

February 2020

.....

Superintendent's Newsletter

Courageous Community Conversations

One of the values we embrace in Newtown is *diversity*. We want all students to embrace differences *and, in turn*, feel understood, accepted, and respected by their peers - just as we expect this to occur when our students go out into the larger community.

We will be asking for volunteers to be a part of a community dialogue on issues regarding diversity and its implications in our schools. **This will be a subgroup of PEAC (Parent Educator Advisory Council). If you are interested, please send an email to junek@newtown.k12.ct.us.** We will be setting up a discussion group in March and will send details.

2020-21 BUDGET

The Board of Education approved the 2020-21 Operational Plan of \$79,201,776, representing a 1.40% increase over the current year's



budget. We are in the process of sharing highlights of our budget with the Board of Finance (BOF) and will be

Budget (cont).

moving on to discuss the budget with the Legislative Council following the BOF approval.

Aside from some staffing adjustments across the District, our operational plan brings our world language program to the 5th and 6th grades, expands SAIL, a Special Education alternative program, to NMS, and provides a plan for three middle school clusters in 7th grade that will offset declining enrollment and maintain the integrity of the cluster model (one six person team). Appropriate class sizes across 7th and 8th grades will remain.

While music will be shared at the elementary level, plans are in place to ensure the program maintains its level of quality for students. Our budget further enhances resources for social emotional learning and provides ongoing professional development for staff and administrators.

If you want further details about our 2020-21 budget, please be sure to visit our website to review the budget presentation or any of the discussions at our recent BOE meetings.

www.newtown.k12.ct.us

.....

PEAC

During the school year, our Parent Educator Advisory Council (PEAC) has been busy working to carry out several initiatives that will make a difference in the school community. Tying their vision to the vision and goals of the District, PEAC subgroups who have focused on the budget, community-school partnerships, and district communication, continue to work diligently to develop action steps in support of meaningful change.

The partnership subgroup has already made a strong connection with community members from the Newtown Senior Center. Students will be sharing elements of their community service and research projects with seniors. Hawley's 4th grade shared their projects in January to an engaged senior audience, and other student groups will follow.

Super Spotlight!

Based on a recommendation by PEAC, I will be visiting classrooms and capturing (via video) innovative instructional practices across the district. These will be uploaded on the district's website and shared during the BOE Superintendent's Report.



Connecticut School Safety and Crisis Response

Newtown Director of Security Mark Pompano will represent the Newtown Public Schools on the newly formed "Connecticut School Safety and Crisis Response Committee." The committee's goal is to establish a school-based Emergency Response Team (ERT) of trained staff who can respond to a crisis or incident occurring within any school district in Connecticut through PREPaRE training.

PREPaRE training was developed by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) and represents a decade-long leadership in providing evidence-based resources and

Connecticut School Safety (cont.)

consultation related to school crisis prevention and response. Newtown staff will also be invited to be a part of this endeavor.



Learning Walks

Dr. Purcaro, Director of Teaching and Learning, and Anne Uberti, Assistant Superintendent, have conducted over 100 learning walks (classroom visits) to date, collecting evidence on eight indicators that focus on conceptual connections, student engagement, and the quality of rigorous learning experiences in classrooms across the District. Their goal is to complete 300 visits by the end of the school year.

As Mrs. Uberti described the learning walks, "Part of the process is a calibration of expectations - creating a common definition of the teaching and learning expectations across a K-12 system."

The observable data from these direct classroom learning walks will continue to inform decisions around curricular and instructional practices.

