

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

Minutes of the Board of Education virtual meeting held January 5, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.

M. Ku, Chair	L. Rodrigue
D. Delia, Vice Chair	A. Uberti
D. Cruson, Secretary	T. Vadas
D. Leidlein	3 Staff
J. Vouros	1 Press
R. Harriman-Stites (absent)	Public by phone
D. Zukowski	

Mrs. Ku called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. and stated it was being recorded and live-streamed.

Item 1 – Pledge of Allegiance

Mrs. Ku requested to move the Charter Revision item to the end of New Business.

Item 2 – Consent Agenda

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education approve the consent agenda which includes the donations to Reed Intermediate School, Newtown Middle School and Newtown High School, and the correspondence report. Mr. Cruson seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 3 – Public Participation - None

Item 4 – Reports

Chair Report: Mrs. Ku reported that tomorrow night the Legislative Council would take up the discussion of the CIP and the Hawley HVAC Project. She thanked Ms. Zukowski for being part of the interviews for the Director of Technology.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Rodrigue said the return to school has gone quite well. The last state figures as of January 5 we have 30 cases per thousand which is a 4% positivity rate. Prior to Thanksgiving we were at 33%. These are state figures we receive from EdAdvance which are posted on our website. It is critical to use the mitigation strategies at home and at school. She meets with members of the Connecticut DPH weekly and there are testing sites for teachers and health care workers. We are planning for vaccinations for staff and waiting to hear when teachers will be vaccinated as essential workers. Anne Dalton is sending a communication to parents and staff tomorrow regarding mitigation strategies and preparing for vaccinations. She thanked the community for stepping up to be substitutes. We communicated the three-hour early release on Wednesdays to maintain equity in teacher schedules when we move into the full time schedule on January 19. The middle school and high school will release at 11:30 on Wednesdays and 12:30 for the K-6 schools. We have 709 students in cohort D so more students are staying home. Our staffing report includes one new hire at the high school. We have 15 new substitutes in total.

Mr. Cruson heard talk about prioritizing teachers for the vaccine and asked about where they will put the rest of the staff to run the schools.

Dr. Rodrigue said they have talked about the bus drivers and support specialists and other Board of Education staff working with children.

Mr. Cruson has been concerned because all of the talk was about the teachers but nothing about the other employees.

Dr. Rodrigue would ask that question at her next DPH meeting.

Mr. Delia asked if she was comfortable with the level of subs.

Dr. Rodrigue said that she was and we've opened up the Applitrack system so that can now be used to apply.

Committee Reports:

Mr. Vouros reported on the Curriculum & Instruction meeting on December 22 where the Middle School schedule was discussed. He encouraged his colleagues to endorse the motion to move the Middle School schedule forward.

Dr. Rodrigue addressed the devices we have been providing students. We had originally reported that this year we would have given the freshman devices and moving forward giving them to seventh graders to have through their senior year. Because of the complexity with devices we changed our thinking. They are not being given to freshman. We will replenish them at the high school and starting next year every freshman will get a device for the four years.

Student Representatives:

Mr. Jerfy reported he was glad to be back and see all teachers and classmates on line.

Regarding college applications, all have been sent out and many students have heard back. He was looking forward to going back January 19.

Ms. Clure was in school Monday and Tuesday and it felt good to be back. The top concern she heard was about lunch. They can't sit outside and students were worried about seating but were told teachers would find places for them to eat. CIAC will meet this Thursday to decide winter sports. There are no mid-terms this year. The last semester begins January 25.

Mr. Vouros asked if she would get a schedule where Board members might be able to hear some of the Capstone presentations.

Item 5 – Old Business

COVID-19 Update:

Dr. Rodrigue told the Board it is challenging to come back when there are rising cases in Connecticut. We brought in Stephanie Stroeve who is a parent and has a strong background in public health and expertise in the areas of epidemiology and microbiology for a meeting with the teacher and para union's executive boards. She spoke about safety in schools, use of PPE, and answered questions. Anne Dalton was on both of these meetings. We are looking at other presenters, including a doctor from Griffin Hospital.

Item 6 – New Business

Newtown Middle School Schedule:

Tom Einhorn, Newtown Middle School Principal, presented the proposed schedule. The process began over the summer and 17 different schedules were developed. The instruction time per day increased from 314 minutes to 329 minutes with no learning lab. We added math and reading interventionists and additional support for special education students. Most middle schools have world language every day so we wanted to add a teacher to each cluster to offer it every day. We are sunsetting Family and Consumer Science classes and will add Health, Tech Ed and Computer Integration classes along with new course opportunities. New course proposals will be forthcoming along with a Cooking Club for interested students. We are moving to three clusters at each grade level with 3.2 world language positions, one math interventionist, two new courses to be determined, and two special education positions. This gives a net reduction to staffing of .8.

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education approve the Newtown Middle School schedule for the 2021-2022 school year. Mr. Cruson seconded.

Mr. Vouros said they spent two lengthy sessions on this schedule and he endorses it. It's very thorough, extremely well thought out and benefits the children immensely.

Mrs. Leidlein asked if the current world language curriculum would have to be rewritten and what is the process going forward.

Mr. Einhorn said he and Mrs. Uberti set money for curriculum writing and the additional time for Tech Ed and computer support.

Mrs. Uberti noted they have been working with Dr. Longobucco and the world language department at the high school. We will be taking their curriculum and making modifications for the middle school. The bigger impact will be at the other end of the high school as the students will complete the course earlier so we might need a course at the end of the high school year. The course is modeled off the current Spanish at the high school which is Rosetta Stone.

Mrs. Leidlein asked which languages will be offered.

Mrs. Uberti said French and Spanish but students who had Spanish since Kindergarten will be surveyed next year to see how many will take Spanish or switch to French.

Mr. Delia asked if the middle school was equipped for a culinary program.

Mr. Einhorn said they had a classroom with four ovens and a kitchen. The teacher is retiring the end of this year and will be difficult to replace. We want to provide the interested students with an area for culinary classes.

Mr. Vouros said a suggestion was made to look into the cooking club and bring the culinary students to the middle school to assist the cooking club advisor. Mrs. Uberti has monitored all of this with Mr. Einhorn and another suggestion was made to possibly have Project Adventure as its own class.

Motion passes unanimously.

Special Education Update:

Mrs. Deborah Petersen provided an update on the Special Education Department's action plan regarding reading and providing services during this time. We have 10 staff Wilson certified and five trained in Orton-Gillingham and a few outside reading evaluators are being used with positive feedback. At the start of year we received guidance from the state which spoke to students that required the most support. The students in our programs struggled the most with accessing any education on the computer and not receiving one-to-one support. We brought those students in every day with a shortened day on Wednesday to get them back into some routine. We also looked at other students attached to our support services and brought them in four days per week. We also offered drop-in services from BTs and OTs. Pre-school began the year in school all week and received services in person.

District Assessment Report:

Dr. Frank Purcaro presented the NWEA and PSAT/SAT results.

Mr. Vouros asked the plan to present this information to the parents and when it's presented to them we have to find a way that it individualizes it so they really understand what the assessment is saying about their child. What will be said to them to help them understand what we are going to do to make sure these gaps are filled?

Dr. Purcaro said that students are doing well on large scale assessments so we aren't seeing huge gaps. There may be specific skills at specified levels where students are struggling. That analysis is the next step at the building level and classroom level. We need to see what students are struggling with.

Mrs. Uberti stated that we always send out the results to parents with the letter to address this year because it is unique year. We will be working with the teachers to help them understand the data and pick out what they do and do not know.

Ms. Zukowski said there were comments about the disruptions due to Covid and asked if we will be able to review how our results compared to like schools at some point this year.

Dr. Purcaro said that if the state has the assessments in the spring we would have the district comparisons. He was not sure if we can get that from NWEA. We believe the state testing will take place.

Mrs. Ku asked if we could also get the district comparisons for the PSAT and SAT.

Mrs. Uberti stated that information comes from the state but they didn't release it because not all districts could administer the test.

Mr. Delia referred to the high school fail rate and asked how many of those students are remote learners and what is being done for intervention for remote students who are failing.

Dr. Purcaro said we don't have the remote data but a large portion of the group who are disengaged are remote learners. Teachers, counselors and administrators are reaching out to these students. A number are struggling learners. The high school is doing everything they can to re-engage those students. Not having them in the buildings adds another layer of difficulty to this process.

Mr. Delia asked if it was a fair assumption that there is a direct correlation to students not engaged in learning remotely and the fail rate.

Dr. Purcaro said that was correct and we see that increase as we go higher in the grade levels.

Mr. Delia asked what we do with the students not showing up for school.

Mrs. Petersen said we hired a special education teacher for the high school which has helped. We also reached out to outside agencies for students who don't come to school. Some agencies will go into the home to work with students.

Mrs. Uberti stated we are having conversations and collecting data on non-special education students who were disengaged to expand the opportunity for them to return to school four days if we stay on hybrid. We are trying to identify those students in all our schools. The ELL students are also having difficulty.

Mr. Delia applauded Dr. Rodrigue and the team in their decision to bring students back and also the teachers for trying everything they possibly can for them and the stresses they are dealing with.

Mr. Vouros asked what will happen if we have high school students who are not doing well and failing and don't have enough credits to graduate. Is there a plan to bring them in during the summer so their failures turn into passes so they can graduate?

Mrs. Uberti said the upper classmen are doing better than those in the lower grades. For seniors in danger of failing they are holding meetings with parents and work to create specific plans to get the students to do the work. We did that last summer and provided tutoring opportunities for students who had incompletes.

Dr. Rodrigue stated we would do this at the high school even without the Covid issue. This is a social emotional issue for students. We want to be sure they are making connections but there are a lot of students who need support. A lot of the surprises we heard tonight are what they are seeing in other districts.

Mr. Delia asked if there was anything the Board can do now to engage the students not engaged and what planning there will be to fill in the gaps.

Dr. Rodrigue said everything we are doing is internal and we have the staffing. This really spoke to the actual assessments and where the students are. We knew there would be gaps to fill in.

Mrs. Uberti said we don't know in January how horrific it will be in June. We will find that the typical on-grade students will rebound and the struggling students have a longer haul to catch up. Many more students are on distance learning now but we hope to see a decrease. We have a lot of resources with the most important being having really good people.

Ms. Zukowski is concerned about third grade math students missing concepts and if Algebra II students will be unwilling to take other math classes.

Dr. Purcaro said regarding third grade math, the math specialists are working with these students. He spoke to Dr. Longobucco regarding Algebra II and her math department is extremely dedicated and understands the data and are addressing SAT math problems on a daily basis.

Mrs. Ku appreciated this information. The data presented could be from a normal year. There is an assumption the older students are better equipped to handle distance learning but the data tells a different story. We do need to pay attention to the middle and high school students also.

Minutes of December 15, 2020:

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education approve the minutes of December 15, 2020. Mr. Vouros seconded.

Vote: 5 ayes, 1 abstained (Mr. Cruson) Motion passes.

Charter Revision Considerations:

Mrs. Ku and Ms. Zukowski met twice to discuss these revisions.

Board of Education Elections: Mrs. Ku stated that the recommendation is that Newtown Ordinance 124 should be merged into the Charter, specifically calling out that 9-204 of the Connecticut General Statutes applies because when the last Charter revision was filed the election process for the Board of Education was unintentionally indicated as following a different statute. The Legislative Council passed an ordinance which now references the current statute.

Date for Referendum: Mrs. Ku said the recommendation is to review voting information to understand whether moving the referendum date or expanding accessibility via absentee or mail-in ballot might increase voter turnout.

Special Appropriations: Ms. Zukowski noted that the Charter says the only person who can initiate special appropriations is the First Selectman with the approval of the Board of Selectman

and the Legislative Council. The appropriations process does not include the Board of Education. Our recommendation is to have that reviewed to include the Board of Education as a possible Initiator of Special Appropriations.

Board of Education Non-lapsing Account: Ms. Zukowski said a letter from the Town Council to Dan Rosenthal and Paul Lundquist stated that putting money in the Non-lapsing Account is similar to a special appropriation. This is recommending another model for doing financial appropriations.

Appropriating/Fiscal Authority: Ms. Zukowski stated there is some confusion as to who is the proper fiscal authority. Our recommendation is to clearly define the fiscal authority and appropriations authority for Newtown.

Practices Related to Appropriating/Fiscal Authority: Ms. Zukowski said we present our budget to the Board of Finance and they send it to the Legislative Council which is the board that will support their recommended budget. We also are required to go to the Legislative Council Education Subcommittee with our budget and are questioning if that duplication is necessary.

Regulation Review: Ms. Zukowski said there is a discussion on the creation of financial regulations that say they will be referred to the Board of Selection and Financial Director prior to action but there are some that involve the Board of Education and we are asking why we are missing in this section.

Town Departments versus Departments of the Town: Mrs. Ku said the Board of Education is given as an example of a town department which means we are a recipient of funds from the general fund. The recommendation is to replace the term town department with an appropriation assignee, Newtown agency or another term that more clearly focuses on the assignment of a body that will receive funds and review the sections that currently reference town department to determine whether the language accurately applies to the Board of Education and current practices.

Finance Director: Mrs. Ku stated that this only applies to municipal negotiations. The Board of Education handles their negotiations. We are asking that the Charter be clear on this.

Budget Process: Mrs. Ku said the section is unclear and the request is to clarify that section.

Town Clerk and Meeting Conduct: Mrs. Ku said the recommendation is to review whether bylaws have to be filed with the Town Clerk since they are already filed in Central Office and are online.

Ex Officio Membership on the Board of Education: Mrs. Ku said this states the First Selectman is an ex officio member of all town bodies including the Board of Education and the request is to review whether the Board of Education should be excluded from this section. It seems inconsistent with the Newtown government structure in which the Board of Selectman have a role parallel to the Board of Education and the Superintendent has a role parallel to that of the First Selectman.

Voting at Meetings: Ms. Zukowski stated the Charter says you have to say yes or no when voting. If we go with the Charter, we would be in violation if a member abstains from approving the minutes if they were not at that meeting. The need is to review whether they should soften that language.

Filling Vacancies: Ms. Zukowski stated we need to reconcile the state statute pertaining to the Board of Education and our Charter. The request is to make it clear as we can't tell if we go with the statute or Charter.

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education approve the Charter Revision considerations. Mr. Cruson seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 7 – Public Participation - None

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

Item 8 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Daniel J. Cruson, Jr.
Secretary

THE WELLER FOUNDATION, INCORPORATED

P.O. Box 894, Newtown, CT 06470

(203) 304-9233

December 6, 2020

Dr. Matt Correia
Principal
Reed Intermediate School
3 Trades Lane
Newtown, CT 06470

Subject: School Donation Proposal

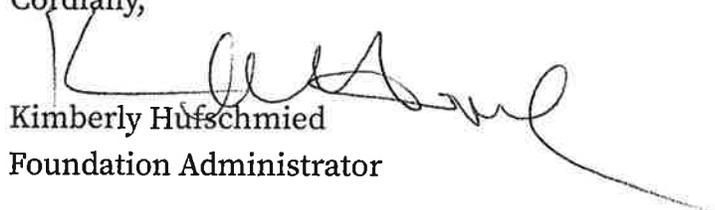
Dear Dr. Correia,

I am pleased to announce that our Board of Trustees at their December 1, 2020 meeting have agreed to grant \$1,700 for your donation request to support funding for the new Greenhouse at your school to assist the Science Department as outlined in your November 11, 2020 letter.

Enclosed is our Foundation Check #5286 in the amount of \$1,700. The Foundation is proud to support your school with this donation.

Thank you for all you do in the education of the students and allowing this Foundation to partner with you in the academic success of all the students.

Cordially,


Kimberly Hufschmied
Foundation Administrator

KAH

Enclosure – Check #5286

THE WELLER FOUNDATION, INCORPORATED

P.O. Box 894, Newtown, CT 06470

(203) 304-9233

December 6, 2020

Mr. Thomas Einhorn
Principal
Newtown Middle School
11 Queen Street
Newtown, CT 06470

Subject: School Donation Proposal

Dear Mr. Einhorn,

I am pleased to announce that our Board of Trustees at their December 1, 2020 meeting have agreed to grant \$1,000 for your donation request to Purchase e-books for the library at your school, as outlined in your November 4, 2020 letter.

Enclosed is our Foundation Check #5285 in the amount of \$1,000. The Foundation is proud to support your school with this donation.

Thank you for all you do in the education of the students and allowing this Foundation to partner with you in the academic success of all the students.

Cordially,



Kimberly Hufschmied
Foundation Administrator

45050 034 0000 - 44550
45050 034 0000 - 55300

KAH

Enclosure - Check #5285

December 23, 2020

TO: Dr. Rodrigue

FROM: Kim Longobucco

Please accept the donation of \$2,500 from Ingersoll Auto of Danbury to It's a wonderful life. This is a very generous gift to the Newtown High School Drama program. Newtown High School students will certainly benefit from this donation.

Thank you.

Correspondence Report
12/15/2020 – 01/04/2021

Date	Name	Subject
12/15/20	Lorrie Rodrigue	Letter to Staff and Parents
12/15/20	Michelle Ku	Eliza's Request
12/15/20	Audra Carbone	In – person return to school
12/15/20	Newtown Parents	January 4 th Return
12/15/20	Eliza Hallabeck	Fw: Story for the Newtown Bee on "what it has taken" in 2020 to educate students
12/15/20	Aaron Carlson	In person schooling
12/16/20	Janice Gabriel	Get your Tickets for "It's a Wonderful Life"
12/16/20	Bret Nichols	School Counseling Newsletter
12/16/20	Anne Dalton	Thank you! (celebration of excellence for Nurses)
12/21/20	Carmella Kuzara	Check Received
12/22/20	Kiley Ggottschalk	12-28-20 BOF CANCELED
12/22/20	Anthony Mascaro	Remote learning
12/23/20	Michelle Ku	Letter for staff
12/29/20	Donna Norling	Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee Minutes
12/29/20	Kathy June	BOE Mailing – January 5, 2021
12/29/20	Michelle Ku	Re: BOE Mailing – January 5, 2021
12/30/20	Michelle Ku	Fwd: Director of Technology Search
12/31/20	Michelle Ku	Charter Revisions
01/01/21	Hope Stevens	Concern about Full Return on January 4 th
01/03/21	Eeryn Ivey	Action plan for struggling students
01/04/21	Kathy June	Staffing Update
01/04/21	Kathy June	Zoom Link for BOE Meeting

TO: Lorrie Rodrigue, Superintendent
FROM: Suzanne D'Eramo, Director of Human Resources
RE: Superintendent's Report – Certified Staffing Update for December 2020
DATE: December 31, 2020

DECEMBER 2020

Retirements:

None

Resignations:

None

New Hires:

SPED FLEX – Debra Howard (start date December 16)

Open Positions:

ADDITIONAL DISTRICT HIRING NOTES:

Here is a recap of all non-certified and certified staff we have hired in the month of December:

Certified teachers = 1

Building subs/LT subs = 3

Paraeducators/para sub = 2

Of the 6 newly hired employees, all indicate a race or ethnicity of white/not Hispanic.

BOE Elections

Town Charter Section 3-15(b) reads:

“At each regular Town Election members of the Board of Education, the Planning and Zoning Commission, Board of Assessment Appeals, Zoning Board of Appeals, and the Police Commission shall be elected and the number to be elected shall be determined by the number of members whose terms expire on or before the December 1st after the election.”

Reason to review:

When a revised charter is filed with the State, a statute governing BOE elections must be indicated. For the 2016 Charter filing, Connecticut General Statute § 9-204 was selected to apply, impinging on number of candidates a party could put forth on the ballot and number of candidates electors could vote for. This was an unintended restriction on the ability of voters to vote for BOE members. As a result, the Legislative Council enacted Town Ordinance 124 to address the issue. When the next revision of the Town Charter is filed with the state, the effective BOE elections statute will likely again be selected as a part of the filing process.

Recommendation:

Newtown Ordinance 124 should be merged into the Charter, specifically calling out that § 9-204b of the Connecticut General Statutes applies.

Date for Referendum

Town Charter 6-14(a) reads:

“The proposed town budget shall be submitted for adoption at the Annual budget referendum to be held on the fourth Tuesday of April between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.”

Reason for Review:

Historically, a small percentage of Newtown’s voting population votes during budget referenda. Changing the date or accessibility of the referendum might increase voter turnout.

Recommendation:

Review voting information to understand whether moving the referendum date or expanding accessibility via absentee or mail-in ballot might increase voter turnout.

Special Appropriations

Town Charter Section 6-35(b) reads:

“A request for a Special or Emergency Appropriation may be initiated by the First Selectman with the approval of the Board of Selectmen or by the Legislative Council.”

Town Charter Section 6-35(c) reads:

“If the First Selectman initiates an Emergency Appropriation request, the appropriation may be approved by a majority vote of the Legislative Council. If initiated by the Legislative Council, the Emergency Appropriation must be approved by the affirmative vote of at least eight (8) members of the Legislative Council.”

Reason to review:

The appropriations process as outlined in 6-35(b)-(c) does not include the Board of Education. This is not consistent to that of budgetary and CIP appropriations. For budget appropriation requests, both the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Education prepare their respective requests, and provide those requests to the Board of Finance. For the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), newly amended, the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Education also prepare their respective requests, and provide those requests to the Board of Finance. These processes suggest that the BOE regularly initiates appropriation requests.

Recommendation:

Town Charter Section 6-35(b) and (c) be amended to include the Board of Education as a possible initiator of Special Appropriations.

Board of Education Non-Lapsing Account

Connecticut General Statute § 10-248a, newly amended, reads:

“For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020, and each fiscal year thereafter, notwithstanding any provision of the general statutes or any special act, municipal charter, home rule ordinance or other ordinance, the board of finance in each town having a board of finance, the board of selectman in each town having no board of finance or the authority making appropriations for the school district for each town may deposit into a nonlapsing account any unexpended funds from the prior fiscal year from the budgeted appropriation for education for the town, provided (1) such deposited amount does not exceed two per cent of the total budgeted appropriation for education for such prior fiscal year, (2) each expenditure from such account shall be made only for educational purposes, and (3) each such expenditure shall be authorized by the local board of education for such town.”

Reason to review:

In “Procedure to Transfer Board of Education Surplus at the End of the Fiscal Year” sent to Dan Rosenthal, First Selectman, and Paul Lundquist, Chairman, Legislative Council, dated Oct 20, 2020, D. Grogins states that such funds are “similar to a ‘special appropriation,’” though not technically a special appropriation.

Recommendation:

We recommend that a multi-board process governing the Board of Education Non-Lapsing Account be set forth in a Financial Regulation. Furthermore, we recommend that the Charter clarify that funds deposited to the Account do not apply to the Legislative Council’s appropriation authority.

Appropriating/Fiscal Authority

Town Charter 1-20 Summary of Governance defines:

(a) The Chief Executive and Administrative Officer of the Town, (b) The administrative body of the Town, and (c) The legislative body of the Town. It does not define the appropriating authority of the Town nor does it include the concept of a fiscal authority.

Reason for Review:

In the CT General Statutes (C.G.S.) that pertain to local education, there is a phrase that is used when local fiscal oversight is required. The phrase (with slight differences) is used in the following (not necessarily exhaustive) list of uses within statutes pertaining to local education:

Statutes concerning Teachers and Superintendents:

1) C.G.S. §10-153b(a): Fiscal authority used in determining a key date in contract negotiations:

“Budget submission date’ means the date on which a school district is to submit its itemized estimate of the cost of maintenance of public schools for the next following year to the board of finance in each town having a board of finance, to the board of selectmen in each town having no board of finance and, in any city having a board of finance, to said board, and otherwise to the authority making appropriations therein.”

This term is present in C.G.S. §10-153d “Meeting between board of education and fiscal authority required. Duty to negotiate. Procedure if legislative body rejects contract,” and C.G.S. §10-153f “Mediation and arbitration of disagreements.”

From what the BOE currently understands, the Board of Finance is considered the fiscal authority for determining the timeline for negotiations, based on the process outlined in section 6-05(a) of the Town Charter.

2) C.G.S. §10-153d(a): Fiscal authority for participation in negotiations.

“Within thirty days prior to the date on which the local or regional board of education is to commence negotiations pursuant to this section, such board of education shall meet and confer with the board of finance in each town or city having a board of finance, with the board of selectmen in each town having no board of finance and otherwise with the authority making appropriations therein. A member of such board of finance, such board of selectmen, or such other authority making appropriations, shall be permitted to be present during negotiations pursuant to this section and shall provide such fiscal information as may be requested by the board of education.”

From what the BOE understands, the fiscal authority would again be the Board of Finance, as it would be expected to be the same throughout the Teachers and Superintendents contract negotiations, even though it would be the Legislative Council (i.e., the legislative body) that would take the role of approving or rejecting any contract.

3) C.G.S. §10-222: Fiscal authority for BOE budget.

“Each local board of education shall prepare an itemized estimate of the cost of maintenance of public schools for the ensuing year and shall submit such estimate to the board of finance in each town or city having a board of finance, to the board of selectmen in each town having no board of finance or otherwise to the authority making appropriations for the school district, not later than two months preceding the annual meeting at which appropriations are to be made.”

As in 1) above, the Charter clearly states that the BOE refers its budget request to the Board of Finance, Presumably, this fulfills the statutorily required timeline, whereas the date, as defined by Charter, that the Board of Education budget is submitted to the Legislative Council would not.

4) C.G.S. §10-248a, as amended:

“... the board of finance in each town having a board of finance, the board of selectman in each town having no board of finance or the authority making appropriations for the school district may deposit into a nonlapsing account any unexpended funds from the prior fiscal year from the budgeted appropriation for education for the town...”

Since the inception of Education Non-Lapsing Account, Newtown has depended on the Board of Finance to be the fiscal authority to make decisions regarding the deposit of the BOE budget surplus to the Non-Lapsing Account. However, recently the Town’s counsel has determined that the Legislative Council should be the fiscal authority, based on it’s role as the Town’s appropriation authority. This opinion is available in a letter by D. Grogins, regarding “Procedure to Transfer Board of Education Surplus at the End of the Fiscal Year” sent to Dan Rosenthal, First Selectman, and Paul Lundquist, Chairman, Legislative Council, dated Oct 20, 2020.

Recommendation:

Clearly define the “fiscal authority” and “appropriations authority” for Newtown.

Practices related to Appropriating/Fiscal Authority

Town Charter Chapter 6:

Prescribes the budget and appropriations processes.

Reason for Review:

Because the Newtown Charter prescribes both a Board of Finance AND an “authority making appropriations” (i.e. Legislative Council), there is redundancy in processes and duplicated efforts. Annually, district personnel and elected officials spend much time deliberating over budgets, Capital Improvement Plans and other financial decisions. The Education Subcommittee of the Legislative Council or the Legislative Council as a whole often repeats the process that the Board of Finance conducts. The Legislative Council can and sometimes does override the decisions of the Board of Finance.

Recommendation:

Review the purpose, cost and benefit of the additional layers of evaluation.

Regulation Review

Town Charter Section 5-10(a) reads:

“... Any proposed regulation, amendment or repeal shall be referred to the Board of Selectmen for comment or consultation prior to action. A similar reference shall be made to the Board of Education or other **Town Body** if its interests is affected. All regulations regarding financial matters shall be referred for review and recommendation to or may originate from the Board of Finance prior to action. Referrals can be acted on by the Legislative Council after 90 days. Such financial regulations shall also be referred to the Board of Selectman and the Finance Director prior to action.”

Reason to review:

The last sentence of the paragraph does not include the Board of Education, yet the Board of Education should review and have the opportunity to provide input on financial regulations that might affect Board of Education operations.

Recommendation:

Add the Board of Education.

Town Departments versus departments of the Town

Town Charter 1-25(a)7 lists the Board of Education as an example of a Town Department.

Reason for Review:

The word “department” generally means an organization that has an implied reporting structure within an organization as well as financial responsibilities associated with appropriated funds. The Board of Education, unlike the other entities included in the definition, is an agency of the state though plays a role comparable to that of the Board of Selectman. The term “**Town Department**” may be confused with “municipal department,” leading readers of the Charter think that the Charter’s administrative sections specifically for the **Town** also apply to the BOE.

Recommendation:

Replace the term “Town Department” with “Appropriation Assignee,” “Newtown Agency” or another term that more clearly focuses on the assignment of funds.

Review the following sections that currently reference “Town Department” to determine whether the language accurately applies to the Board of Education and current practices. All uses of the term “Town Department” are listed below:

1-05(a): Is this the case that the Town would subsume all right and obligations of the BOE, if the BOE were unable to fulfill its responsibilities?

4-05(c)(1): Is it the case that the Finance Director is responsible for maintaining “general cost accounting system” for the BOE? If not, should “other than the Board of Education” be added?

4-05(c)(3): Is it the case that the Finance Director has “custody of all funds belonging to” the BOE and makes “such deposits or investments as he or she deems in the best interest of the Town within the limits imposed on such deposits or investments by the General Statute” without necessarily consulting with the BOE?

6-05(b): The BOE is exempted from “**Town Department**” regarding BOS budget process.

6-10(a): Finance Director must be (reasonably) available on request to advise on budget questions for all **Town Departments**.

6-40(a): All **Town Departments** are required to “submit a Financial Impact Statement to the Board of Finance and the Legislative Council...”

7-05(b): “The system of accounts used by the **Town Departments** shall be that prescribed by the General Statutes as supplemented by regulations adopted by the Board of Finance and approved by the Legislative Council and in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.”

7-05(d): Does the following apply to the BOE? “All **Town Departments** and officers shall report and remit all receipts to the Finance Director as often as he or she may deem desirable but not more often than daily.”

7-15(a): "The Board of Finance shall keep under review the budget of the Town and shall by regulation prescribe periodic reports of receipts and expenditures for which purpose said Board of Finance shall have access to the books and records of any **Town Department**."

7-15(c): "Neither the Board of Selectmen nor the Board of Education shall draw any order upon the Town unless the Finance Director confirms that there are appropriations within the requesting **Town Department** to cover the request."

7-15(d): The BOE is exempted from "**Town Department**" regarding supplies and contract procurement.

7-15(e): "No officer or **Town Department** shall expend or vote to incur any liability or expense by contract or otherwise, or enter into any contract that would obligate the Town to expend in excess of an approved departmental line item appropriation."

7-15(f): "All sums not in excess of \$50,000 which may become due and payable to the Town or any **Town Department** by virtue of any loss or damage suffered by persons or property entrusted to the care, supervision or management of any such department shall be deposited in a special account and segregated by the Finance Director."

7-25(b): "No Special Appropriation shall be made, no purchase, grant nor gift of real or tangible personal property shall be accepted by any **Town Department** as provided in Sections 6-35, 6-40, and 8-05, until the Board of Finance and Legislative Council have received and have had thirty-five days to give due consideration to a Financial Impact Statement."

Finance Director

Town Charter Section 4-05(c) indicates the the Finance Director shall:

“(9) Prepare a cost analysis of all labor contracts, pension plans and insurance plans prior to the signing of any such contracts or plans; and

(10) Assist in all labor negotiations serving as a consultant to the labor negotiators representing the **Town.**”

Reason to review:

The Board of Education conducts a separate negotiation process

Recommendation:

Ensure that it is clear that these apply only to the town, and not the BOE.

Budget Process

Town Charter Section 6-20(f) 2 reads:

“Prior to subsequent budget referenda, if any, amendments made by the Board of Selectman and/or the Board of Education to budget proposals shall not be exceeded by the Legislative Council.”

Reason to review:

It is not clear to us what this means.

Recommendation:

Please clarify.

Town Clerk and Meeting Conduct

Town Charter Section 2-01(c) reads:

“All elected and appointive **Town Bodies** may make rules for the conduct of their meetings and the manner for accomplishing their duties. Such rules shall be filed with the Town Clerk.”

Reason to review:

Bylaws for the Board of Education are filed along with the District Policies in the District Central Office and are publicly available on the District website.

Recommendation:

Review whether it is necessary for the Board of Education to file bylaws with the Town Clerk.

Ex Officio membership on the Board of Education

Town Charter Section 2-01(d) reads:

“The First Selectman shall be an ex officio member of all **Town Bodies**, but without vote and not counted for the purpose of having a quorum except as a member of the Board of Selectmen. The First Selectman shall be given reasonable notice of all meetings of **Town Bodies** by their chairmen or secretaries, and may in writing appoint another member of the Board of Selectmen to represent him or her at any meeting of such **Town Body**.”

Reason to review:

Should the Board of Education be excluded from this? It seems inconsistent with the Newtown government structure in which the Board of Selectman have a role parallel to the Board of Education, and the Superintendent has a role parallel to the that of the First Selectman?

Recommendation:

Review

Voting at Meetings

Town Charter Section 2-25(a) reads:

“It shall be the duty of every member present at any Town Body meeting to vote affirmatively or negatively on each question raised. Should a member have a conflict of interest, said member shall refrain from discussion and voting. The reason for the conflict of interest need not be stated nor made part of the record.”

Reason to review:

There may be times when abstaining is appropriate. For example, when a person was not present for discussion.

Recommendation:

Review

Filling Vacancies

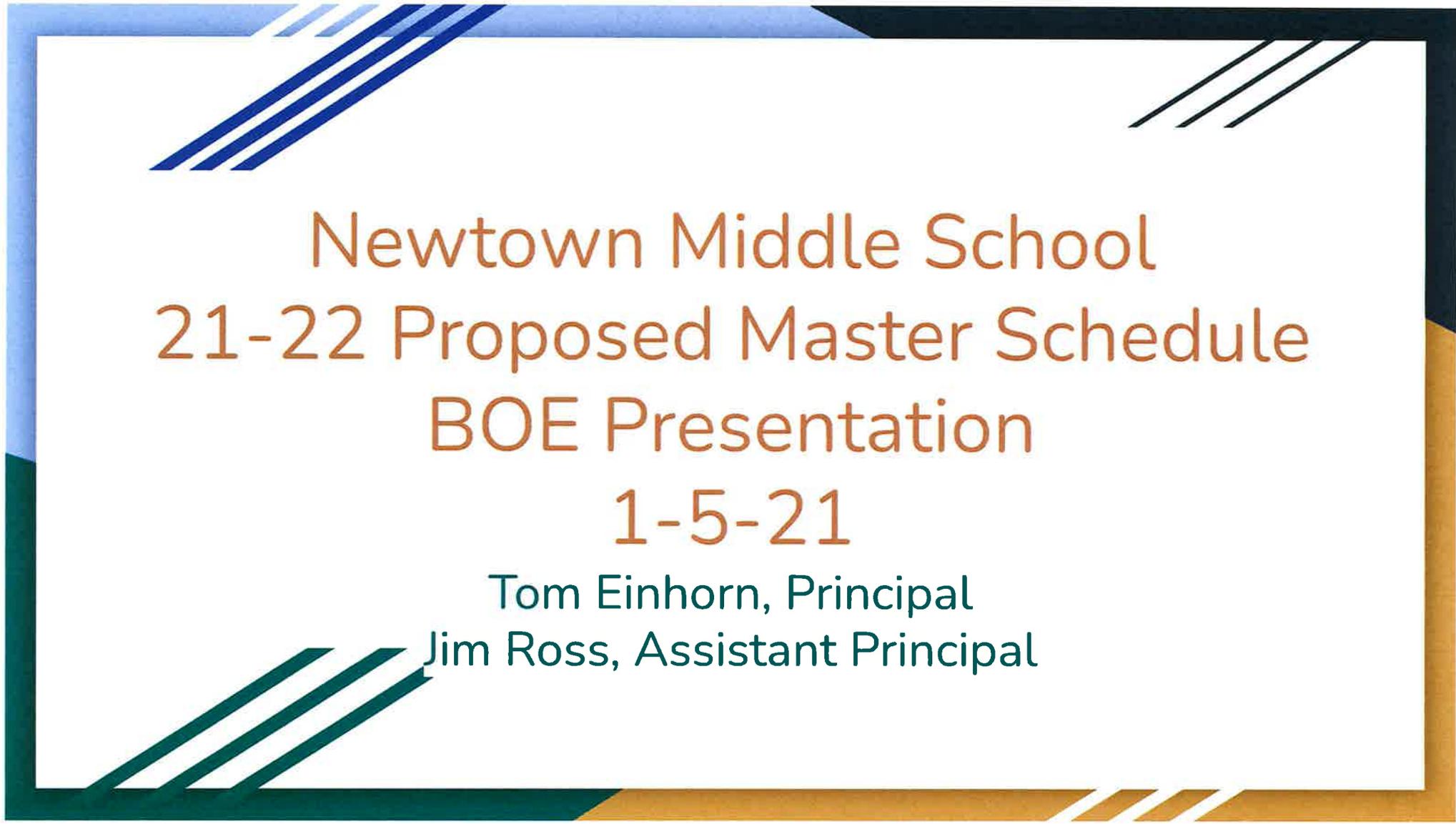
Town Charter Section 2-31 outlines procedures for filling vacancies on elected Town bodies:

Reason to review:

Should the statute that is applicable to the Board of Education (C.G.S. §10-219) be referenced in the same way as the statute that applies to the Board of Selectman is referenced?

Recommendation:

Review



Newtown Middle School
21-22 Proposed Master Schedule
BOE Presentation
1-5-21

Tom Einhorn, Principal
Jim Ross, Assistant Principal

Schedule Redesign Process Solicited the Input of all Stakeholders

- Committee began meeting in September
- Committee representation from general ed, special ed, intervention, unified arts, paraeducator, parent, as well as building and central office administration
- Committee members gathered input from area schools
- All staff members were surveyed for input
- New schedule outcomes were considered and prioritized
- Draft schedules were produced and refined

Major Features of Proposed New Schedule

Area/Element	Current Schedule	New Schedule	Benefits
Instruction Minutes Per Day	314 Minutes Daily	329 Minutes Daily (No Learning Lab)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased overall instructional time
Increased Opportunities for Math Support	1 math interventionist & 3 reading interventionists	Dedicated math and reading interventionist at each grade level (2 math and 2 reading)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Balance support based on student needs ● Increased opportunities to deliver interventions during a dedicated intervention block
Co-taught Teaching Model in every cluster	Special education teacher support in only 2 clusters	Special education teacher support in every cluster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Better balanced classes across clusters ● Special ed students receive direct instruction from ELA and Math teacher WITH special ed teacher support to meet IEP goals and objectives. ● More time with typical peers

Area/Element	Current Schedule	New Schedule	Benefits
Addition of a World Language Teacher to each Cluster	4 Teacher Cluster - ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies	5 Teacher Cluster - ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies & World Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Doubles the amount of language time ● Comparable to surrounding community offerings ● Spanish I in 7th; Spanish II in 8th ● Greater flexibility for enrollment shifts
Conversational Spanish (CSPAN)	Approximately 135 students are unable to take world language due to needed interventions, special ed services, prior foreign language experience or inability to keep pace	Opportunity for ALL students to take Spanish (Modeled after existing Spanish 1A & 1B @NHS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Better language preparation for all students in advance of high school (grad requirement)

Area/Element	Current Schedule	New Schedule	Benefits
Tiered Intervention Model (SRBI)	Limited opportunities for consistent math support, fixed Reading Class (in lieu of world language for duration of middle school), frequent UA pullouts	Flexibility for students to move in and out of intervention, as needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Intervention plans developed based on student's specific instructional needs ● Increased flexibility in terms of both frequency and duration of intervention ● Opportunity for CSPAN
Provide time for other middle school experiences identified as priorities	Non-existent	Special Schedule once in every 12 cycle days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Opportunity for ensemble music practices ● Dedicated time for social and emotional learning to be delivered in cluster ● Common time for grade level meetings

Area/Element	Current Schedule	New Schedule	Benefits
Sunsetting Family and Consumer Science (FACS)	Health, Tech Ed, Computer Integration, and FACS (22 classes)	Increases instructional time for Health, Tech Ed, Computer Int. (30 classes) New course opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase in instructional time for health, tech ed, computer int. ● Two new courses will be designed to meet the interests/needs of middle schoolers (New course proposals will be forthcoming) ● Cooking Club to be offered to students interested in culinary

Staffing Implications

Reduction of Staffing: Total of 9 Positions

- 6 Current Cluster Positions (Offset by anticipated retirements and possible reallocations to other positions i.e. math intervention, new courses, etc)
- 1 Reading Position (Currently a 1-year Position)
- 1 School Counselor (Potential Retirement)
- 1 Rotation Teacher (Potential Retirement)

Additions to Staffing: Total of 8.2 Positions

- 3.2 World Language Positions
- 1 Math Interventionist
- 2 New Course Positions (TBD)
- 2 Special Education Positions-(Case Manager on every Cluster, request in the Sp.Ed. Budget)

Net Reduction to Staffing .8

Thank you for listening...

Any Questions????

Data Presentation: NWEA and PSAT/SAT results

Frank Purcaro

Director of Teaching and Learning

January 5, 2021



NWEA

- Test Window & Schedule
- Newtown Fall 2020 NWEA Results/Comparisons
 - RIT Mean
 - Predicted Proficiency
 - Student Growth



NWEA – Testing Window & Schedule



- Testing Window, Nov 2nd through Dec 10th
- Testing environment, began during All-in & Hybrid (Nov 2nd) then shifted to fully remote (Nov 23rd)
- Between 10%-20% of testing administered remotely
- Remote testing – an emphasis is placed on the 3 way communication between at home caregivers, test proctor, and student in an effort to re-create an in-school testing environment

Newtown 2020 Results – Math and Reading

Types of Reports

- Grade-on-Grade Mean RIT Comparisons
- District Predicted Proficiency Comparisons
- Matched Cohort Student Growth Comparisons

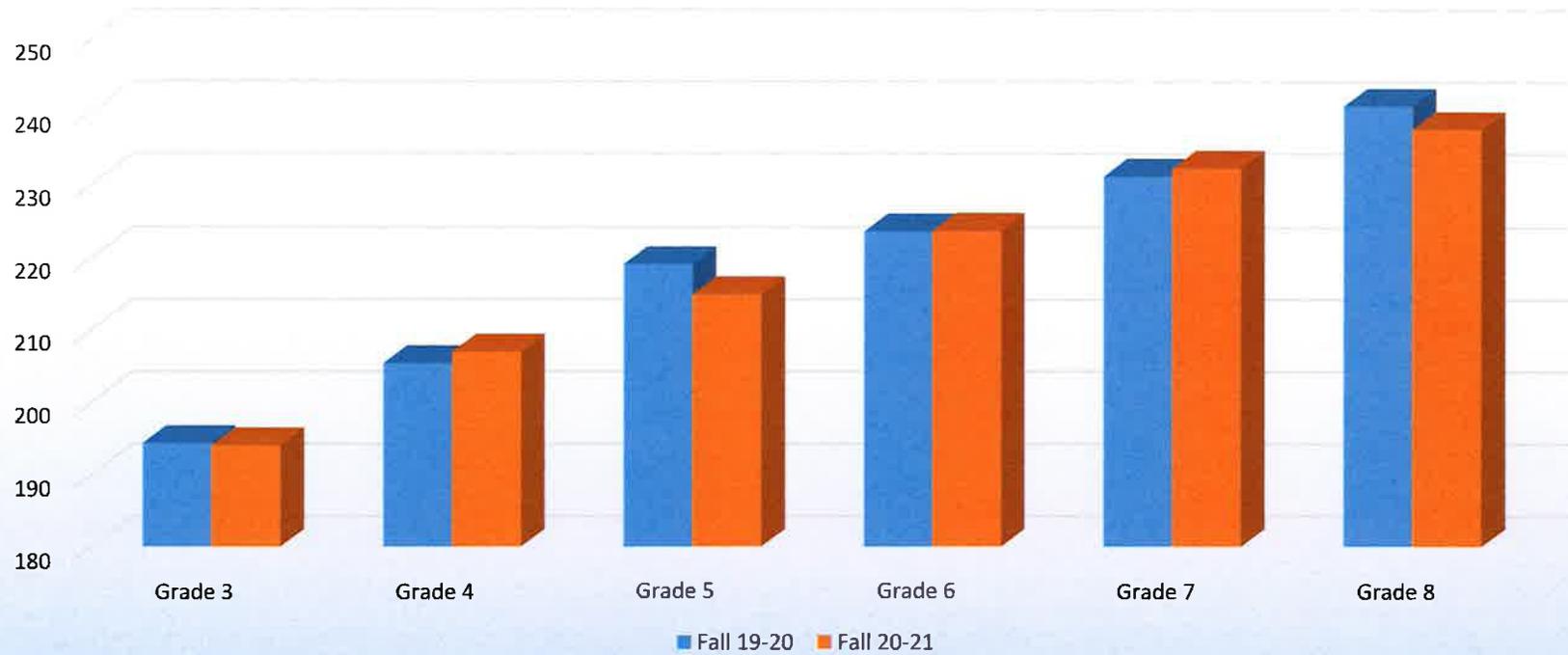
Grade-on-Grade MEAN RIT Comparisons

- Fall 2019-20 vs. Fall 2020-21 in reading and math.
- MAP Growth uses a scale called RIT to measure student achievement and growth.
- RIT scores range from 100–300.
- Students typically start at the 180–200 level in the third grade and progress to the 220–260 level by high school.
- Using RIT scores make it possible to follow a student's educational growth from year to year.

Grade-on-Grade Analysis Math: Mean RIT

	Fall 2019-20 Mean RIT	Fall 2020-21 Mean RIT	+/- Differential
Grade 2	N/A	N/A	N/A
Grade 3	194.4	194.1	- 0.3
Grade 4	205.4	207	+1.6
Grade 5	219.2	215	- 4.2
Grade 6	223.7	223.8	+0.1
Grade 7	231.2	232.3	+1.1
Grade 8	240.9	237.7	- 3.2

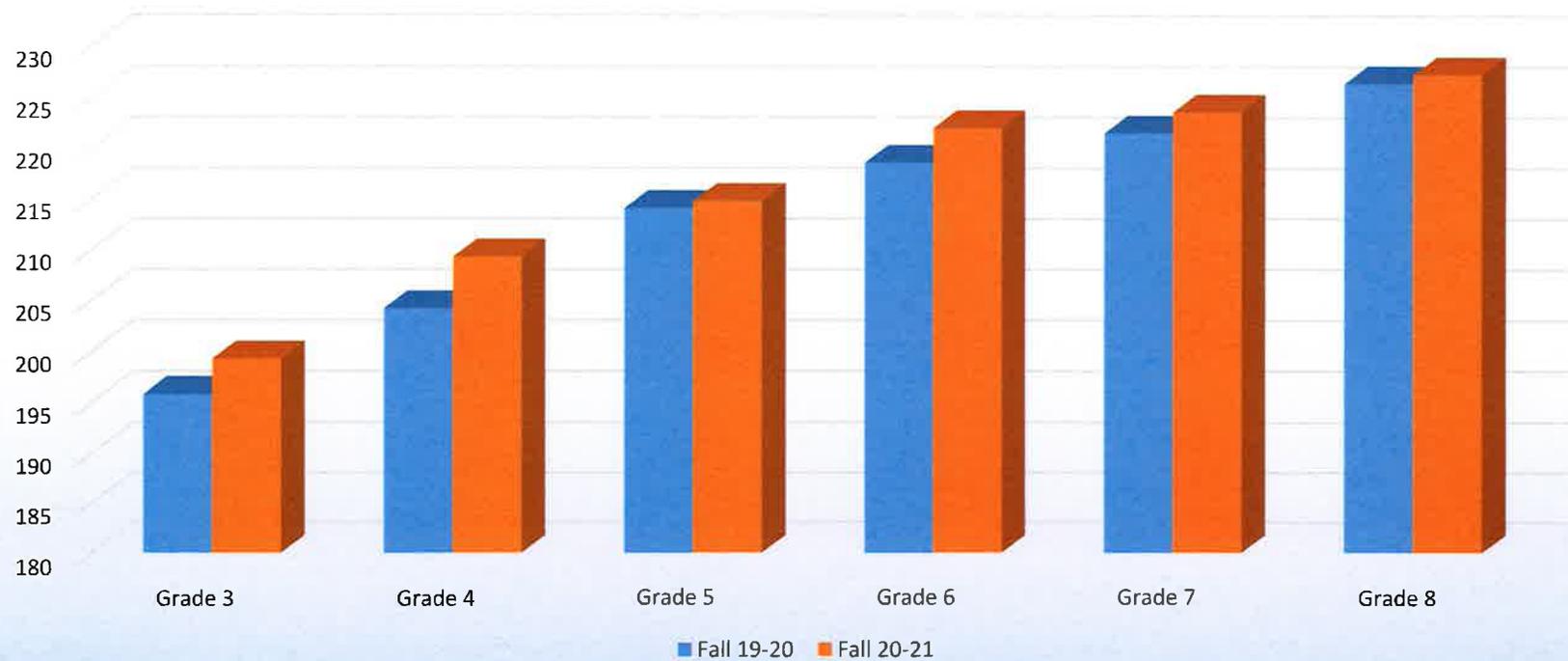
Math Grade-on-Grade Mean RIT Comparisons



Grade-on-Grade Analysis Reading: Mean RIT

	Fall 2019-20 Mean RIT	Fall 2020-21 Mean RIT	+/- Differential
Grade 2	N/A	N/A	N/A
Grade 3	195.8	199.3	+3.5
Grade 4	204.2	209.3	+5.1
Grade 5	214.1	214.8	+.7
Grade 6	218.6	222	+3.4
Grade 7	221.5	223.6	+2.1
Grade 8	226.4	227.3	+.9

Reading Grade-on-Grade Mean RIT Comparisons



Projected Proficiency Reporting

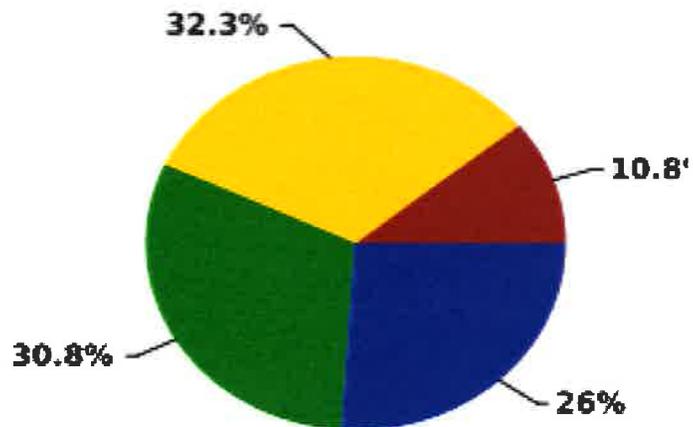
- Predicts the percentage of students that will score at Levels 1-4 on the state assessment in reading and math.
- Graphs in the following slides compare Fall 2020-21 Math and Reading Projected Proficiency with Fall 2019-20 Reports.



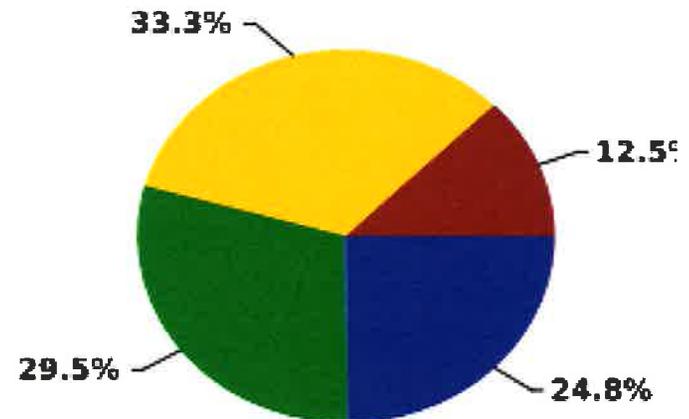
Predicted Proficiency on State Assessments: Fall 2019 vs. Fall 2020



Fall 2019 Math Projections
63.1 Level 3 & 4



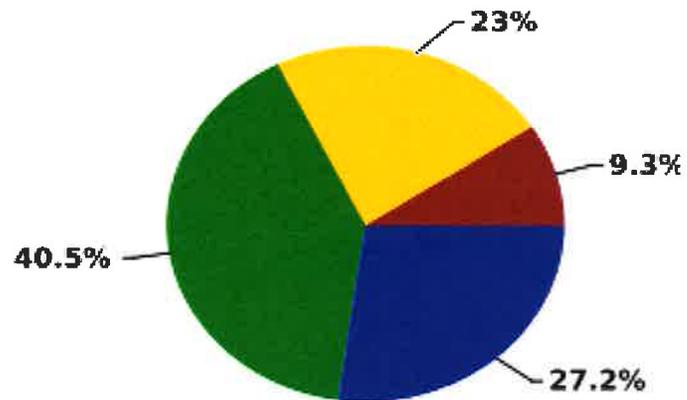
Fall 2020 Math Projections
62.8% Level 3 & 4



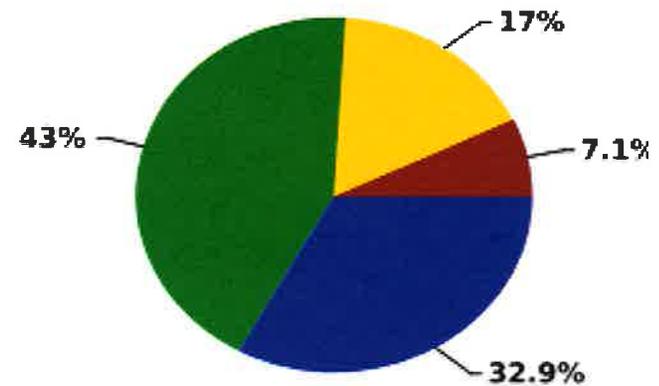
Predicted Proficiency on State Assessments: Fall 2019 vs. Fall 2020



Fall 2019 Reading Projections
67.7% Level 3 & 4



Fall 2020 Reading Projections
75.9% Level 3 & 4



Student Growth Summary Report

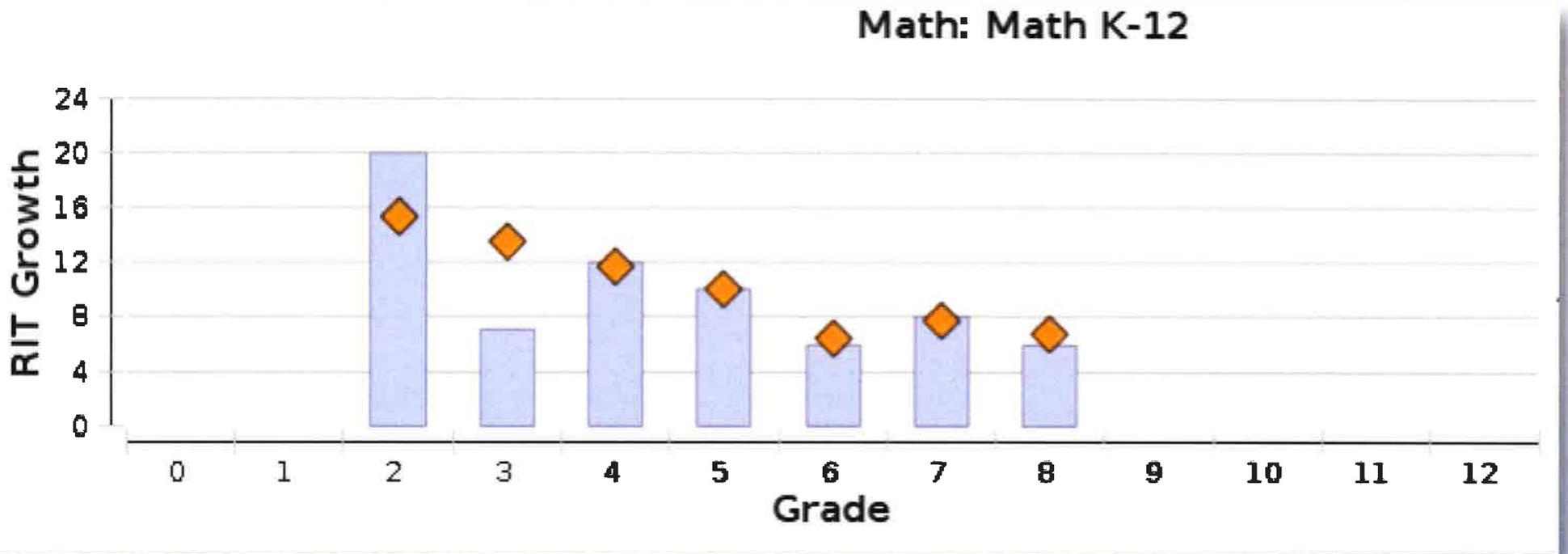
- Matched Cohorts from Fall 2019-20 to Fall 2020-21.
- Compares Actual/Observed Growth to NWEA Projected Growth for each grade.



Cohort Analysis Math: Student Growth Summary

	Avg. Projected Growth	Avg. Observed Growth	+/- Differential
Grade 2	15.3	20	+4.7
Grade 3	13.5	7	- 6.5
Grade 4	11.7	12	+0.3
Grade 5	10.0	10	0
Grade 6	6.4	6	- 0.4
Grade 7	7.7	8	+0.3
Grade 8	6.8	6	- 0.8

Math Student Growth Summary

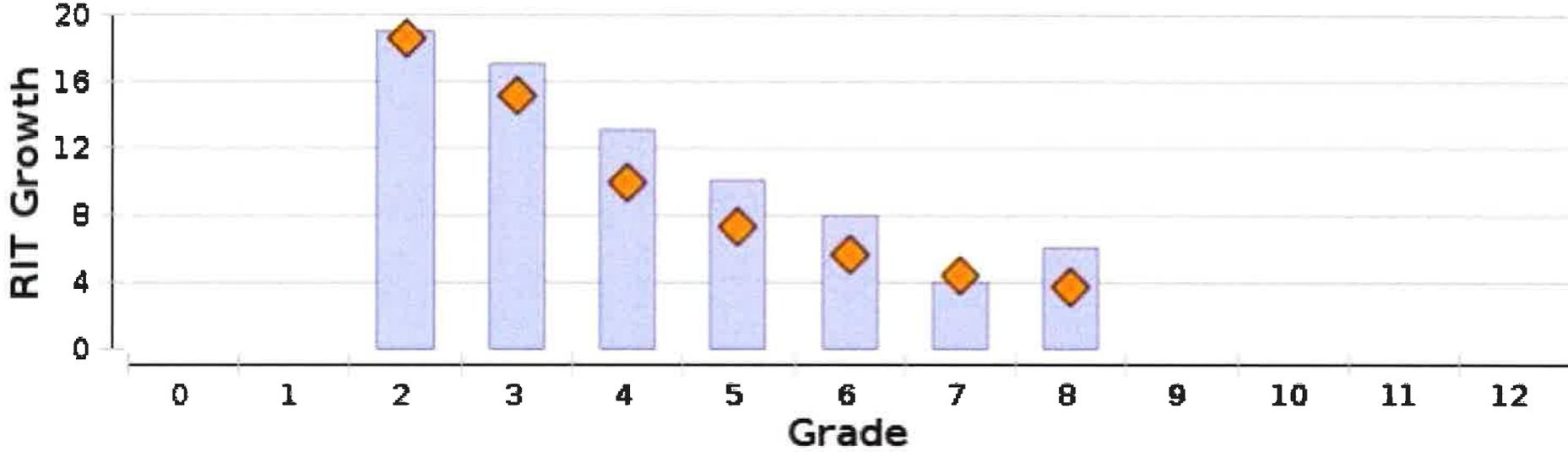


Cohort Analysis Reading: Student Growth Summary

	Avg. Projected Growth	Avg. Observed Growth	+/- Differential
Grade 2	18.6	19	+ .4
Grade 3	15.1	17	+1.9
Grade 4	9.9	13	+3.1
Grade 5	7.3	10	+2.7
Grade 6	5.6	8	+2.4
Grade 7	4.4	4	- 0.4
Grade 8	3.7	6	+2.3

Reading Student Growth Summary

Language Arts: Reading



NWEA – Analysis & Next Steps

- Student math performance is lower than reading when comparing grade-on-grade and growth results, (NWEA math results are lower nationally).
- Student math growth from grades 2 to 3 is an outlier compared to other growth results, but still within the standard error.
 - *More challenging to engage in math instruction remotely, more challenging to address abstract skills in a remote environment.*
 - *Reading traditionally more widely supported at home.*
- **Continue to work closely with math and reading specialists as well as classroom teachers to identify specific skills that need to be addressed.**
- **Provide additional Tier II support where needed.**
- **Closely monitor and support full time distance learners.**
- **Closely review the performance of students piloting new math resources.**

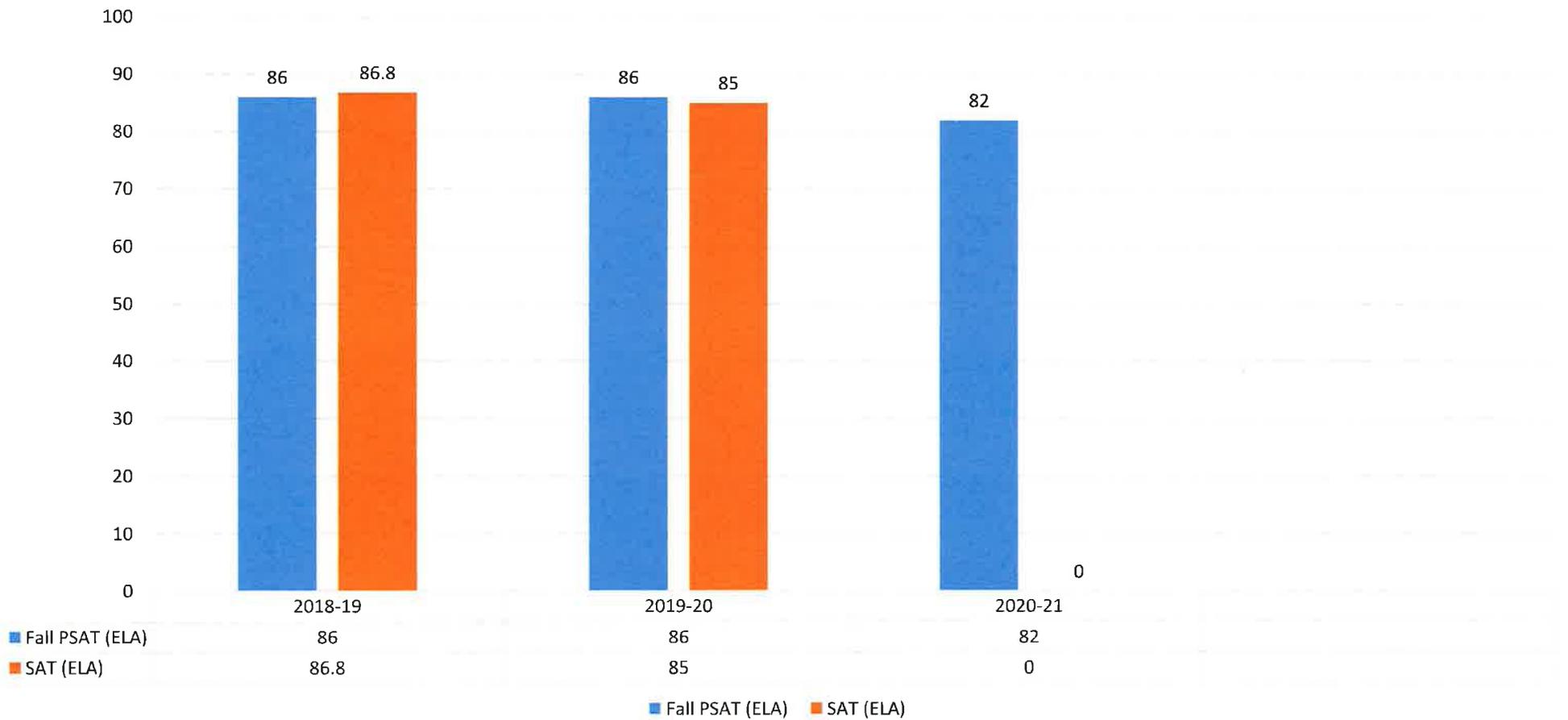
PSAT/SAT

- All students in 11th grade take the PSAT in October each year.
- Those same 11th graders take the SAT in March as well.
- The 2020 March SAT was postponed and instead administered to 12th graders in October of 2020.



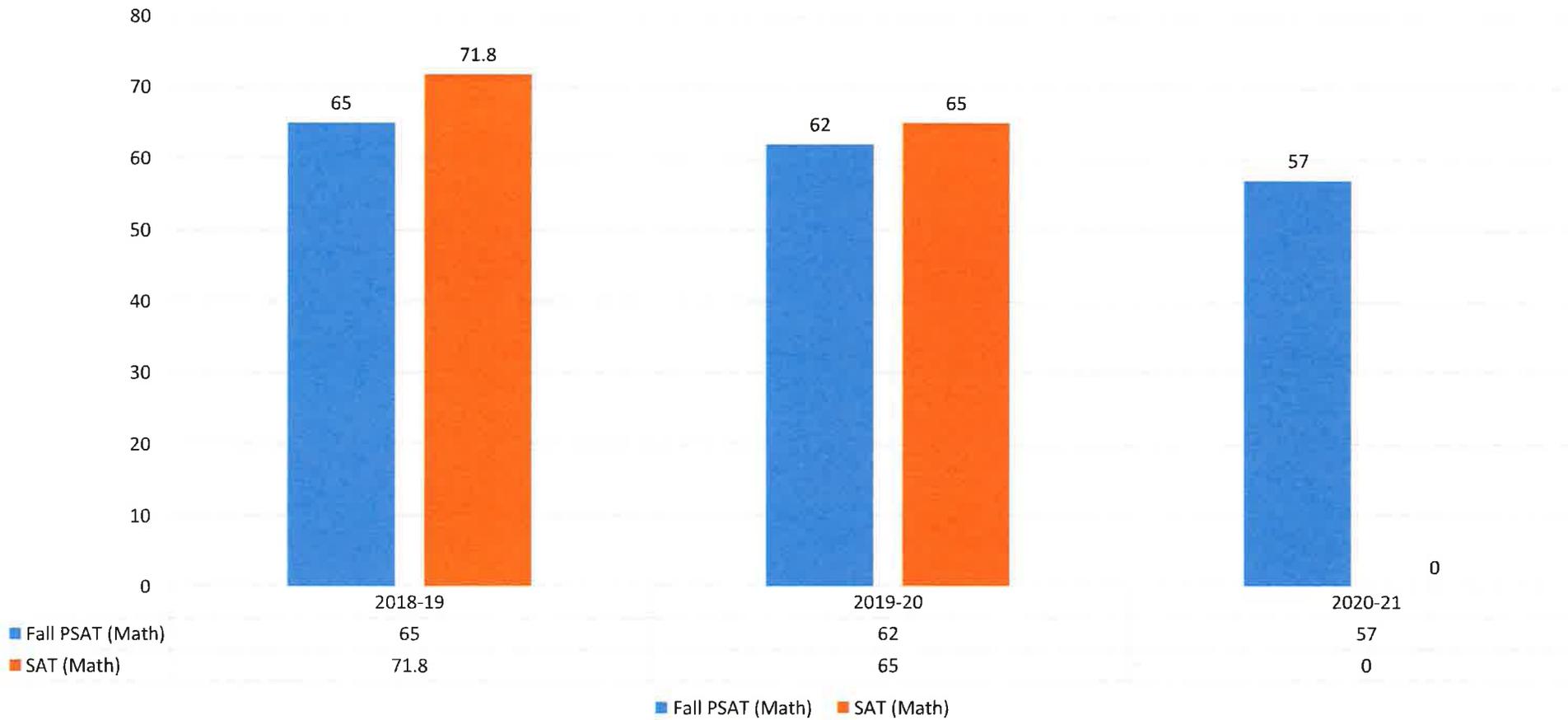
PSAT/SAT – ELA Scores 2018-2020

Percentage of Students Level 3 & 4



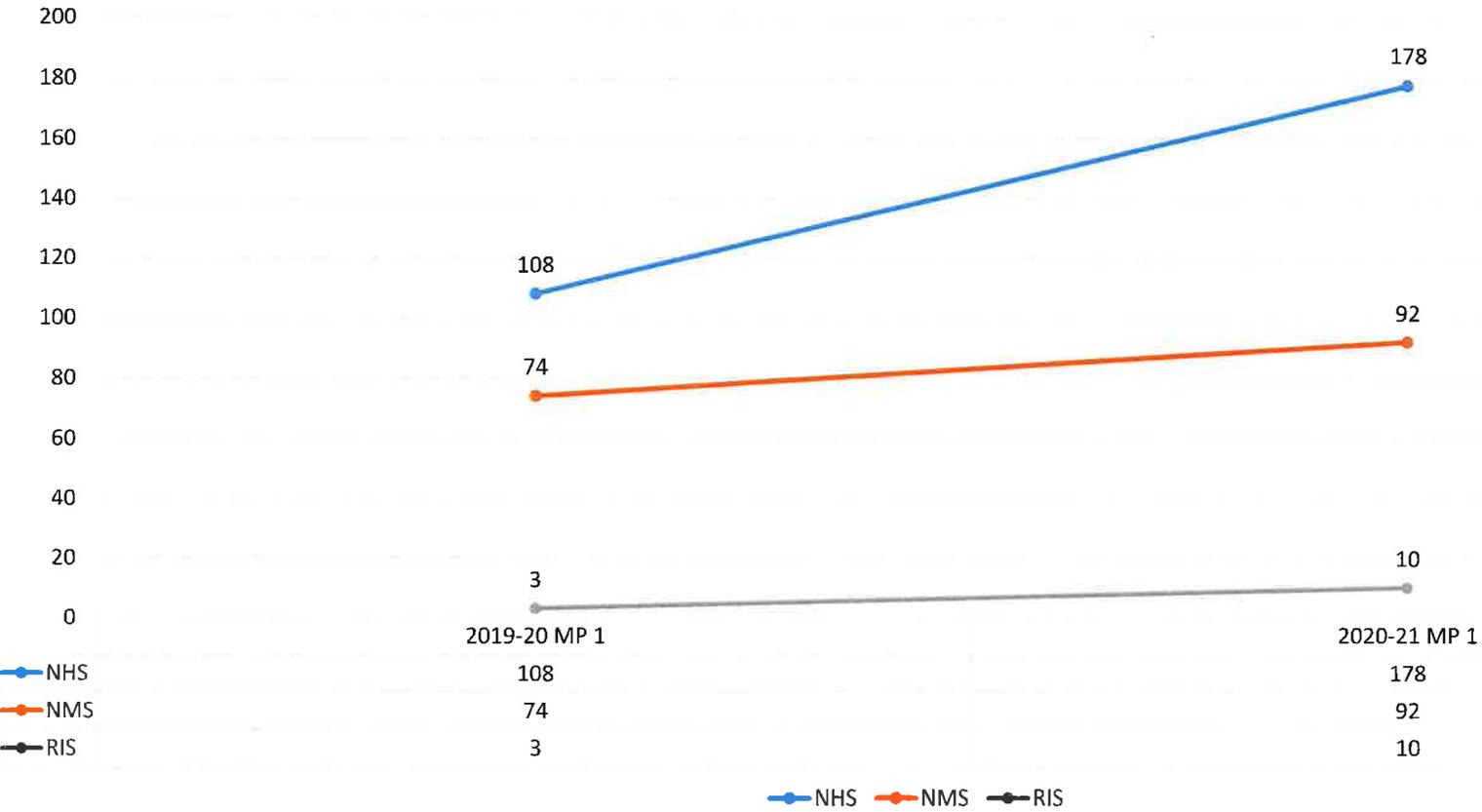
PSAT/SAT – Math Scores 2018-20

Percentage of Students Level 3 & 4



Number of students with one or more failing grades (below 65%) in the first marking period.

(1st Marking Period 2019 vs. 1st Marking Period 2020)



Grade Reports - Analysis

- Students in grades 7-12 have only experienced hybrid or fully remote learning environments.
- Students struggling with completion of assignments and with remote assessments.
- On-screen learning mindset significantly different from in-person learning.
- Students may perform well on state and large scale assessments such as NWEA and SAT but encounter more day-to-day learning challenges with hybrid and fully remote environments.

Feedback from K-6 Math Specialists

- Students are performing much better when in-person instruction occurs. When hybrid and remote occur, distance learning does hinder academic growth and progress.
- More students not doing as well on typical math topic/unit assessments this year. There is a lack of conceptual understanding in some areas as well as inconsistencies with student attention/focus when we are in hybrid and/or remote.
- ***We are seeing that some Distance Learners (Cohort D) who had not really struggled mathematically while in person last year are now being picked up for interventions and/or are struggling with the current concepts.***

Feedback from K-6 Reading Specialists

- We are seeing across the board a drop in reading fluency since we were remote in March. Dibels and DRA scores are lower than what a student may have scored on the NWEA, but we do not assess fluency on the NWEA.
- Most students were not reading aloud during distance learning and the remote learning environment does not open to the normal reading aloud and conversations between students that you would get during in-class instruction.
- ***Students perform significantly better when all-in. Engagement during distance learning is extremely difficult for elementary children.***
- Learning and teaching in person also has challenges due to safety protocols and changes to typical routines for meeting with small groups, partnerships, conferring and other best practices around teaching. However, students are more engaged, better prepared, and in an environment that allows for more consistent and effective hands on teaching, learning and feedback.

“Despite the uphill battle that has been ‘teaching and learning’ since last March, the children are making progress!! I applaud them, their teachers, their parents, and the district for all the creative and ‘out-of-the-box’ efforts it has taken to make instruction possible this year. It is a testament to the resiliency of this town.”

Questions/Comments



**Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut**

Minutes of the Board of Education virtual meeting held December 15, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

M. Ku, Chair	L. Rodrigue
D. Delia, Vice Chair	A. Uberti
D. Cruson, Secretary(absent)	T. Vadas
D. Leidlein	2 Staff
J. Vouros	1 Press
R. Harriman-Stites	Public by phone
D. Zukowski	

Mrs. Ku called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. and stated it was being recorded and being live streamed.

Item 1 – Pledge of Allegiance

Item 2 – Celebration of Excellence

Dr. Rodrigue spoke about celebrating our nurses because they have worked tirelessly advising parents, helping students, and have been a comfort to the entire school community. They are the true behind-the-scenes heroes. Anne Dalton our Nursing Supervisor has worked with Donna Culbert, Health Director, on contact tracing. She recognized Donna Culbert attending the meeting and thanked them all on behalf of the entire Newtown staff and schools.

Mrs. Ku also thanked them for their work keeping our schools safe.

Item 2 – Consent Agenda

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education approve the consent agenda which includes the minutes of December 1, 2020 and December 8, 2020 and the correspondence report. Mrs. Harriman-Stites seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 4 – Public Participation

Stephanie Strover, Possum Ridge Road, appreciates the teachers and nurse Maddie at Head O'Meadow. Staffing issues are preventing students from being in school and she feels we are over-quarantining our staff. She proposed the schools create a scientific advisory council to talk about the virus and evaluate how the CDC is implemented in our schools.

Liza Leuallen, 10 Wills Road, formerly Liza Mecca, thanked the teachers and staff and is concerned about social emotional learning. Decisions come with a price. There was no transparency in dealing with the staffing issue. Students need to be in school January 4.

Jen Larkin, 10 Marlin Road, thanked Dr. Rodrigue and the Board for returning to school in January. She is concerned with sub-par education. Students and parents are riddled with anxiety. In-person instruction provides the best education. She is sympathetic to the teachers but the model we are in is not sustainable and encouraged the opening of the buildings.

Jennifer Salinger, 68 Marlin Road, is a healthcare provider to Covid patients. The mitigation efforts and PPE works. There is data supporting that the children are safest in school and data should be used to support decisions.

Janet Guzma, 12 The Boulevard, thanked the teachers, administration and Dr. Rodrigue for taking time to meet with her and other parents on Friday. Her children often have anxiety over remote learning. Our schools have proven to be safe. It's imperative to be given a choice to send their children to school.

Item 5 – Presentations

Counseling Services and Support:

Dr. Rodrigue introduced Dr. Longobucco who will talk about the Kids in Crisis and Hope Squad at the high school and Bret Nichols who will talk about the K-12 counseling services.

Mr. Nichols spoke about this challenging time and that we are reaching out the students. He also reviewed his recent newsletter.

Mr. Delia asked what type of training helps them get ready to deal with this challenge the students are facing.

Mr. Nichols said he was a member of two different DRG groups to share professional development and feels we are ahead in a lot of ways in comparison to other districts.

Mr. Delia asked if there was anything he needs from the Board that isn't in the budget or something he didn't plan on to help support the children.

Mr. Nichols believes we have been supported and are meeting the needs but he appreciated the offer.

Dr. Longobucco spoke about Teen Talk which is a school-based mental health program that reaches students through individual counseling, group sessions, and presentations. The Hope Squad is a school-based peer-to-peer suicide prevention program to reduce youth suicide through education training and peer intervention.

Ms. Zukowski asked if they have spoken with Social Services and Youth and Family Services about leveraging that type of program.

Dr. Longobucco stated they work with those groups but wasn't sure they would use the Kids in Crisis program because it's a school based program.

Item 6 – Reports

Chair Report: The Legislative Council dates for the CIP are January 6 and 20. With this being the last meeting of the year, Mrs. Ku thanked the Board that works year round and the Superintendent and all of our staff during this incredibly challenging year for their pivot to a new learning environment. Thanks to Dr. Rodrigue for taking on the weight of running the district during a pandemic. She wished everyone a happy holiday and new year.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Rodrigue noted that yesterday was the 12/14 anniversary and thanked the Matt Crebbin and the Interfaith Council for putting together a prerecorded service for staff which was truly appreciated. She started her day at Sandy Hook School but even eight years later it was very difficult. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the victim's families. PEAC subgroups are putting together a model for K-6 to work with peers. With snow coming we plan on a snow day on Thursday with no remote learning. We are close to our winter break and hopes everyone finds time to pause, take a breath, and enjoy their families.

Committee Reports:

Mrs. Harriman-Stites reported the Policy Committee was looking at personnel policies with the evaluation of coaches coming next.

Mr. Delia said the CIP Committee met. The Board of Finance expanded the Hawley project over three years.

Mr. Vouros reported that the Curriculum and Instruction Committee met with the principal of Newtown Middle School regarding their schedule change for next year. They will meet again on

December 22 to discuss the special education portion of the change. January 5 we will provide the Board with the complete change that will occur next year.

Ms. Zukowski said the Communications Committee met and hopes to get the next newsletter to the Board in January focusing on technology.

Student reports:

Mr. Jerfy reported that school has been tiring sitting in front of the screen but we do get some breaks. Clubs are going well and the National Honor Society is getting their events planned. We also had an event at Maplewood with Christmas caroling.

Ms. Clure focused on getting information on the arts in the high school. Choir and jazz band are having virtual practices, which is difficult. Regarding electives, ceramics and painting students have a day to pick up materials from school so they can work at home on their projects. Baking pastry and culinary can use their home kitchens. They can record themselves or send final project to their teachers. The NHS drama "A Wonderful Life" started filming this weekend with the performance on Saturday.

Financial Report:

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education approve the financial report and transfers for the month ending November 30, 2020. Mrs. Harriman-Stites seconded.

Mr. Delia noted that Covid expenses are over \$1.5M but our budget doesn't show a deficit for that amount. The community needs to understand that money budgeted has not been sent but the strain is there. We are in the red for technology by \$700,000 and there are significant expenses related to Covid.

Mrs. Vadas spoke about the Covid expenses document, the financial report, and the comparison of the lunch program from last year to this year.

Motion passes unanimously.

Item 7 – Old Business

COVID-19 Update:

Lorrie sent a letter to staff and parents for our plan to return in full on January 4. We will continue to review our classroom space and lunch distribution. All of the prep time for teachers is equitable. In the last week parents and community members were starting to get applications to help as substitutes. We have to make sure we don't compromise safety. Data shows there is no spread in schools. We worked with Donna Culbert and Anne Dalton and feel confident that we can come back and be able to manage with staffing and social distancing to ensure safety. The flexibility of keeping students home is still in place.

Mrs. Culbert stated that regarding students coming back in January, students in person in school is a safe environment. We will continue to run into cases where we will have to quarantine. The nurses and teachers the first part of the year worked well in contact tracing. She wants everyone to be prepared because we have seen cases rise but it will have an impact on school. We may not peak until mid-January so we need to be prepared. What people are willing to do and not do is based on human behavior. She is confident because we have a good team and excellent system.

Mrs. Ku appreciates all that Mrs. Culbert has been doing with Anne Dalton and Dr. Rodrigue regarding information from the State.

Mrs. Leidlein asked how it is determined when a faculty member needs to quarantine.

Mrs. Culbert said we look at their environment and if they have been 6 feet apart and less than 15 minutes and the level of activity between student or other staff member. We need to rely on the adults for this information as they are the guardians of the students when in school.

Mrs. Leidlein asked if an exposure happens outside the school, who makes the decision to quarantine.

Mrs. Culbert said she would make the decision to quarantine when exposed to a case.

Mr. Delia wanted to know how many substitutes we need and do we have a goal.

Dr. Rodrigue said we wanted 20 to start and have close to 11 now. It's hard to determine because we don't know what to expect in January. We are down 17% of staff and paras. The flexibility from the State has focused more on substitute teaching and not needing the two years of college but there is more to being a para. We have two that need waivers to sub. She thanked the parents and the community for stepping up to solve this problem.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites was concerned if our pay was competitive.

Dr. Rodrigue said we were at \$80 per day when she started, then it was increased to \$85 and now it is \$90 per day.

Mr. Delia asked if the Board had the authority to increase it and make it more appealing.

Dr. Rodrigue said we still have time and thinks we'll be okay but an increase in the pay could help us but was not convinced it was just the pay. Every district was looking for staff so the competition was greater. We aren't alone with this issue.

Mr. Vouros agreed to revisit the amount of money we pay substitutes. We are not nearly as competitive as we should be and we don't have the ability to attract substitutes.

Mr. Delia asked who makes the decision to raise the substitute pay.

Dr. Rodrigue said we've done that in the past. We just looked at it again and we are competitive. She thinks it's a combination of things.

Mrs. Ku asked to bring information on subs and the shortage and comparison of what we are paying compared to other districts.

Dr. Rodrigue said we have gone to teachers when we don't have enough subs to cover classes and our teachers give up their prep time to help with coverage.

Dr. Longobucco stated that it's always harder to get subs at the high school level. Our staff stepped up during their prep periods which are longer this year. The extra building subs also help.

Dr. Rodrigue said we anticipated this happening so we added additional building subs at every level and still there was an issue.

Mr. Vouros said the block scheduling works at the middle school and the high school but at the lower levels the teachers don't have time to cover other classes. In those buildings the sub situation is very problematic.

Mr. Delia asked if we can get data on the impact on learning and how the students are doing.

Dr. Rodrigue said that was planned for the next meeting.

Mr. Delia is significantly concerned about student's well-being and mental health. He thought we should bring in more counselors as a Covid-related expense.

Mrs. Ku asked how we were ensuring that students are learning in this environment.

Dr. Rodrigue stated that we will look at that once everyone is back from the holidays. It's important to wait until everyone is back in full.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites felt we need to look at psychologists and social workers and the special education department to fill in the gaps during the time we've lost.

Mr. Delia said it was critical for us to use the data and try to anticipate what is coming. He appreciates opening up the schools in January and thanked Dr. Rodrigue for that decision.
Conversations on Race Curriculum:

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education approve the Conversations on Race curriculum. Mrs. Harriman-Stites seconded.

Mr. Delia was in full support of this except for the movie which has a lot of significant strong language and wanted to state that for the record.

Motion passes unanimously.

Policy 5145.5 Sexual Discrimination and Sexual Harassment

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education approve Policy 5145.5 Sexual Discrimination and Sexual Harassment. Mrs. Harriman-Stites seconded.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites said a couple of issues were brought up and changes were made in the definition of sexual discrimination and the procedure on page "b" so it has similar language that's in the racial harassment policy.

Ms. Zukowski said the racial harassment policy has a requirement for the Board to hear summaries of reports and it might make sense to have it in the sexual harassment policy too.

MOTION: Ms. Zukowski moved to amend the motion to add the language "A summary of all such incidents and their dates of resolutions shall be included in the annual report required as outlined in Policy 0523" as the second paragraph of the Procedure section.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites would like to here if Dr. Rodrigue would be able to furnish this.
Dr. Rodrigue said she would.

Vote on amendment: Motion passes unanimously.

Vote on amended policy: Motion passes unanimously.

Policy 5145.6 Student Grievance Procedures (Title IX)

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education approve Policy 5145.6 Student Grievance Procedures (Title IX) Mrs. Harriman-Stites seconded.

Motion Passes unanimously.

Item 8 – New Business

Mrs. Ku stated that the Charter Revision Commission is being reviewed by the Legislative Council and she suggests we use the same format and bring any suggestions. Their next meeting is January 15 but we would need this by our January 5 meeting. Five items she thought for possible discussion are the Non-lapsing Account, the appropriations process, the Board of Education being defined as a department, the Board of Education election process and balance of political parties, and the date for the referendum.

Ms. Zukowski volunteered to work with someone on this.

Mrs. Ku asked for thoughts to be emailed to her and she and Ms. Zukowski would refine the list.

2021 Board of Education Committees:

Mrs. Ku said this is consistent with our Policy 9130 to vote on the establishment of the committees.

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education approve the 2021 Board of Education Committees. Mrs. Harriman-Stites seconded.

Ms. Zukowski asked if it would be possible to create an acronym for a short name for the CIP/ Facilities/ Finance Committee to be called CFF. The short name we are using is CIP which gives more weight to CIP than to facilities and finance.

MOTION: Ms. Zukowski moved to append the title CIP/Facilities/Finance Committee to (CFF). Mr. Delia seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Main motion passes unanimously.

Item 9 – Public Participation

Lisa St. Louis, 137 Currituck Road, said the distance learning has been stressful for her children and asked why there was such a discrepancy with staffing here compared to other districts. The process for quarantining has been concerning and reckless with 85 students quarantined for possible exposure to a coach at an outside event and a PSAT class quarantined because one had it.

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

Item 10 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Michelle Ku
Chair