

**Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut**

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting held on January 23, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers 3 Primrose Street.

A. Plante, Chair	C. Melillo
J. Vouros, Vice Chair	A. Uberti
D. Ramsey, Secretary	T. Vadas
T. Higgins	16 Staff
S. Tomai	1 Public
C. Gilson	1 Press
D. Linnetz	

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved that the Board of Education go into executive session to discuss the Superintendent's mid-year evaluation. Mr. Higgins seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 1 – Executive Session

Executive session began at 6:00 p.m. Mrs. Tomai joined the meeting at 6:10 p.m. The Board discussed the Superintendent's mid-year evaluation and exited executive session at 6:52 p.m.

Mrs. Plante called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

Item 2 – Pledge of Allegiance

Item 3 – Newtown High School/Athletics Budget

Dr. Longobucco presented the high school and athletic budget with Mr. Memoli.

Mr. Ramsey complimented the Capstone Project presentations. Regarding TAP, he asked what the maximum number of students was when it was held after school.

Dr. Longobucco said there were 15 and we now have 18 with one waiting. Each TAP teacher is paid for teaching a class. The hours are 10:00 a.m. to 2:32 p.m. Students get work experience and are also placed in jobs.

Mr. Vouros said there are 63 freshmen with IEPs and asked if she has enough help.

Dr. Longobucco noted that we can make reasonable caseloads for the staff we have if we get the coordinator position.

Mr. Vouros is concerned about the SEL portion of their lives and wants to sure she has enough assistance for the challenging classes

Dr. Longobucco responded that she feels they have the support needed.

Mr. Ramsey asked if there was any interface between the Flex Program and TAP.

Dr. Longobucco responded that TAP is an alternative program and Flex is a support for students in a regular schedule who needs a teacher dedicated to helping them get their work done and eventually go to a traditional schedule of classes. Some students just stay for a short time to get their work done.

Mr. Higgins asked about the specialist positions.

Dr. Longobucco said they are non-certified staff members who work in the support center and writing center and provide assistance to students. They do not perform interventions as that is only done by certified staff.

Mrs. Linnetz asked if there were interventions to be sure students come to school.

Dr. Longobucco said there are no agencies to refer to for help with absenteeism but Pupil Personnel Services is helping especially since they will lose credit if too many classes are missed.

Mr. Vouros asked how she would use a dean of students.

Dr. Longobucco said that position is critical in dealing with student behavior. It's difficult for our two assistant principals to handle this. A dean could take care of the attendance issues and base level behavior problems.

Mr. Vouros asked if the dean position could help the 63 students with IEPs.

Dr. Longobucco said it could as it's a flexible position.

Mrs. Plante asked about the \$20 per athlete increase. She is concerned it will be an obstacle for families and asked if students can apply for a scholarship.

Mr. Memoli said that moving it up to \$180 will assist with transportation. We have help for families who need it. The family cap will stay at \$450.

Dr. Longobucco said we have more than a handful of families that get assistance every season.

Mr. Higgins asked if we were doing anything to try to impact the numbers regarding the performance gap for students and post-secondary readiness.

Dr. Longobucco said the free and reduced lunch list is confidential so it would be impossible for teachers to know students in their class are in that program. Regarding other subgroups, there is a lot we have to figure out on how to increase performance.

Mr. Higgins referred to a previous meeting where Mr. Memoli spoke about student leadership training and asked where he was with it.

Mr. Memoli said there is no extra budget for this. It is held before school for freshmen involved in sports and he enjoys meeting with them.

Mr. Ramsey referred to the assistant principal and asked if they could hire a dean who would not have PPT responsibilities.

Dr. Longobucco said they would be in the teacher's union and would not have administrative responsibilities.

Mrs. Tomai thanked Mr. Memoli for the contributions he's making that are not in the budget but he's passionate about.

Item 4 – Special Education Budget

Mrs. Petersen spoke about the special education, pupil personnel and nursing budgets.

Currently we have 650 special education students as of December 1st. This is the first year our numbers have declined but there are a lot more severe behaviors since Covid. She is looking for a PPT compliance coordinator for the high school.

Mrs. Tomai referred to out-of-district students and asked if there was a commonality in the services they receive and if we should provide them in district.

Mrs. Petersen said there is no commonality. We always look to provide services in district but some cannot be met by our staff.

Mrs. Linnetz asked about the behavior analysts and behavior interventionists.

Mrs. Petersen said prior to this year we had three behavior analysts. We started seeing an uptick in students not identified as special education but having challenging behaviors. We requested to add another BCBA to work with general education teachers on how to work with those students in the classrooms. BTs work with special education students.

Mr. Higgins asked for information on the gifted and talented program. We are mandated to identify K-12 students but we only start the identification process in third grade.

Mrs. Uberti manages this program and said that State law and our policy calls for procedures for identification but we don't begin our universal screening until grade three. A student can be identified in any grade if requested by a parent through a PPT.

Mr. Higgins asked if there was any reason we are not screening at the kindergarten level.

Mrs. Uberti stated we are missing a regulation for the policy which we should revisit or add a regulation to make it clearer. If a parent made a referral, under the law we would identify.

Mr. Higgins said State law enables us to identify up to 10% of students. We are identifying significantly less than 10% and asked why.

Mrs. Uberti said the guidance as to the percentage of the population as gifted is 3% to 5% of any given group. The purpose of the program is to identify the truly gifted students and if we bring in many more students we would change the nature of the program for students who are truly exceptional.

Mr. Higgins asked if we were screening for talented.

Mrs. Uberti said not specifically. Our screening is for gifted students. We don't have a program for talented students. She was not aware of any districts that identify for talented.

Mr. Higgins asked if we are allocating enough resources for this program.

Mrs. Uberti said we are and feels the services we provided have expanded because we shifted part of the enrichment program to our library media specialists. That freed up time for our two gifted and talented teachers and will allow us to expand the universal screening down to second grade.

Item 5 – Pupil Personnel Budget

Mr. Higgins noted that with the drop of students at the high school we have the same number of guidance counselors and asked why there was no adjustment given the student reduction.

Dr. Longobucco said they need to give more time to the students impacted at Sandy Hook.

Mr. Higgins also noted the same level of counselors at the middle school.

Mrs. Petersen said they teach a class, attend PPTs and attend meetings.

Mr. Ross said they are cluster based with two counselors per team. They teach lessons, are 504 case managers, advocate for students academically and SEL so their days are filled.

Mrs. Linnetz asked if there were resources to get students to come to school.

Mrs. Petersen noted there has been a definite increase since Covid with anxiety and depression. Outside resources don't do too much for the absenteeism issue. Our staff goes to the homes to help families get the students to school. It's difficult to get outside resources to help.

Mr. Vouros noted we are down 20 paraprofessionals and asked why we cannot tap into the money we have and hire help in other areas until these positions are filled.

Mrs. Petersen is hoping the wage increase will bring more applicants.

Item 6 – Health Budget

Karen Powell, Nursing Supervisor, reported that between all seven schools we have seen 20,290 students since the start of the year. This doesn't include the three private schools. There are four drivers of her budget. One is having to provide a .5 nurse at the Housatonic Waldorf School. The second is the nursing coverage for the middle school overnight trip to Boston. The third is an increase in summer hours for the nursing supervisor, and fourth is the increase in the medical supply budget line. Full-time staffing continues to be a concern.

Item 7 – Curriculum

Mrs. Uberti spoke about the curriculum and staff development budget, which is focused on developing rigorous and relevant curriculum and provide staff with professional development and training to effectively implement that curriculum. The budget sections are staff and curriculum development, contracted services, staff training, and textbooks.

Mr. Higgins asked about staff training and how this budget provided training for a new curriculum.

Mrs. Uberti reported that Kara DiBartolo, the Director of Teaching and Learning, works with her. We work with the principals and they are an integral part along with their teams. We have been meeting with them for the new reading program. The training is from consultants and trainers and is not reflected in her budget.

Mr. Higgins asked if there was evidence of making more rapid identification of students. He didn't see any increase in the specialists line for reading.

Mrs. Uberti said the program doesn't give early identification. Dibbles is the biggest assessment we give to students. We also implemented Foundations Phonics program, which also has an assessment.

Mr. Higgins asked if she believed this budget is providing enough resources.

Mrs. Uberti would like to see the focus go more to instructional practices and provide more training.

Item 8 – Public Participation

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

Item 9 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Donald Ramsey
Secretary

Newtown High School

24-25 Budget

Budget Goals

- Align with school and district strategic plans, objectives and all State-mandates.
- Protect the instructional core.
- Ensure all programs have adequate resources to maintain a safe, inclusive, and a high level of instruction.
- Maintain adequate class sizes and enrollment across all disciplines.



Previous Staffing Reductions

	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	Total
Administration								
Assistant Principal				1.0				1.0
Teachers								
English	0.50	1.00		0.60				2.10
Fine Arts		0.40	0.20					0.60
Math	0.50	1.00				1.00		2.50
Science	0.50	1.00	0.80		0.80		0.20	3.30
Social Studies	0.50				1.00			1.50
TAP (The Alternate Program)							0.20	0.20
Tech Ed			0.20		0.50	0.40		1.10
World Language		1.00	0.28	1.00		1.00		3.28
Support Staff								
Career Center			0.50	0.50				1.00
In School Suspension							1.00	1.00
TAP Para							0.30	0.30
Total	2.00	4.40	1.98	3.10	2.30	2.40	1.70	17.88

Budget Reductions

- Homebound Tutors - Reduced by \$10,000
- Morning Monitors - Reduced by \$4,550
- Staffing Reductions - 2.0 FTE Certified Staff
.29 Paraprofessional



Budget Additions

- Textbooks - English
- Tuition - Out of District Programs
- Instructional Supplies - Replenish from 23-24 budget
- Equipment - French Horn
- Equipment Repairs - Project Adventure & Auto Shop
- Equipment Rental - Copier lease



Athletics

- Part-time Athletic Trainer
- High Jump Mat
- Equipment Rental
- Pay to Participate Increase
- Change in Event Tickets



Special Education Addition

- New position - PPT Compliance Coordinator
- Special Education Budget
- Department has grown from 10.5 teachers in 2018 to 15 teachers currently
- Current Department Chair facilitated 270 PPT's in 23-24
- 63 Incoming freshman with IEP's



Curriculum & Staff Development Budget Proposal 2024-2025

Anne Uberti
Assistant Superintendent
Presentation to the Board of Education
January 23, 2024



Goals of the 24-25 Curriculum and Staff Development Budget

Strategic Priority 1: Ensure Stimulating, Engaging, and Challenging Learning Opportunities

Strategic Priority 2: Prepare Students for Life Beyond Graduation

Strategic Priority 3: Hire, Retain, and Develop a Diverse and Exceptional Faculty and Staff

Strategic Priority 4: Strengthen District, Family and Community Partnerships



Listening, Learning, Leading

Identified priorities related to curriculum and instruction and staff development are derived from meaningful interactions with all stakeholders:

- Districtwide curriculum committees
- Conversations with teachers, teacher leaders and administrators
- Discussions with Board members in C & I
- Feedback from parents and students
- Firsthand observations of classrooms
- Collegial conversations with colleagues from other districts
- New state and/or federal initiatives
- Other unanticipated conditions impacting student learning

Curriculum and Staff Development Budget Sections

Staff & Curriculum Development
Staff Training
Contracted Services
Textbooks





Staff & Curriculum Development

Proposed Staff Development

- Coordinator to plan and lead New Staff Orientation
- New Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM)
- District committees that provide leadership and direction in the following areas:
 - English Language Arts
 - Mathematics
 - Science
 - Social Studies
 - Curriculum Development
 - Professional Development and Evaluation
- Collaborative Planning Meetings for K-4 Leadership Teams



Staff & Curriculum Development

Proposed Curriculum Revision/Development

- **Reed/Middle**
 - Social Studies 7 - 8
 - Spanish & French - Grades 7 & 8

- **High School**
 - French
 - Middle Eastern Studies
 - Philosophy
 - Public Health
 - CP Environmental Science
 - Meteorology
 - English II
 - Poetry
 - Accounting II
 - Fine Arts - Acting I

Staff Training

Professional development opportunities provided by outside consultants

- **Professional learning supported by outside consultants**
 - K-5 El Imagine Learning Year 2 Implementation Support & Continued Professional Learning
 - Continued professional learning for math teachers grades 6-8
 - Inquiry instruction professional learning for science & social studies in grades 5-8
 - At NHS, initial planning and professional learning in preparation for the roll-out of Portrait of a Graduate, 2025-2026

- **Fine Arts Professional Learning for K-8**
 - Attendance at various regional professional learning opportunities based on area of speciality

- **Attendance at Regional Conferences**
 - Language Arts Consultants - Connecticut Reading Association
 - Math Specialists - Association of Teachers of Mathematics in New England (ATOMIC)

Contracted Services

- ✔ **Rubicon Atlas**
 - Curriculum management platform
- ✔ **iReady**
 - iReady reading and math assessment for Grades 2 through 8
 - Personalized instruction licenses to support intervention and special education
- ✔ **Dibels**
 - The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills®, a universal screener for early detection of possible reading disabilities for Grades K through 3
- ✔ **Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Program (K-2)**
 - Systematic program of daily lessons in phonemic awareness
- ✔ **Foundations Fun Hub**
 - Digital platform to support the implementation of Foundations, a foundational reading, spelling and handwriting curriculum
- ✔ **Lexia - Core 5 & Power Up**
 - Adaptive blended learning program that accelerates the development of literacy skills for students of all abilities
- ✔ **Learning A to Z**
 - Digital supplemental literacy resource that supports reading, writing, science and vocabulary development
- ✔ **Mystery Science**
 - Online platform that supports K-5 science
- ✔ **BrainPOP**
 - Online platform that provides videos to help teachers deliver content in science, social studies, math, engineering and technology, health, and arts & music
- ✔ **Quavered Health**
 - Innovative digital platform that integrates health and physical education



Textbooks

- Updated Spanish program for 7th, 8th and 9th grades
- Classroom libraries to further support implementation of the new K-5 Reading Resource
- New 6-8 Reading Resource
- Updated Edition of AP Psych Textbook
- Additional materials for increases in class sections (Bridges Math Kits, EL Imagine Learning Kits, etc.)