

November 2, 2021

Dear Parents and Staff,

Hope you and your families are doing well and enjoying the festive fall season. I wanted to take this time to share a few updates with you.

### **Quarantining**

Superintendents and other leaders across the State have been providing feedback to the CT Department of Public Health (DPH) regarding school transmission data, as well as the academic, social and emotional issues impacting our students due to quarantine protocols. The DPH welcomed our input and recently outlined a potential option for districts and families that will minimize some of the restrictive protocols associated with quarantining. This information is not public yet, and we expect details to be provided through a press conference this week. Please know that I will share the details with the community when I can.

### **Transportation**

In order to ensure all families have timely information about bus issues, we have been working to review the information in our system. We have noted that some parents may not realize there is an "opt in" to text messaging, or any other mode of communication from our schools/district. This is important, since some bus issues (e.g., a driver who needs to leave unexpectedly or calls in sick late) will not be known well in advance. That being said, some parents have complained they did not know their child's bus number or did not receive a text. **Please review the information below:**

**The PowerSchool Portal** (<https://newtownps.powerschool.com>) offers parents/guardians access to the student demographic and contact information that Newtown Public Schools has on file. If you do not know your portal login, please contact your school.

- **Transportation Info** - This page lists the AM and PM bus that each student has been routed on, as well as any alternate transportation information. If information on this page does not match what you believe your student is assigned to, please contact your school's main office
- **Year-Round Update 21-22** - This page gives households the ability to update their communication preferences. Parents/Guardians can opt into communications via phone, email and SMS (text). In regards to recent busing notifications, we encourage households to **opt into SMS (text)** communication, as text messages are the most efficient method of getting information out in a timely fashion. Schools will continue to send communications via text and email as well as phone calls during weather/school emergencies.

Newtown Public Schools has utilized the SchoolMessenger alert system to send out mass notifications. Over the next few months, there will be a transition to using **Blackboard**, a new communication system that will provide households with additional communication preferences/options (including a mobile app). The mobile app will make things far more efficient and will be user friendly for both parents and staff. More information will be forthcoming as we get closer to moving to this new system.

### **Celebration**

Newtown High School has been selected as the CIAC Fred Balsamo Award for Sportsmanship recipient for the 2021-22 school year. The CIAC recognized Athletic Director, Matt Memoli, NHS

students, and the entire athletic program for continuing to seek ways of promoting the growth of our students and supporting the ideals of good sportsmanship. The CIAC commended the NHS athletic department for their dedication to sportsmanship and for providing students with an enjoyable athletic experience. The BOE will be recognizing the NHS program and their award at their next meeting.

### **Community Service**

Aside from a productive professional development day today, our certified staff donated non-perishables for the Faith Food Pantry and earned an entry into a drawing for a basket of goodies. Their kindness was appreciated, and we will be sending over all of the donations to the pantry this week!

Thank you and stay well!

Dr. Lorrie Rodrigue, Superintendent