

These computer systems are business and educational tools. As such, they are being made available to employees of the district for district-related educational and business purposes. *All users of the computer systems must restrict themselves to appropriate district-related educational and business purposes.* Incidental personal use of the computer systems may be permitted solely for the purpose of email transmissions and similar communications, including access to the Internet on a limited, occasional basis. Such incidental personal use of the computer systems is subject to all rules, including monitoring of all such use, set out in these regulations. Moreover, any such incidental personal use shall not interfere in any manner with work responsibilities.

While performing work-related duties and responsibilities, it is essential that all district employees remain alert, focused, and free from distractions. As such, with exception of very brief job/work related texts or cell phone calls necessary in the performance of their duties, or to address true personal emergencies involving an employee’s health or safety or the health or safety of the employee’s immediate family, use of cellular phones, whether district owned or privately owned, is prohibited during work hours.

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Acceptable Use of Computer Systems and Electronic Communications

These computer systems are expensive to install, own and maintain. Unfortunately, these computer systems can be misused in a variety of ways, some of which are innocent and others deliberate. Therefore, in order to maximize the benefits of these technologies to the district, our employees and all our students, this regulation shall govern *all* use of these computer systems.

Safeguarding of the district's computer systems assigned to employees is the responsibility of the employee. It is also the employee's responsibility to report any loss or damage of the district's computer systems to the Director of Information Technology immediately upon discovery of the loss or damage.

All computer systems owned by the Board shall be returned to the district upon resignation/termination or whenever requested by the Superintendent of Schools. Restitutions (appropriate replacement value) may be made to the district for any damage (caused by other than normal wear and tear) done to the district's computer systems or if such computer systems are lost or stolen outside of school.

Monitoring

It is important for all users of these computer systems to understand that the Board, as the owner of the computer systems, reserves the right to monitor the use of the computer systems to ensure that they are being used in accordance with these regulations. The Board intends to monitor ~~in a limited fashion, but will do so as needed. to ensure that the systems are being used appropriately for district related educational and business purposes and to maximize utilization of the systems for such business and educational purposes.~~ The Superintendent reserves the right to eliminate personal use of the district's computer systems by any or all employees at any time.

The system administrator and others managing the computer systems may access electronic messaging systems (including email) or monitor activity on the computer system or electronic devices (including, but not limited to, voicemail messages, and text and picture messages) accessing the computer systems any time and for any reason or no reason. Typical examples include when there is reason to suspect inappropriate conduct or there is a problem with the computer systems needing correction. Further, the system administrator and others managing the computer systems can access or monitor activity on the systems despite the use of passwords by individual users, and can bypass such passwords. In addition, review of emails, messages or information stored on the computer systems, which can be forensically retrieved, includes those messages and/or electronic data sent, posted and/or retrieved using social networking sites, including, but not limited to, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube.

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Acceptable Use of Computer Systems and Electronic Communications

Notwithstanding the above and in accordance with state law, the Board may not: (1) request or require that an employee provide the Board with a user name and password, password or any other authentication means for accessing a personal online account; (2) request or require that an employee authenticate or access a personal online account in the presence of a Board representative; or (3) require that an employee invite a supervisor employed by the Board or accept an invitation from a supervisor employed by the Board to join a group affiliated with any personal online account of the employee. However, the Board may request or require that an employee provide the Board with a user name and password, password or any other authentication means for accessing (1) any account or service provided by the Board or by virtue of the employee's employment relationship with the Board or that the employee uses for the Board's business purposes, or (2) any electronic communications device supplied or paid for, in whole or in part, by the Board.

In accordance with applicable law, the Board maintains the right to require an employee to allow the Board to access the employee's personal online account, without disclosing the user name and password, password or other authentication means for accessing such personal online account, for the purpose of:

- (A) Conducting an investigation for the purpose of ensuring compliance with applicable state or federal laws, regulatory requirements or prohibitions against work-related employee misconduct based on the receipt of specific information about activity on an employee's personal online account; or
- (B) Conducting an investigation based on the receipt of specific information about an employee's unauthorized transfer of the Board's proprietary information, confidential information or financial data to or from a personal online account operated by an employee or other source.

For purposes of these Administrative Regulations, "personal online account" means any online account that is used by an employee exclusively for personal purposes and unrelated to any business purpose of the Board, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, social media and retail-based Internet web sites. "Personal online account" does not include any account created, maintained, used or accessed by an employee for a business purpose of the Board.

Why Monitor?

The computer systems are expensive for the Board to install, operate and maintain. For that reason alone it is necessary to prevent misuse of the computer systems. However, there are other equally important reasons why the Board intends to monitor the use of

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Acceptable Use of Computer Systems and Electronic Communications

these computer systems, reasons that support its efforts to maintain a comfortable and pleasant work environment for all employees.

These computer systems can be used for improper, and even illegal, purposes. Experience by other operators of such computer systems has shown that they can be used for such wrongful purposes as sexual harassment, intimidation of co-workers, threatening of co-workers, breaches of confidentiality, copyright infringement and the like.

Monitoring will also allow the Board to continually reassess the utility of the computer systems, and whenever appropriate, make such changes to the computer systems as it deems fit. Thus, the Board monitoring should serve to increase the value of the system to the district on an ongoing basis.

Privacy Issues

Employees must understand that the Board has reserved the right to conduct monitoring of these computer systems and can do so *despite* the assignment to individual employees of passwords for system security. Any password systems implemented by the district are designed solely to provide system security from unauthorized users, not to provide privacy to the individual system user.

The system's security aspects, message delete function and personal passwords can be bypassed for monitoring purposes.

Therefore, *employees must be aware that they should not have any expectation of personal privacy in the use of these computer systems.* This provision applies to any and all uses of the district's computer systems and electronic devices that access same, including any incidental personal use permitted in accordance with these regulations.

Use of the computer system represents an employee's acknowledgement that the employee has read and understands these regulations and any applicable policy in their entirety, including the provisions regarding monitoring and review of computer activity.

Prohibited Uses

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Acceptable Use of Computer Systems and Electronic Communications

Inappropriate use of district computer systems is expressly prohibited, including, but not limited to, the following:

- ◆ Sending any form of solicitation not directly related to the business of the Board of Education;
- ◆ Sending any form of slanderous, harassing, threatening, or intimidating message, at any time, to any person (such communications *may* also be a *crime*);
- ◆ Gaining or seeking to gain unauthorized access to computer systems;
- ◆ Downloading or modifying computer software of the district in violation of the district's licensure agreement(s) and/or without authorization from supervisory personnel;
- ◆ Sending any message that breaches the Board's confidentiality requirements, including the confidentiality rights of students;
- ◆ Sending any copyrighted material over the system;
- ◆ Sending messages for any purpose prohibited by law;
- ◆ Transmission or receipt of inappropriate email communications or accessing inappropriate information on the Internet, including vulgar, lewd or obscene words or pictures;
- ◆ Using computer systems for any purposes, or in any manner, other than those permitted under these regulations;
- ◆ Using social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube in a manner that violates the Board's Social Networking policy.

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Acceptable Use of Computer Systems and Electronic Communications

~~[If the Board does not have a formal social networking policy, the last bullet may be revised as follows:~~

- ~~◆ Using social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube in a manner that disrupts or undermines the effective operation of the school district; is used to engage in harassing, defamatory, obscene, abusive, discriminatory or threatening or similarly inappropriate communications; creates a hostile work environment; breaches confidentiality obligations of school district employees; or violates the law, Board policies and/or the other school rules and regulations.]~~

In addition, if a particular behavior or activity is generally prohibited by law and/or Board policy, use of these computer systems for the purpose of carrying out such activity and/or behavior is also prohibited.

Electronic Communications

The Board expects that all employees will comply with all applicable Board policies and standards of professional conduct when engaging in any form of electronic communication, including texting, using the district's computer system, or through the use of any electronic messaging system or electronic device or mobile device owned, leased, or used by the Board. As with any form of communication, the Board expects district personnel to exercise caution and appropriate judgment when using electronic communications with students, colleagues and other individuals in the context of fulfilling an employee's job-related responsibilities, including when engaging in remote teaching or use of a digital teaching platform.

Disciplinary Action

Misuse of these computer systems will not be tolerated and will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. Because no two situations are identical, the Board reserves the right to determine the appropriate discipline for any particular set of circumstances.

Complaints of Problems or Misuse

Anyone who is aware of problems with or misuse of these computer systems, or has a question regarding the appropriate use of the computer systems, should report this to a district administrator or supervisor or to _____.

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Acceptable Use of Computer Systems and Electronic Communications

Most importantly, the Board urges *any* employee who receives *any* harassing, threatening, intimidating or other improper message through the computer systems to report this immediately. It is the Board's policy that no employee should be required to tolerate such treatment, regardless of the identity of the sender of the message. *Please report these events!*

Implementation

This regulation is effective as of __/__/__.

Legal References:

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 31-40x
Conn. Gen. Stat. § 31-48d
Conn. Gen. Stat. §§ 53a-182; 53a-183; 53a-250

Electronic Communication Privacy Act, 18 U.S.C. §§ 2510 through 2520

NOTICE REGARDING ELECTRONIC MONITORING

In accordance with the provisions of Connecticut General Statutes Section 31-48d, the Board of Education hereby gives notice to all its employees of the potential use of electronic monitoring in its workplace. While the Board may not actually engage in the use of electronic monitoring, it reserves the right to do so as the Board and/or the Administration deem appropriate in their discretion, consistent with the provisions set forth in this Notice.

“Electronic monitoring,” as defined by Connecticut General Statutes Section 31-48d, means the collection of information on the Board’s premises concerning employees’ activities or communications, by any means other than direct observation of the employees. Electronic monitoring includes the use of a computer, telephone, wire, radio, camera, electromagnetic, photoelectronic, or photo-optical systems, and global positioning systems (GPS). The law does not cover the collection of information (A) for security purposes in any common areas of the Board’s premises which are open to the public, or (B) which is prohibited under other state or federal law.

The following specific types of electronic monitoring may be used by the Board in its workplaces:

- Monitoring of e-mail and other components of the Board’s computer systems, including monitoring of electronic devices such as PDAs, Smartphones, and mobile or handheld devices that access the computer systems, for compliance with the Board’s policies and regulations concerning use of such systems.

- Video and/or audio surveillance within school buildings (other than in restrooms, locker rooms, lounges and other areas designed for the health or personal comfort of employees or for the safeguarding of their possessions), on school grounds and on school buses and other vehicles providing transportation to students and/or employees of the school system.

- Monitoring of employee usage of the school district’s telephone systems.

- Monitoring of employee usage of the school district’s vehicles through the Global Positioning System (GPS).
 - Monitoring of employees when employees are engaging in remote teaching or use of a digital teaching platform.

The law also provides that, where electronic monitoring may produce evidence of misconduct, the Board may use electronic monitoring without any prior notice when the Board has reasonable grounds to believe employees are engaged in conduct that (i) violates the law, (ii) violates the legal rights of the Board or other employees, or (iii) creates a hostile work environment.

Questions about electronic monitoring in the workplace should be directed to the Superintendent.

Legal References:

Connecticut General Statutes:

Section 31-48b

Section 31-48d

10/2019

Bylaws of the Board**Methods of Operation**

The Newtown Board of Education shall concern itself only with broad questions of policy and not with administrative details. The Board shall rely upon the Superintendent of Schools to recommend policies for adoption and to administer policies enacted by the Board. Such policies shall be broad enough to indicate a line of action to be taken by the Superintendent in meeting a number of problems and jobs. Application of such policies to individual problems and jobs is an administrative function to be performed by the Superintendent.

Adopted: 6/5/12

**Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut**

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting held on January 17, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. in the Reed Intermediate School Library, 3 Trades Lane.

D. Zukowski, Chair	C. Melillo
J. Vouros, Vice Chair	A. Uberti
D. Ramsey, Secretary	T. Vadas
D. Cruson	14 Staff
J. Kuzma	1 Public
J. Larkin	
A. Plante	
K. Kunzweiler	
D. Godino	

Ms. Zukowski called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Item 1 – Pledge of Allegiance

Item 2 - Consent Agenda

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved that the Board of Education approve the consent agenda which includes the donations to the Newtown Public Schools and Newtown Middle School, and the correspondence report. Mrs. Kuzma seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 3 – Public Participation

Item 4 – Reports

Ms. Zukowski enjoyed seeing some of the Capstone projects and the Middle Gate concert last week.

Mrs. Larkin also went to the Capstone presentations with her children.

Mr. Ramsey did the same and appreciated the legacy aspect of them. He also attended professional development activities at the middle school.

Mr. Vouros saw six Capstone presentations and took away not just what they were saying but how personalized their subject was to them and how much they learned about themselves.

Superintendent's Report:

Mr. Melillo attended the Rotary Student of the Month Dinner last week where three students were recognized. They were Ali El-Awa from the middle school, and Kirtana Kunzweiler and Patrick Reisert from the high school. These students exhibit excellence in school and in the community. Our eighth grade Project Challenge team achieved highest honors in the first WordMasters Challenge national vocabulary competition. Thursday night he attended the Nighthawk girls basketball and unified sports games.

Committee Reports:

Mrs. Larkin reported on last Thursday's CFF meeting where they discussed transportation with an update from All-Star. A committee will be set up to put a more regular focus on the transportation issues. Mr. Gerbert gave an update on the Hawley project which will be completed by April. They also discussed a new playground at Middle Gate School. Virtual net metering is booming and saving money in our supplies account.

Mrs. Plante reported that the DEI committee met January 12 and Kellen Nixon of Nixon and Company Consulting Group, joined the meeting virtually and will help with our DEI efforts. He has a wealth of experience in this field. His work will be about eight months in duration and will establish a needs assessment to help with what we have accomplished and where we can do better.

Mr. Vouros noted that the Curriculum and Instruction Committee met and discussed the reading program selection process and the science professionals they met with will be here in February.

Mr. Cruson said CAFE is going to have its annual Board of Directors retreat next week to discuss ways to support boards of education and also next year's CAFE/CAPSS Convention.

Student Reports:

Ms. Kunzweiler reported that Unified Theater presented their original play, members of the Hope Squad took part in a retreat at the Community Center, and rehearsals are underway for the play "Into the Woods."

Mr. Godino said athletics had a successful start to the new year and the Leo Club had guest speaker Chris Gardner share his experiences in volunteerism in the community. Seniors presented Capstone projects and midterms are this week.

Financial Report:

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved that the Board of Education approve the financial report and transfers for the month ending December 31, 2022. Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Mrs. Vadas presented her report.

Motion passes unanimously.

Item 5 – Presentations

Update on Reading Program Selection Process:

Anne Uberti and Kara DiBartolo spoke about the reading program selection process. They are revising their initial recommendation for a pilot program and recommending using Imagine Learning EL Education. We will notify the state we intend to apply for a waiver and use Foundations and Heggerty. They met with K-4 teachers last week who are in favor of this.

Mr. Cruson appreciated the recommendation that a pilot can't be done and disappointed we didn't have the time. He was glad we are keeping elements of what we've had.

Mrs. Uberti said if we find issues, they will be addressed but we believe this is a good fit and has all of the components. We would do an evaluation on our decision.

Mrs. Kuzma as glad were were keeping Foundations and Heggerty and asked about computer usage compared to what we are doing now.

Mrs. DiBartolo said that was one of the deciding factors. This one has a great balance with printed materials and online components. Students will still have books.

Mrs. Larkin referred to the grade comparisons and hoped we can quickly move to fill the gaps for the students in Reed and the middle school who didn't have an adequate program and are still struggling. She was concerned about how students select books.

Mrs. Uberti said students have had independent reading so levels won't go away. They are predominantly texts at their level.

Mrs. Larkin was concerned that we are picking one of the most important implementations with not having a pilot and not having a fall back plan for another choice.

Mrs. Uberti said the best second alternative would be to do two full pilots next year but that's not an option. It was chosen by a great group of people who have a lot of reading knowledge.

Mrs. Kuzma asked if other district that use this were contacted.

Mr. Uberti responded that we have name of the districts using it and intend to contact them.

Mr. Ramsey felt they've done their due diligence and the odds of success are quite great.

Ms. Zukowski asked about the differentiation in reading instruction.

Mrs. DiBartolo said it's about the progression of reading and questioning if the students know what they are reading. That's when differentiation would come in.

Ms. Zukowski asked if we had professional development for teaching reading.

Mrs. DiBartolo said we spoke about professional development from EL Education and will start with our core team at the beginning of the year..

Mrs. Uberti added we are having off site and in-house PD in Foundations and the Science of Reading this year.

Superintendent's Overview of the 2023-2024 Budget:

Mr. Melillo presented his proposed budget.

Mrs. Larkin said it was well done and phenomenal work. These decisions not made easy. Seeing what other towns have come in at this number is lower than she expected.

Ms. Zukowski said it was an excellent overview and thanked everyone for their work on the budget.

Item 6 – Old Business

Weight Training Curriculum:

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved that the Board of Education approve the Weight Training Curriculum. Mrs. Kuzma seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 7 – New Business

Letter regarding Transportation:

Ms. Zukowski asked the Board their feeling about send a letter to our State legislators regarding our issues with transportation.

Mr. Cruson feels sending a letter from the Board is a tool when we have special requests or opinions. He can't think of anything they can do. There is nothing specific to ask of the State so he doesn't see the value in sending the letter.

Mr. Melillo said there could be funding sources and noted that EdAdvance doesn't have enough drivers for our special education students. No one budgeted for overages in transportation costs. In other states they've used National Guard or other agencies to drive. He reached out to Fran Rabinowitz and our legislators and feels it won't hurt to ask for support and it will put it on their radar that it's an issue. We can be advocates to see if the state can support some of the work we need to do or ask our community to pay. He would let the Governor's office know that this problem needs to be solved.

Mrs. Kuzma agrees there should be a specific ask and supports writing a letter. She spoke to Mitch Bolinsky who said there is talk around all of the various shortages.

Mr. Melillo said they can make changes in the upcoming session regarding financial and time relief.

Mrs. Plante said we're no worse off if we send a letter. It needs to have a pointed request which is for financial relief.

Mrs. Larkin send a letter last week and supported the Board sending a letter also. We owe it to the families and Mr. Melillo and Mrs. Vadas as they are getting calls and we get emails every day. It's time to take the next step.

Ms. Zukowski noted that she would create another letter to include tonight's comments and add it to next Tuesday's agenda.

Action on Minutes:

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved that the Board of Education approve the minutes of January 3, 2023. Mr. Ramsey seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved that the Board of Education approve the minutes of January 13, 2023. Vote: 5 ayes, 2 abstained (Mrs. Larkin, Mrs. Plante) Motion passes.

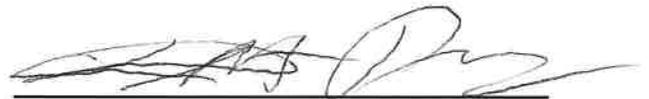
Item 8 – Public Participation

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved to adjourn. Mr. Vouros seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 9 - Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:



Donald Ramsey
Secretary

**Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut**

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting held on January 19, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 3 Primrose Street.

D. Zukowski, Chair	C. Melillo
J. Vouros, Vice Chair	A. Uberti
D. Ramsey, Secretary	T. Vadas
D. Cruson	25 Staff
J. Kuzma	
J. Larkin	
A. Plante	
K. Kunzweiler (absent)	
D. Godino (absent)	

Ms. Zukowski called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Item 1 – Pledge of Allegiance

Item 2 – Elementary School Budgets

Mr. Geissler, Dr. Gombos, Mr. Napolitano and Mr. Moretti spoke about the elementary budgets.

Mr. Vouros asked for feedback on how the library media centers in the elementary schools will operate under the new plan without paraprofessionals. He also questioned the adjustments under Project Challenge.

Mr. Melillo said one of the enrichment teachers is going to remain in one of elementary schools and still be working with teachers to enrich within the classroom. The only change is there will be one person instead of two. They will continue to identify gifted students.

Mr. Cruson said with the proposed cut with the library paraprofessionals and now asking the librarians to take care of Project Challenge, it seems like there will be a lot more work for them.

Mr. Napolitano said it will add to their responsibilities but we will support them and use volunteers. We will work with them in each building to make this work. He supports our library teachers and will reach out to families for volunteers.

Dr. Gombos said over the past 10 years we cut all of our specialists in our buildings. We've shared teachers because of the amount of classes taught. To keep these specialists whole we had to make these decisions. This change has the least impact on students.

Mrs. Kuzma said that during Covid volunteers were not allowed in schools and asked if they had enough volunteers now.

Dr. Gombos said we have more volunteers than ever before at Sandy Hook School and turn people away. We will have a system for training volunteers.

Mr. Geissler said the paras are the backbone of our schools and we have a good staff because of good hiring followed by good training.

Mr. Vouros was having difficulty supporting this reduction. The enrichment model in grades three and four is extensive.

Dr. Gombos stated there will be a gifted teacher each week.

Mr. Vouros said the enrichment challenges the teachers do now is a separate program. The library media teacher won't have time to do the work involved. That can't suffer and we need to think about how we are going to find money.

Mr. Napolitano said regarding the enrichment piece we will be reaching more students with bigger groups of students

Mrs. Uberti stated that not all 3rd and 4th graders are getting enrichment.

Mrs. Larkin asked for an explanation if what maker spaces were.

Mr. Moretti explained that the librarians brought it to us and it's exposing children to a variety of technologies, stem activities, robots, decoding, and the like.

Dr. Gombos said it started 10 years or so and media specialists use it as one of their resources. It's imbedded in our media program for all students.

Mr. Cruson said regarding para cuts, we would be foolish to believe all of them would move to a special education position. What will be done to fill the open positions?

Mr. Moretti stated we post positions on various websites, college campuses and journals. Central office continues to look at ways to fill them.

Mr. Melillo said we look at what is mandated in a special education student's PPT and decide what the various responsibilities are for teachers and paras. None of the cuts have anything to do with the performance of paras or teachers. We had to come up with a solution to a problem and recognizes this will put a load on media specialists. Others have been covering special education student needs. We have landing spots for those who will lose their position so they will still have a job. We are faced with pulling supports from classrooms and making classes larger. We are making decisions in the best interest of the students.

Ms. Zukowski inquired about elementary enrollment projections and classroom space.

Dr. Gombos said their budgets are based on projections and we don't plan for extra students.

Mr. Melillo said we will make adjustments if needed. It's not uncommon to add classes at the beginning of the school year. We opened kindergarten enrollment early with 60 students enrolled at this time.

Mr. Cruson felt the enrollment and classroom space should be a discussion the Board should have in the future and have maps with what each room is used for.

Dr. Gombos said you could look at the maps but you have to also look at the room dimensions because many are too small to be used for classrooms.

Ms. Zukowski noted we need to make sure the school fields are ADA accessible.

Mr. Vouros asked what we would do if the SRBI and library paras being cut don't want special education positions.

Mr. Melillo said when we pass the budget we will have a better idea of who goes where. If we have a dearth of applicants we may have to leverage some of our MTSS tutors to help our special education students or see how we can support the library media specialists. Those special education positions are tied to IEPs. It was a plan to try to ensure our staff have a landing spot. There are 13 open special education positions and he is hopeful that everyone impacted by these cuts will take a position in the district.

Mrs. Uberti said we made a decision to keep the additional math interventionists. We have an additional certified person because of the pandemic. It serves the students well to have a certified teacher working with them.

Mrs. Larkin said we put so much additional programming in but there is only so much time in the day. We have to teach the core subjects and give them the time they need. These maker spaces sound great. Maybe we streamline some things.

Item 3 – Reed Intermediate School

Dr. Correia spoke about his budget. Office and classroom referrals are down. Enrollment continues to grow with a prediction of 577 students but we are now expecting 600.

Mr. Ramsey asked if they had a reduction in referrals.

Dr. Correia didn't have that information but feels this has happened because teachers are handling things more in their classrooms and the students are getting diversion lessons in both grades. Some days we see none.

Mrs. Larkin asked about ELA and if he has any requests.

Dr. Correia has no request right now. He spoke about curriculum needing to grow with the students and that we are missing some things that should be in the core classes.

Mrs. Uberti said when we present curriculum for next year they would meet the needs discussed.

Mrs. Plante asked if he was worried about class size given the increased enrollment.

Dr. Correia was not worried at this time as he expects to be under the class size guidelines.

Ms. Zukowski noted that she is setting up a committee to look at clubs. She asked about removing a science position listed on page 83.

Dr. Correia said that is our science instructional coach to address teachers needing NGSS training. The teacher instruction is no longer needed so we can eliminate this position.

Item 4 – Newtown Middle School

Jim Ross spoke about his budget and was joined by Terri Greenfield.

Mr. Cruson asked if the Reed 600 students number was close to the grade 7 enrollment.

Mr. Ross said that number was pretty close. The middle school schedule has flexibility. If a grade level is 75 students over then there would be concern.

Mr. Ramsey asked if there was a plan to offer any other after school clubs.

Mr. Ross said it depended on the following for additional clubs. This year we piloted a singing program. We are always looking to enhance.

Mr. Vouros heard great reports coming from your school. He asked with the new schedule if there was anything he needed that will enhance it.

Mr. Ross said they were in a great spot right now. They started to think about the essential skills about time management, learning how to learn, and social emotional curriculum pieces.

Mr. Vouros acknowledged Mr. Walsh and his work with the students. His identifying with them the way he does is working.

Mr. Ramsey asked how the middle school was working with student referrals.

Mr. Ross said they were trending in the right direction.

Item 5 – Public Participation

Beth Murphy, 6 Miya Lane, Head O'Meadow School Library

Erika Carlson, Library Hawley Library

Andrew San Angelo, Middle School Library

Katie Mauro, Sandy Hook Library

Suzanne Hurley, Middle Gate School

Alison Smith, 30 Taunton Hill Road, library para at Head O'Meadow School

Beth Murphy said with the removal of a para she will have to absorb 20 hours of work. She has volunteers but they don't do the work of her para.

Suzanne Hurley spoke about her duties and that the high school, middle school and Reed have paras. The elimination of these will impact students in the elementary schools. They have very few volunteers. This will be a devastating loss.

Andrew SanAngelo felt that this loss will hinder the library program. It's impossible to add 20 hours and a program for these teachers. He asked to reinstate the paras.

Alison Smith said one person alone cannot manage a library. It will break the specialists.

Julie Morey, 17 Saddle Ridge Road, is a former library volunteer and para at Middle Gate School and is now a library clerk at the middle school. She spoke about the importance of additional help in libraries.

Jessica Galterio, 8 Surrey Trail, was concerned about cutting paras from the libraries. She volunteers in the Middle Gate School library and asked to reconsider this decision.

Motion: Mr. Vouros moved to adjourn. Mr. Cruson seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 6 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Donald Ramsey
Secretary

**Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut**

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting held on January 24, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 3 Primrose Street.

D. Zukowski, Chair	C. Melillo
J. Vouros, Vice Chair	A. Uberti
D. Ramsey, Secretary	T. Vadas
D. Cruson	15 Staff
J. Kuzma	
J. Larkin	
A. Plante	
K. Kunzweiler (absent)	
D. Godino (absent)	

Ms. Zukowski called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Item 1 – Pledge of Allegiance

Item 2 – Newtown High School / Athletics Budget

Dr. Longobucco presented the high school budget and Mr. Memoli addressed athletics.

Mr. Melillo stated that the instructional core fits in with the student/teacher ratio. We make a conscious effort at all of the schools to ensure our students are in classes that are not overloaded. We looked at other ways to save and still meet our student needs.

Mr. Cruson asked the load for the in-school suspension tutor.

Dr. Longobucco said that some days we only have one student and some are just there for one period. It's been nice to have a consistent person but instead we will have teachers there.

Mr. Cruson asked the trend this year with office referrals.

Dr. Longobucco said that last year we had increased misbehaviors and very childish behaviors. This year has been significantly better.

Mrs. Kuzma remarked that we aren't offering buses for the middle school students.

Mr. Memoli said before Covid we had school buses transport middle and high school students to games but we don't have enough this year so parents now transport middle school students. We are working on reducing the use of coach buses by this spring.

Item 3 – Special Education and Item 4 – Pupil Personnel

Mrs. Petersen presented the special education budget which also includes out-of-district placements.

Mrs. Larkin asked what Mrs. Petersen needed.

Mrs. Petersen noted that each outplacement location regulates their tuition. Our caseloads are very manageable but there are a lot of special needs so we need the staff to help.

Mrs. Larkin asked how the special education para vacancies effect the ability to provide services for those students and if they were going unserved.

Mrs. Petersen stated they are not being underserved and we are not out of compliance. The teachers and some paras help to make sure the students get the coverage they need but it has been exhausting.

Mrs. Kuzma asked how many special education para positions were open now.
Mrs. Petersen said there were 13 open and five behavior therapist positions open.

Mr. Melillo stated that we are using all of the resources we have to meet their needs. He thanked Mrs. Petersen and her team for providing what the students need.

Mrs. Plante asked about the reduction of a project challenge part time teacher.

Mrs. Uberti stated that she and Mrs. Petersen co-manage project challenge. We currently have a part time teacher at the middle school who also covers one elementary school part time. A retired teacher covers Middle Gate part time and she is in a one-year position. One full-time person is servicing two elementary schools.

Mr. Vouros felt it was great to have the same teachers with these students. We're hoping to have the enrichment program separate from gifted. He is concerned that too often we hear because we have a sub shortage that paras are teaching in the classroom. If so, who is working with their child and is it sub pay or para pay?

Mrs. Petersen noted that rarely a special education para will be pulled because they need to be with their student.

Mrs. Uberti said that happens very infrequently. It happened last year due to quarantining and illness. Regarding pay, there are different rates in their contracts.

Ms. Zukowski suggested having the list of out-of-district tuition by district to show the range during the budget discussion.

Mrs. Petersen would provide a comparison.

Ms. Zukowski referred to the list of grants.

Mrs. Petersen said with the grant money we wanted another teacher for the PAL program. We had a teacher last year for a month and they resigned. We decided to use the grant money for the lead BT position who has staff under them and has to train incoming staff.

Item 5 – Health Budget

Mrs. Petersen and Karen Powell, Nursing Supervisor, spoke about the Health Budget. From the start of this school year as of January 12, 2023, the school nurses have seen a total of 18,627 students. They also spoke about the difficulty maintaining full nurse coverage each day.

Mrs. Larkin was curious to see how this ties into an air study.

Mrs. Petersen was going to keep track of the nurse office numbers and noted that we might ask for additional nurses because Mrs. Powell is often called to fill in at the schools.

Item 6 – Curriculum Budget

Mrs. Uberti highlighted the curriculum and staff development budget.

Mr. Vouros thanked her for all she does to develop the staff professionally on a consistent basis.

Mrs. Larkin noted that she is valuable, touches so many in the district, and has done so much to improve how things are done. She asked where her professional development was for the new program.

Mrs. Uberti said she doesn't have a solid number yet and is working with the publisher now because it has to fit our timeline. Some may come out of her current budget. She doesn't anticipate doing much PD this year because it's too early and there is not much PD time left. Training will take place at the start of next year.

Mr. Melillo said we are looking to front load PD at the beginning of the year.
Mrs. Uberti stated that the calendar will be designed for PD at the beginning of the year.

Ms. Zukowski said she was a bright spot in the district and has made an incredible impact.

Item 7 – Adoption of *Imagine Learning EL Education*

MOTION: Mrs. Kuzma moved that the Board of Education approve the one-year adoption of the Imagine Learning EL Education for grades K-4 for the 2023-2024 school year. Mrs. Larkin seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

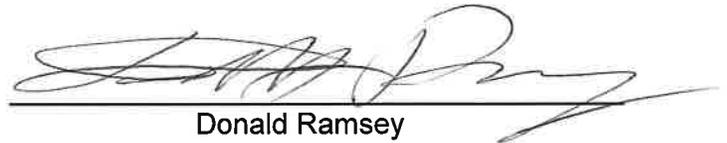
Item 8 – Public Participation

MOTION: Mr. Vouros moved to adjourn. Mr. Cruson seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 9 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:



Donald Ramsey
Secretary

**Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut**

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting held on January 26, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 3 Primrose Street.

D. Zukowski, Chair	C. Melillo
J. Vouros, Vice Chair	A. Uberti
D. Ramsey, Secretary	T. Vadas
D. Cruson	9 Staff
J. Kuzma	3 Public
J. Larkin	
A. Plante	
K. Kunzweiler (absent)	
D. Godino (absent)	

Ms. Zukowski called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

Item 1 – Pledge of Allegiance

Item 2 – Technology Budget

Dennis Colclough, IT Director, presented his budget.

Mr. Cruson questioned the decrease in the number of laptops to Chromebook and heard the Chromebook have limitations.

Mr. Colclough said there are shortcomings and he is looking to provide better access to software.

Mrs. Larkin asked if there was tech and library media support in the buildings.

Mr. Colclough said there is a stipend for the elementary library media specialists when there is a problem with a Chromebook. There is also tech support at Reed and the middle school.

Mrs. Larkin asked for an explanation of stipends.

Mr. Melillo said a stipend is for work after their school day or during prep time. A stipend would also fall outside of their job description.

Mrs. Uberti said it's compensatory time for work outside of the day.

Mr. Ramsey asked how many devices are breaking down that can be repaired in-house.

Mr. Colclough said there is about a 10% breakage rate. Most repairs are in-house but some are on warranty.

Mrs. Plante asked when we would know if we will get help from the Town's capital non-recurring account.

Ms. Zukowski said we are up front with our costs to the Board of Finance and it is their choice to use those funds to help with their recommendation going to the Legislative Council.

Mr. Vouros asked that when a student graduates if we give them a Chromebook or sell it to them.

Mr. Colclough stated we would have to look into the Charter to see if it should be sold or if we can give it to the student.

Ms. Zukowski asked Mr. Colclough to have his slides for the Board of Finance meeting.

Item 3 – Continuing Education Budget

Jennifer Arnold, Director of Adult and Continuing spoke about her budget.
Mr. Ramsey appreciated the summer programs and asked if the citizenship classes have increased over the years.
Mrs. Arnold would get those numbers from Werace in Danbury.

Item 4 – Plant Budget

Bob Gerbert, Director of Facilities, spoke about his budget.
Mrs. Larkin said that no one realizes how much he and his group do for the town.
Mr. Gerbert said we have great people who love and are committed to their job.
Mr. Ramsey said the custodial staff enhances the school atmosphere and they did so much during Covid.
Mr. Gerbert and his staff appreciated the November newsletter, which highlighted his department and staff.

Ms. Zukowski noted the move to a one-year plan.
Mr. Gerbert said there was a shift in priorities year to year. He meets with principals in the fall regarding projects they have in mind. Some things change over the course of the school year or other things have big costs and are pushed back. It is easier to manage one year.

Ms. Zukowski asked if the Town had a five-year plan.
Mr. Gerbert was not sure but probably a short-term list for one year.

Mr. Melillo stated there has been a discussion on projects scheduled out. There is no guarantee we will be there in the year the project is listed. The longer you go out, the harder it is to pinpoint projects so we decided on a one year plan.

Ms. Zukowski felt the principal's first priority is what is happening in the classrooms and reaching out to parents. She is concerned we might miss things easily managed earlier than later. The five-year plan makes us proactive. Are there inspections of the HVAC systems?
Mr. Gerbert said a lot is captured in contract services. Our maintenance people react quickly when there's a problem. We have done capital projects to avoid bigger problems.

Ms. Zukowski referred to furniture purchases and felt it would be good to pull some out and asked if we could use the non-lapsing account.
Mrs. Vadas said that money is more for projects, not consumable items.
Mr. Gerbert felt it was not wise to use that account.

Item 5 – Benefits Budget and Item 6 – General Services Budget

Mrs. Vadas introduced Angela Walsh who joined her for her budget discussions.
Mrs. Larkin asked if there was a lunch fund that could help with equipment repairs.
Mrs. Vadas said the fund is more for equipment repairs and she would get more information.

Mr. Melillo said we need to find out if we have to use it for repairs.
Mr. Cruson thought there was an approval process to use those funds.
Mrs. Vadas said there was not because it's self-funded.
Mr. Melillo spoke about the fluctuation of guards this year because there is a lot of competition with higher paying districts. We train our guards and then lose them.

Mark Pompano, Director of Security, said it's extremely challenging to retain guards. We had one only stay a month because of salary and the driving distance from Stratford. Darien is now \$36.75 per hour. The incident in Uvalde really made other districts hire armed guards.

Item 7 – Transportation Budget

Mrs. Vadas spoke about the transportation budget.

Mrs. Larkin said the bus reduction was after we had the budget and she was concerned about next year.

Mr. Cruson said we had unexpected expenses this year to fill gaps and was concerned there was not enough money for additional expenses.

Mrs. Vadas noted that we had to use money from the activities fund so it's not increasing this budget.

Ms. Zukowski expects it will cost more for out of district transportation. We have to come up with a way to transport students because more coach buses are being used.

Mrs. Vadas said we put more money in the transportation contract for sports.

Mr. Melillo needs a solution to the lack of bus drivers and was having a meeting with All-Star the next day. We tried to pay more, reroute, asked the Governor, the Commissioner of Education and State representatives and was tired of hearing it's a Newtown thing. He understands there is a driver shortage as EdAdvance is having the same issue. Dan Rosenthal will be joining the meeting also and he would report back. We are looking at all of our options.

Item 8 – Letter Regarding Transportation

MOTION: Mrs. Larkin moved that the Board of Education approve sending a letter to CAPSS and State Representatives regarding transportation. Mrs. Kuzma seconded.

Ms. Zukowski referred to the two letters and asked if anything was missing.

Mr. Cruson explained his version as he was concerned about it being Newtown specific and made it clear this was a State problem and State action was appropriate. His letter explained what we were dealing with and added using the National Guard. He felt CUBE and CAPSS should just be copied on the letter.

Mr. Ramsey feels the public needs to understand the administration and Board of Education are doing everything they can. He feels Mr. Cruson's version was crystal clear and offered a proper context of this situation with it being a site problem.

Ms. Zukowski spoke to other Board chairs and some have no problems.

Mrs. Plante said the point is there is a problem and we want to ask for help. She supports Mr. Cruson's letter.

Mrs. Kuzma agrees it's bigger than Newtown. It's not the time to have the tier conversation. She supports Mr. Cruson's letter also and copying CUBE and CAPSS.

Mrs. Larkin recommended addressing it also to our Attorney General.

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved to amend the motion to include in the salutation Attorney General Tong, Governor Lamonte, the Commissioner of Education and cc CUBE and CAPSS.

Mr. Ramsey seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved to amend the motion that Ms. Zukowski, in conjunction with Mr. Cruson, provide the final version of the letter and send it out. Mrs. Plante seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 9 – Public Participation

Alison Smith, 30 Taunton Hill Road, asked the Board to preserve her position of library para. She will not fill one of the vacancies if her position was cut. Don't cut the support of our libraries.

Phil Carroll, 1 Fieldstone Drive, spoke about the bus driver shortage and imposing fines for not providing drivers. Go back to a three-tier system. They aren't paying drivers enough. They should be responsible to pay for the sports buses if they don't provide drivers.

MOTION: Mr. Vouros moved to adjourn. Mr. Cruson seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 10 - Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Donald Ramsey', written over a horizontal line.

Donald Ramsey
Secretary

**Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut**

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting held on January 31, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 3 Primrose Street.

D. Zukowski, Chair	C. Melillo
J. Vouros, Vice Chair	A. Uberti
D. Ramsey, Secretary	T. Vadas
D. Cruson	30 Staff
J. Kuzma	2 Public
J. Larkin (absent)	
A. Plante	
K. Kunzweiler (absent)	
D. Godino (absent)	

Ms. Zukowski called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Item 1 – Pledge of Allegiance

Item 2 – Public Hearing on the 2023-2024 Budget

Trent Harrison, 59 Platts Hill Road and President of the NFT, asked for consideration to put the necessary funds of approximately \$272,000 back into the budget to keep the paras in their current staffing levels. To protect and enhance the instructional core we need to keep staff in place. Paras are necessary to cover classes and other areas. If we reduce paras, it will stress the system and not be beneficial. Do what is best for students. Let the people of Newtown decide if the budget meets the needs of the students.

Linda Biscoe, 47 Old Hawleyville Road, is a para at Hawley School. We work with students and do small group instruction which includes special education students. Please do not eliminate any of our positions.

Item 3 – Budget Discussion and Adoption

Mrs. Vadas presented the technical adjustments to the budget which include liability insurance for \$9,616, workers comp for \$20,915, food service equipment repairs for \$25,000, and music stands and science and computer lab tables at the middle school for \$8,000, for a total of \$56,531.

MOTION: Mrs. Plante moved that the Board of Education adopt the Superintendent's recommended budget for \$85,989,669. Mrs. Kuzma seconded.

MOTION: Mrs. Plante moved to amend the motion to reduce the Superintendent's budget by \$56,531 based on the technical adjustments provided by the Director of Business. Mr. Cruson seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved to amend the motion to add \$57,836 to restore the four library paraeducator positions. Mr. Vouros seconded.

Mr. Cruson heard a lot why paras are important to schools. The two big things to keep in mind are that we are asking the media specialists to take on a new task with enrichment activities, which is illogical because of the additional duties they will have without their paras. In addition, the State is telling us to focus on reading. To lose services from the library in a year when we need to focus on reading comprehension and fluency also seems illogical.

Mr. Vouros agreed with Mr. Cruson. Were this to happen and the enrichment program is moved to the library media specialists, in order to keep the fidelity of that program we need to maintain the staff in that library. Because the enrichment model is going into the library, it enhances the Project Challenge program because the two teachers will be moving it to the libraries with the paras in place which is a win-win for the elementary schools.

Mr. Ramsey said the Superintendent's budget was extremely well done. He read the letters regarding the paras and visited Sandy Hook School's library. Paras are on the front line interacting with students and they are an important assistant in the class. He supports Mr. Cruson and Mr. Vouros in this decision.

Mrs. Plante also agrees about the budget document and with her colleagues regarding the paras. Having them is an extremely high value for our students.

Mrs. Kuzma knows the special education department is understaffed and overworked. If there happens to be an immediate need in a school would it be possible for a para to go to another school to help for a period of time.

Mr. Melillo didn't think any para would refuse helping where needed.

Mrs. Kuzma questioned the enrichment piece responsibility for the teachers.

Mrs. Uberti said it's for an hour. She planned to start meeting with the current Project Challenge teacher regarding her schedule and meet with the library media specialists to see what time is realistic.

Ms. Zukowski said the enrichment is not just for Project Challenge students, but for others that need enrichment. It's an important program to continue and agrees it's not the right time to pull people they rely on.

Amendment passes unanimously.

Mr. Vouros referred to the \$200,000 for all of the other para positions and questioned the math specialists will be able to take over the duties of MTSS. What does that look like on a daily basis and how much will the caseload increase taking over the para duties.

Mrs. Uberti said MTSS is fluid regarding how many are in each school. In two years we added a full time certified person for each elementary school. We also added a math interventionist in each elementary school.

Mr. Vouros said it was important if these paras are not reinstated that we keep a very close eye on what's going on in those classrooms and let us know if they need assistance.

Mr. Cruson thanked Mr. Melillo for his time and energy preparing this budget.

Mrs. Kuzma asked for clarification on the four library para positions and if there were other positions for them.

Mr. Melillo said we have almost \$800,000 in grants ending this year, we had \$1M in contractual increases, and the costs around special education are rising. All of those combined costs would give us a budget of almost 7%. The first thing he thought about was how to keep our programs and our people. He recognizes you all have families and rely on a paycheck. He wanted to ensure he had a landing spot for everyone. Almost \$1.75M was cut but we still maintained positions. It's a budget that keeps people here if they want to be here. There is a process in place going to the Board of Finance and Legislative Council and then to the referendum.

These decisions were not about not valuing the work that you do. Paras are the backbone of the district and you perform above and beyond and he wanted to be sure you had a position here.

Ms. Zukowski shared five concerns about this budget. The first is that we have \$1.1M in addressing the repercussions of Covid and asked if there is a landing place for some of the 14 people.

Mr. Melillo was not sure how long the recovery from the pandemic would take but we will continue to monitor our students. There is no position necessary if we have met our goal. If we are at a point where students need to be, we will see if we can find spots over time. We have less than a handful of retirees so far.

Ms. Zukowski said the second was a concern about ensuring we can provide special education students with services they need to make them whole. We need the administration helping but need them to run the program. If we have to go outside for services from BTs, we will take a hit.

Number three is a concern about out-of-district transportation increases and also because of the lack of bus drivers so we may have to come up with money in the budget.

Number four is the elementary enrollment concerns. We may need two classes for kindergarten and two teachers not in this budget.

The fifth concern is looking at inflation rates, which hurt everyone.

Ms. Zukowski closed by saying we have the best budget we can have at this time and thanked Mr. Melillo.

MOTION: Mrs. Plante moved that the Board of Education adopt the Superintendent's recommended budget of \$85,990,974 Mr. Ramsey seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

MOTION: Mrs. Plante moved that the Board of Education direct the business office to prepare the final budget and authorize the Director of Business to make any technical and arithmetical changes. Mrs. Kuzma seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 4 – Public Participation

MOTION: Mr. Vouros moved to adjourn. Mr. Cruson seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 5 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:



Donald Ramsey
Secretary