

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

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting on January 8, 2019 at 7:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers at 3 Primrose Street.

M. Ku, Chair	L. Rodrigue
R. Harriman-Stites, Vice Chair	J. Evans Davila
D. Cruson, Secretary	R. Bienkowski
D. Leidlein (7:40 p.m.)	4 Staff
J. Vouro's	14 Public
A. Clure (absent)	2 Press
D. Delia	
C. Dubois	
R. Morrill	

Mrs. Ku called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Item 1 – Pledge of Allegiance

Item 2 – Celebration of Excellence

Dr. Rodrigue stated that on December 7, four middle school students competed in the first ever Connecticut Cyber Robotics Coding Competition. This began in October when 24 student team members worked through a rigorous coding boot camp and competed in qualifier rounds. Based on their scores in these rounds, Jackson Baimel, Andrew Arena, Noah Massotta, and Isabella Pessoa were invited to compete at the State level. Andrew and Jackson's team earned third place and Noah and Isabella's team earned fourth place. Newtown Middle School staff members, a Board of Education member, and many parents participated in the process. Newtown Middle School Principal Tom Einhorn and computer science teacher Rachel Smith were at the meeting. She praised these students for their hard work, much of which was on their own, and for being invited to compete at the State level. Mr. Einhorn was thrilled to have these students at the middle school was proud of their accomplishments.

Item 3 – Consent agenda

Mr. Cruson moved that the Board of Education approve the consent agenda which includes the minutes of December 18, 2018, the Newtown High School field trips, the donation of Promethean equipment to the district, the resignation of Georgia Cottrell, and the correspondence report. Mrs. Harriman-Stites seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 4 – Public Participation - none

Item 5 – Reports

Chair Report: Mrs. Ku reported that there was a joint meeting with the Legislative Council, Board of Finance, Board of Selectman and Board of Education on December 19. She thanked those who attended various meetings. The Board of Finance should consider our request for using the non-lapsing account money on January 14 at 7:30 p.m. The CABA Legislative Breakfast will be in Ridgefield on January 15 at 8 a.m.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Rodrigue sent the Board a draft of action steps for the special education self-study and gave the Board a revised copy with some changes. These will be shared with staff at an upcoming teacher forum. Some resources have been put in place. We have hired a special education teacher for the middle school and seven teachers are being trained in Orton Gillingham. We are all accountable for this including leadership. She welcomed any thoughts from the Board.

Dr. Rodrigue shared an article on improving schools and that we have had discussions around these observations. We are looking at reinventing our behavioral program currently housed at Hawley School and we have added staff for this program next year. The budget books would be given to the Board tonight and Dr. Rodrigue thanked those involved in its preparation including the principals, staff, central office administration, Mr. Bienkowski, Tanja Vada's and Joanne Morris, who puts the book together.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites thanked Dr. Rodrigue for coming back with the draft action steps and asked the timeline to finalize them.

Dr. Rodrigue said they would be finalized in the next two to three weeks.

Mr. Vouros questioned if the budget will have the necessary monies to fulfill the action steps being proposed.

Dr. Rodrigue said a lot of these steps are less about budgetary requirements but more of what and how we are doing things.

#### Committee Reports:

Mrs. Harriman-Stites said the Policy Committee is working on the 5000 series bringing them to the Board five at a time. They are in the health section now and are also finalizing the policy on Board ethics.

Mrs. Ku reminded the Board that we need to think about our communication and budget letters.

#### Student Reports:

Clare Dubois reported that winter sports have had a promising start. Girls Track freshman Ally McCarthy broke the school record for the 800 meters and both track teams will compete at Yale this weekend. Mid-term exams start next Monday. There will be an internet safety workshop for all parents on January 17 at the high school.

Robert Morrill reported that the Unified Basketball and Soccer leadership team was asked to present at the CIAC middle school conference being held at NYA. The Unified Theater class performed their show last Saturday and Sunday. Families United in Newtown hosted their annual benefit concert to honor the people who have battled opioid addiction.

#### Item 6 – Old Business

##### Review of District Data:

Mrs. Evans Davila presented trend data from the new generation of State-mandated assessments in literacy and math comparing Newtown and State results.

Table 1 includes data on Smarter Balanced ELA/Literacy showing rough cohort data from 2015 to 2018 on level 3 or 4. Current 7<sup>th</sup> graders when in third grade starts at 75%, increasing slightly in grades 4 and 5 and dipping in grade 6. Current 8<sup>th</sup> grade when in 4<sup>th</sup> grade begins at 75% with a slight raise in grade 5, a dip in grade 6 and a slight raise in grade 7. The current 9<sup>th</sup> grade when in 5<sup>th</sup> grade starts at 77%, in grade 6 dips to 71%, in grade 7 dips also to 67% and in grade 8 recovers with a slight raise of 1% from the starting point.

In ELA we have been focusing on fidelity of implementation with readers writers workshop in grades K-8. We are ready to go to grades 1 and 2 with readers writers workshop and looking at rubrics and their connection to reading.

Table 2 includes data on Smarter Balanced Math. The current 7<sup>th</sup> graders in grade 3 starts at 67%, dips slightly in grades 4 and 5 and recovers to 70% in grade 6. The current 8<sup>th</sup> grade

when in grade 4 begins at 56%, grade 5 rises to 65%, grade 6 increased to 67% and grade 7 increased to 69%. The current grade 9 when in grade 5 starts at 50%, grade 6 increased to 71%, grade 7 dips 1% and grade 8 has a dip but still has a 17% gain over the starting point at 67%.

Table 3 is CT School Day SAT for grades 3 and 4 from 2016-2018. Compared to the State scores we do perform quite higher.

Literacy based learning is very important and we continue to support that in professional development.

Mrs. Leidlein said that based on the investment we made over the last several years she is surprised by these scores as they don't reflect the amount of training we have provided. Regarding the ELA and math chart she feels there are a number of points we would have expected to rise and show improvement. She was surprised by the number we dropped in the scale scores. Back to the lower levels being trained in Teachers College Readers Writers Workshop she understands the benefit but is concerned that it doesn't seem to be reflected in where they are. If administrators are using this data and making decisions, what do they think would be the next steps and are any suggestions being made.

Mrs. Evans Davila said that regarding the SAT she would have to consult with Bret Nichols. Regarding Readers Writers Workshop, it does address the common score standards. With Words their Way, it was trained at one tier of people who were expected to operationalize it out. We did some retooling this year and the teachers will be trained the beginning of the year. In terms of Readers Writers Workshop, the teachers feel it develops a love of reading in students. Language arts teachers are pleased with this program.

Dr. Rodrigue stated you have to supplement these types of programs to be sure there is rigor. Concept-based is a mind shift from where we were five to ten years ago.

Mrs. Leidlein asked if what they are learning with writers workshop are they making sure that every student receives the instruction they need. How is it being seen in the classroom and then shown to us?

Mrs. Evans Davila said NWEA is tied to standards. Our staff has converted units into preconceptualized units.

Mr. Delia asked how often schools collect grade-wide data.

Mrs. Evans Davila said often and there is a variety of assessment data.

Mr. Delia said small group instruction is critical for success and asked if teachers have gotten instruction in this area.

Mrs. Evans Davila said this is imbedded in Big Ideas where students are grouped. Math students are taught at different levels.

Mrs. Ku asked what we were going to do about these scores because it's a big concern.

Mrs. Evans Davila said we are continuing with Readers Writers Workshop. Interventions are a key piece and also narrowing down the data. People are setting goals and making the move to link SBAC results with NWEA to improve it.

Mr. Vouros feels it is important that we recognize special education students who have needs and whether they are being met sufficiently so they are assessed with fidelity.

Mrs. Evans Davila said if students have IEPs they are getting specialized instruction. There is a lot for students in Readers Writers Workshop.

Mrs. Leidlein said it looks like we are increasing the number of data collection programs and wants to be sure we are making the right decisions and if this will be discussed in the budget.

Mrs. Evans Davila said there will be something on moving to the phonics program, professional development, funds for Readers Writers Workshop, and curriculum hours in the budget.

Mrs. Ku recalled when we started using NWEA testing it sounded fantastic and thought it would be nice for the Board to hear how it works.

Mrs. Evans Davila will work with Dr. Rodrigue to have that on an agenda.

Performance Bond for Transportation Contract:

Mrs. Ku said that at the last meeting question was raised by a Board member about the performance bond and wanting more information on it.

Mr. Bienkowski said that performance bonds are guarantees that jobs are completed according to specifications of the contract. This is not required on transportation contracts. We would put it on only if we want to have access to the company's books. In the past we have waived the performance bond for All-Star because of the reputation of the company and that we feel they will perform for us. The wording is the same that we used in the previous contract extension.

Mr. Delia asked if we had a bond in previous years with this contract.

Mr. Bienkowski said we did not. The Board makes the ultimate decision if a bond is required.

Mr. Delia asked why it was in the agreement if we don't do it.

Mr. Bienkowski said it's in there because we don't know who will apply. In a case like that, it would be more important to have a bond to protect our interest. Often time, the second year of a contract we would remove the bond.

Mr. Delia verified that we didn't change anything in the contract. This was more of a formality to extend the contract for another year.

Mrs. Ku said that EdAdvance has a Board that reviews the budget and decides if everything is being managed well. We have some control over them compared to All-Star.

Mr. Vouros stated that this speaks to the trust factor.

Mr. Delia agreed but wanted to be sure it was the same contract we voted on.

#### Item 7 – New Business

First Read of Policies:

Mrs. Harriman-Stites spoke about the policies.

Policy 5111-1 Foreign Exchange Students takes out some extraneous language in keeping with federal law.

Policy 5113 Attendance/Excuses/Dismissal was the CAFE policy with some added wording.

Mr. Vouros asked if we have jurisdiction over a child if removed from the school district because they are being home schooled.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites said we do not. We ask the parent to sign a form and request to see the curriculum they will use. We have no control over this until they try to come back to the district.

Dr. Rodrigue said we do an assessment of what they have been working on at home and determine what we can accept.

Policy 5117 Student Attendance Areas is a revision to our current policy.

Policy 5118.1 Homeless Students is a mandated policy.

Policy 5121.2 Eligibility for Honor Rolls talks more specifically about what the honor roll looks like in the high school and middle school.

Item 8 – Public Participation - none

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved to adjourn the meeting. Mrs. Harriman-Stites seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 9 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

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Daniel J. Cruson, Jr.  
Secretary

NO BUS



# All-Star Transportation

31 Pecks Lane  
Newtown, CT 06470  
(203) 304 - 9778  
Fax: (203) 304 - 9776

Principal Approval: K. Z...

## CHARTER BUS REQUEST

Person requesting: Thomas School: NHS

Class: Deble Date of trip: 1/19 - 1/20

Pickup time: \_\_\_\_\_ AM / PM Destination: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of destination: Lexington High School

Leave time from destination: 6 AM / PM Snow/Rain date: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher in charge of trip: Thomas

No. students: 3 No. staff: 1 No. parents (if applicable): 1

Do any students have special needs for transportation? Yes / No

If **yes**, what is required? (wheel chair, harness, etc): \_\_\_\_\_

If multiple students have special needs requirements, please list: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Party responsible for payment: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact person: Thomas Phone No.: 203 991 1762

Parent driving

*If additional space required for listing, please include separate page*

- > A minimum of **two weeks** is needed to place a reservation. Please understand that availability of a date decreases the later you wait.
- > Average capacity is 50 students per bus. Capacity decreases for older students and adult-sized passengers.
- > Students with special needs requirements (wheel chair, harness) will require a Type II bus as full-size buses cannot accommodate.
- > If trip is being paid through a grant, school is still **responsible for payment for service**.
- > Please fax this request with all completed information. A confirmation will be faxed back to you with all costs.
- > We reserve the right to have buses back in town for school dismissal schedule.
- > Cancellation or postponement of a reserved trip requires a minimum of two hours' notice on a school day; one day prior if a weekend trip. Failure to notify may incur a cost for time bus ran.

NO BUS



31 Pecks Lane  
Newtown, CT 06470  
(203) 304 - 9778  
Fax: (203) 304 - 9776

Principal Approval: K. J. ✓

**CHARTER BUS REQUEST**

Person requesting: Thomas School: NHS

Class: Debate Date of trip: 1/25 - 1/27

Pickup time: 11 AM / PM Destination: Columbia University

Address of destination: \_\_\_\_\_

Leave time from destination: \_\_\_\_\_ AM / PM Snow/Rain date: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher in charge of trip: \_\_\_\_\_

No. students: 4 No. staff: 1 No. parents (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Do any students have special needs for transportation? Yes / No

If **yes**, what is required? (wheel chair, harness, etc): \_\_\_\_\_

If multiple students have special needs requirements, please list: \_\_\_\_\_

Party responsible for payment: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact person: Thomas Phone No.: 203 551 1762

*If additional space required for listing, please include separate page*

- A minimum of **two weeks** is needed to place a reservation. Please understand that availability of a date decreases the later you wait.
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- Students with special needs requirements (wheel chair, harness) will require a Type II bus as full-size buses cannot accommodate.
- If trip is being paid through a grant, school is still **responsible for payment for service**.
- Please fax this request with all completed information. A confirmation will be faxed back to you with all costs.
- We reserve the right to have buses back in town for school dismissal schedule.
- Cancellation or postponement of a reserved trip requires a minimum of two hours' notice on a school day; one day prior if a weekend trip. Failure to notify may incur a cost for time bus ran.

*Parents driving back and forth each day*

*Parent driving*





# All-Star Transportation

31 Pecks Lane  
Newtown, CT 06470  
(203) 304 - 9778  
Fax: (203) 304 - 9776

Principal Approval: K. [Signature]

## NO BUS NEEDED

### CHARTER BUS REQUEST

Person requesting: Eckhardt School: NHS

Class: Winter Percussion Date of trip: 4/9/19 to 4/13/19

Pickup time: 3:00  AM /  PM Destination: Hampton Inn

Address of destination: 25 Greenwood Lane, Springboro, OH 45066

Leave time from destination: 4/13 1:00AM  PM /  AM Snow/Rain date: ---

Teacher in charge of trip: Eckhardt

No. students: 28 No. staff: 6 No. parents (if applicable): TBD

Do any students have special needs for transportation? Yes /  No

If **yes**, what is required? (wheel chair, harness, etc): \_\_\_\_\_

If multiple students have special needs requirements, please list: \_\_\_\_\_

Party responsible for payment: NHS Winter Percussion / Band Parents

Contact person: Kurt Eckhardt Phone No.: 203-733-6017

*If additional space required for listing, please include separate page*

- A minimum of **two weeks** is needed to place a reservation. Please understand that availability of a date decreases the later you wait.
- Average capacity is 50 students per bus. Capacity decreases for older students and adult-sized passengers.
- Students with special needs requirements (wheel chair, harness) will require a Type II bus as full-size buses cannot accommodate.
- If trip is being paid through a grant, school is still **responsible for payment for service**.
- Please fax this request with all completed information. A confirmation will be faxed back to you with all costs.
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## Newtown High School Winter Percussion 2019

**Tuesday April 9<sup>th</sup> – Saturday April 13<sup>th</sup>: WGI World Championships – Dayton, Ohio**

### Tuesday April 9<sup>th</sup>

- Depart Newtown High School at 3:00AM
- Arrive Early Afternoon to *Hampton Inn and Suites (25 Greenwood Lane Springboro, OH 45066)*
- Relax/Eat
- TBD: Night Rehearsal Facility

### Wednesday April 10<sup>th</sup>

- TBD: Morning Rehearsal Facility
- Depart to University of Dayton – Scholastic A Prelims
- Watch Other Ensembles/Dinner
- TBD: Night Rehearsal Facility

### Thursday April 11<sup>th</sup>

- TBD: Morning Rehearsal Facility
- Depart to University of Dayton – Scholastic A Semi-Finals (if we make it past prelims)
- Watch Other Ensembles/Dinner
- TBD: Night Rehearsal Facility

### Friday April 12<sup>th</sup>

- Check out of Hotel
- TBD: Morning Rehearsal Facility
- Depart for University of Dayton – Scholastic A Finals (If we advance from Semi's)
- \*If we do not advance from Semi's we will watch WGI Open & World Class Groups throughout the whole day
- After WGI World Class Semi Finals get on bus (Ballpark 10PM)

### Saturday April 13<sup>th</sup>

- Arrive Late Morning/Early Afternoon to Newtown High School

### Bus Information

- Kelley Transit Company

### Parent Flight Information:

- \*I would arrive Tuesday night, but no later than Wednesday night\*
- Please note: Dayton is a small airport, flights fill up fast, so I have provided multiple options
- **DAY** (James M Cox Dayton International Airport) – 10 Miles
- **CVG** (Cincinnati Northern Kentucky International Airport) – 55 Miles
- **LCK** (Rickenbacker International Airport) – 67 Miles
- **CMH** (Port Columbus International Airport) – 70 Miles

# Promethean<sup>®</sup>

**Via EMAIL**

[amodeoc@newtown.k12.ct.us](mailto:amodeoc@newtown.k12.ct.us)

December 27, 2018

Ms. Carmella Amodeo, CETL  
Newtown Public School District  
Technology Department, Municipal Center  
3 Primrose Street  
Newtown, Connecticut 06470

**Re: Donation of Promethean Equipment**

Dear Ms. Amodeo:

It is our pleasure to inform you that Promethean, Inc. is donating an ActivPanel V6 ("Equipment") to Newtown Public School District ("District"). The Equipment is donated "as-is" with no warranty of any kind, either expressed or implied, and no support or professional development provided with the Equipment. The approximate value of the Equipment is \$5,600.00.

By signing below, you are acknowledging that this donation is not made to any individual employee of the District, but rather it is a gift that you are receiving on behalf of the District. You have concluded through your own due diligence or knowledge that acceptance of this gift does not violate any school, district, local, or state gift or ethics rules that would prohibit the District from accepting gifts from entities that have done business or who may do future business with the District. You further agree that you have submitted or will submit any necessary reports or disclosure statements on behalf of the District which may be required upon acceptance of this gift. Additionally, you agree that this gift is not being given with the expectation of any future purchase of Promethean products or services.

If you have any questions, please contact Geoffrey Allison at 860-726-8640 or at [Geoffrey.Allison@prometheanworld.com](mailto:Geoffrey.Allison@prometheanworld.com).

Sincerely,



Allyson G. Krause  
Executive Vice President and General Counsel

**Acknowledged and accepted on** December 28, 2018.



Carmella Amodeo, CETL, Newtown Public School District

Cc: Geoffrey Allison, Meagan Wallace, Amy Wallace



NEWTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Deramo, Suzanne <deramos@newtown.k12.ct.us>

**Fwd: Letter of Resignation 12/17/18**

1 message

**Grayson, Paula** <graysonp@newtown.k12.ct.us>

Wed, Dec 19, 2018 at 11:02 AM

To: Bonnie DeLorenzo <delorenzob@newtown.k12.ct.us>, Suzanne Deramo <deramos@newtown.k12.ct.us>

FYI from Georgia Cottrell

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Cottrell, Georgia** <cottrellg@newtown.k12.ct.us>

Date: Mon, Dec 17, 2018 at 2:53 PM

Subject: Letter of Resignation 12/17/18

To: Paula Grayson <graysonp@newtown.k12.ct.us>

Cc: Lorrie Rodrigue <Rodriguel@newtown.k12.ct.us>, Kimberly Longobucco <longobuccok@newtown.k12.ct.us>, Poppe, Marena <poppem@newtown.k12.ct.us>

Dear Dr. Grayson,

This letter serves as my notice of my resignation from Newtown High School.

I have been honored to serve the students of the Newtown Community.

I am committed to the smoothest possible transition possible.

Very Truly Yours,

Georgia Cottrell

[Hand Delivered to Marena Poppe]

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Paula Correia-Grayson, Psy.D.  
Special Education Supervisor  
Newtown Public Schools

Correspondence Report  
12/18/2018 – 01/07/2019

<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Subject</b>
12/18/18	Kim Bepko	Newtown Special Education Complaint
12/20/18	Liza Mecca	FOIA Request
12/27/18	Alissa Mendoza	FOIA Self Study Survey Results Request
12/31/18	Brenda McRae	FOIA Request
01/07/19	Kristen Bulkley	ALICE training

Improving Schools from Within

June 25, 2015 | Volume 10 | Issue 20

## **Improving Schools One Conversation at a Time**

*Sarah Birkeland, Richard W. Lemons, and Isobel Stevenson*

High-quality classroom teaching is a national pursuit: we want to improve student learning, close achievement gaps, and increase graduation rates, and we share societal, political, and economic reasons for desiring these outcomes. The field is not short of strategies for pursuing instructional improvement, including new curricula, new instructional strategies, data teams, and even learning walks. Yet even when smart people are working incredibly hard to implement research-based interventions, the results often fall short of expectations. In districts across the nation, leaders are dissatisfied with the results of years—even decades—of effort aimed at systematic school improvement.

What gets in the way? The reasons are many and varied, yet the authors' collective experience in the field suggests an important pattern: the successful execution of nearly every initiative, no matter its content, comes down to what Bossidy and Charan call "the basic unit of work"—that is, individuals' ability to have the right conversations at the right time with the right people. Any educational change effort requires learning, and most initiatives rely on person-to-person conversation to foster that learning—for example, feedback from a principal to her staff after learning walks or a conversation between an instructional coach and a teacher about how to implement a new curriculum.

Surprisingly often, educators either avoid these "learning conversations" or conduct them poorly, diminishing the potential of the chosen improvement strategy to catalyze professional learning and ultimately change the practice. It is tempting to frame the major barrier to these conversations as a lack of courage or will on the part of those who should be initiating them. We suggest, instead, that the problem represents a lack of skill. Conversations that lead to learning require a specific skill set as well as a shared understanding of purpose, which in turn requires training and support for all involved.

### **Four Essentials**

There are four essential attributes to successful learning conversations. First, conduct learning conversations with a spirit of shared inquiry and mutual support for professional

learning. This stands in contrast to the one-way transmission of information that is common in the conversations among educators, especially between supervisors and teachers. Second, ground learning conversations in data and evidence. Third, build learning conversations on the understanding that all individuals bring their own assumptions, experiences, and mental models to bear on those data. Reaching a shared understanding may not be straightforward or easy. And fourth, use learning conversations to lead those involved to construct new knowledge and insights.

Some educational change initiatives, including the widely popular movement to create PLCs and data teams, are built around the argument for such generative conversations. We are not the first to argue for their place in advancing the adult learning necessary for real instructional change. However, the need for learning conversations does not exist solely in PLCs and data teams. It is at the heart of every educational improvement initiative that aims to change the practice.

### **What School and District Leaders Can Do**

Schools and districts benefit from acknowledging the importance of the learning conversation in educational improvement and investing in it. What can you do?

- 1. Identify your learning conversations.** Examine your core improvement strategies and identify the specific moments in which you expect staff members' beliefs, attitudes, skills, or practices to change. Notice how many changes depend on conversation and exchange, such as
  - a. Developing a shared understanding of what high-quality instruction looks like.
  - b. Using data to guide conversations about where instructional practice falls short.
  - c. Discussing practices that effectively meet particular student needs.
  - d. Analyzing why data teams often fail to get to improved instructional practice.
  - e. Planning high-quality instruction.
  - f. Reflecting on what did and did not work with recent instruction.

Take time to plan where and when those conversations will take place and chart how to involve participants in each one.

**2. Invest in skill building.** Once you have identified the key learning conversations embedded within your core improvement strategies, make sure that all individuals involved in the conversations receive training and support. Learning to engage in an effective learning conversation is a lifelong pursuit that depends on obtaining a host of skills and dispositions. To encourage these conversations among school leaders and faculty, we suggest focusing professional development on the following skills:

- Framing purposeful conversations and establishing agreed-upon outcomes
- Selecting and presenting appropriate data for consideration
- Listening carefully to what someone else is saying and suppressing the need to talk

- Being sensitive to clues about what others value and are worried about
- Asking questions that help others activate their prior knowledge, uncover assumptions, and generate ideas
- Identifying connections across seemingly disparate perspectives

Frequently, leaders only train educators whom they see as the "feedback givers"—that is, those who have something important or powerful to tell others. We encourage training everyone who plans on engaging in learning conversations for two reasons: learning to receive feedback is as important as learning to give it, and the ethos of the learning conversation is about mutual professional learning rather than a dialogue between a master and apprentice.

**3. Monitor the existence and quality of the learning conversations.** Don't just assume these conversations will take place. They often do not. Gathering evidence as to whether and when these conversations happen, however, is not enough. These conversations need to foster meaningful learning, challenge existing organizational practices, and develop new skills and understandings. Ultimately, what matters is whether the conversations deliver the intended results. If professional learning community discussions are supposed to lead to collectively altered instructional practice, does that practice occur? If supervisory post-observation sessions are intended to prompt introspection, is there evidence that teachers are more reflective as a result? If learning walk debriefs are meant to create ownership of instructional patterns and commitment to work on high-priority areas, does anything improve? Gather evidence related to these questions and use the data as a basis for subsequent learning conversations.

Leveraging the power of a school-improvement strategy requires more than setting up the calendar and providing high-quality professional development. We must also make sure that the strategy is translated into instructional improvement through discussion of collective meaning making, new understandings of instructional patterns, increased expectations for the kinds of tasks students can tackle, and extensive knowledge of what creating such tasks entails. If our ultimate aim is to make instructional changes that will lead to improvements in student learning, we must engage in the dialogue that is likely to help change our practice.

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Sarah Birkeland is an education researcher and the founder of Helix Learning Partners. Richard W. Lemons is the deputy director at the Connecticut Center for School Change. Isobel Stevenson is a program coordinator at the Connecticut Center for School Change.

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**TREND DATA**

**ELA/LITERACY – SMARTER BALANCED 2015-2018**  
Rough Cohort Change -- % at Level 3 and Above

	2015		2016		2017		2018	
	Newtown	CT	Newtown	CT	Newtown	CT	Newtown	CT
Grade 3	75%	54%	79%	54%	76%	52%	80%	53%
Grade 4	75%	55%	76%	56%	70%	54%	68%	55%
Grade 5	77%	59%	76%	59%	77%	56%	72%	58%
Grade 6	78%	56%	71%	55%	69%	54%	72%	54%
Grade 7	81%	57%	74%	55%	67%	55%	76%	55%
Grade 8	72%	54%	76%	56%	65%	54%	76%	56%

**MATHEMATICS– SMARTER BALANCED 2015-2018**  
Rough Cohort Change -- % at Level 3 and Above

	2015		2016		2017		2018	
	Newtown	CT	Newtown	CT	Newtown	CT	Newtown	CT
Grade 3	67%	48%	76%	53%	75%	53%	82%	54%
Grade 4	56%	44%	66%	48%	68%	50%	66%	51%
Grade 5	50%	37%	65%	41%	65%	43%	53%	45%
Grade 6	70%	37%	71%	41%	67%	44%	70%	44%
Grade 7	71%	39%	74%	42%	70%	43%	69%	67%
Grade 8	56%	37%	71%	40%	67%	42%	67%	43%

**ELA AND MATHEMATICS – CT SCHOOL DAY SAT 2016-2018**  
% at Level 3 & Above and Average Score

		2016		2017		2018	
		Newtown	CT	Newtown	CT	Newtown	CT
ELA	% Levels 3 & 4	89%	65%	88%	65%	83%	62%
	Average Score	577	520	580	524	557	516
Math	% Levels 3 & 4	66%	39%	73%	41%	62%	40%
	Average Score	562	502	578	507	556	503

**Recommendations**

**Specialized Reading Programs and Certified Staff:** Specialized reading programs were an area that precipitated the special education review of the District. Since issues were first identified the District has taken significant action in ensuring sufficient trained and/or certified personnel in one or more specialized reading programs. In addition to current efforts, the District should review the IEP of all students identified as SLD/dyslexia to ensure that an appropriate reading program is in place for the student. Such a review should also take place for each newly identified student with SLD/dyslexia within this school year to ensure a system is in place to appropriately identify students and ensure an appropriate and timely implementation of a specialized reading program by appropriately trained and/or certified staff. The District appears to be engaged in ensuring training, professional development and certification opportunities for staff for the implementation of specialized reading programs such that programmatic concerns with regard to this issue are being addressed. The District should continue the focus on ensuring a sufficient number of trained and/or certified personnel. Monitoring and supervision of staff in delivering a specialized reading program with fidelity should occur by the District special education administration. Attention to staff concerns regarding time for collaboration and professional development should be addressed.

**Action Steps:**

- Under the supervision of the Assistant Superintendent, a review of the IEPs of students identified with SLD/dyslexia to determine the appropriate and consistent implementation of reading support programs in place and delivered by trained/qualified NPS.
- Continue to offer comprehensive professional development in phonemic and phonological awareness to support instruction of identified dyslexic students (e.g., Wilson, Orton, Lindamood Bell).
- Facilitate collaborative conversations between SPED teachers and Language Arts Consultants to determine appropriate programming for students and professional development needs for both general and special education teachers.
- Ongoing monitoring of programs in place and review of data to determine success of students (discussed at PPTs) and any additional services as needed.
- Report to C & I (as necessary) regarding programming and services, as well as future needs, including restructuring of support services.

**Confidentiality:** There is a perception by parents that breaches of student confidentiality are somewhat frequent and happening throughout the district. The district should review their current practices and the system in place for the distribution of information to parents about their child. A review of the District policies and procedures, analysis of the system currently in place that utilizes the school psychologist, and the administrative monitoring by administration might identify targeted areas for improvement. Targeted training/professional development for all school staff, including paraprofessionals, on confidentiality and the protection of student information should be considered and incorporated into the trainings/professional development opportunities offered to staff, particularly those working with students receiving special education or by experts in the area of reading.

- Under the direction of the Director of Pupil Services, review expectations and mandates regarding confidential information and records.
- Mandated annual training by all certified and non-certified staff and supervisors regarding handling of confidential student information (beginning of the year faculty meetings and central office), including identifying and handling breaches of confidential information.
- Signature confirming training
- Implement a “checks and balances” system for FERPA requests so these are checked and reviewed by two or more staff members.

**Professional Development/Training:** The District should review the needs of general and special education staff, to include but not be limited to academic content and the behavior/social emotional needs of students. The District should: (a) ensure that training and professional development needs are identified annually for general and special education staff; (b) continue to redefine and align paraprofessional hours with the school day and to incorporate and/or compensate, to the extent appropriate, paraprofessionals for participation in training; and (c) work with the newly formed SEPTA to identify needs and resources to provide training to families. Providing information, training and support to parents on federal and state special education requirements including identification, evaluation (including IEEs), eligibility, development and implementation of an IEP, and dispute resolution would be helpful in fostering communication and collaboration between parents and District staff and administration.

- Under the supervision of the Superintendent’s Office, work with the District Safe School Climate Committee to continue to provide ongoing training and professional workshops in social/emotional/behavioral needs for all staff.

- In alignment with the CASEL model, ensure consistent social/emotional practices are implemented in all classrooms K-12.
- Continue to offer paraprofessionals training in working with students with special needs.
- Evaluate and expand informational opportunities for parents through evening events and forums. Work with existing PTA and SEPTA organizations to solicit needs and feedback.
- Utilize the new district webpage to highlight family and parent resources (e.g., articles of interests, webinars, workshops, etc.) in special education topics.

**Staffing:** As previously stated, the crucial issue in a review of special education staffing is whether students' IEPs are being implemented with fidelity. Newtown clearly has a dedicated staff that works to ensure that all IEPs are implemented with fidelity although there is a perception that this may not *always* be the case, or, that appropriate implementation requires staff to give up essential planning and collaboration time and work longer hours than they should. The District should undertake a review of staffing patterns in the District to determine: (a) whether the District employs the appropriate number of staff including instructional, related service and non-certified personnel; (b) whether staff is being appropriately utilized and deployed throughout the district to ensure that IEPs are being implemented with fidelity; and (c) whether job responsibilities are appropriate to staff skills and time (including, for example, a review of caseloads and how school psychologists are utilized in the PPT process).

- Under the supervision of the Director of Human Resources, and in collaboration with staff and administration, conduct a qualitative and quantitative comprehensive review of the following:
  - Special education staffing needs across the district
  - School psychologists' responsibilities and their roles
  - Use of paraprofessionals and other support personnel (efficiency and appropriateness)
  - Consistent practice of hiring substitutes for 1-1 paras
  - Schedules and opportunities to maximize service delivery

**The Planning and Placement Team (PPT) and Individualized Education Program (IEP):** The district should consider providing parent information, resources and educational opportunities to families regarding PPT meetings and the development of IEPs. In addition, the development of district-wide policies, procedures and practices around planning, leading and participating in PPT meetings, to be implemented consistently throughout the district, will be helpful to both staff and parents. These could include how and when school staff and parents will be informed when a special education administrator will be at a PPT and the role and responsibility of that person in the PPT. Policies and practices to be considered

could also include the use of meeting agendas that provide time for parents to have their concerns addressed and considered. It is also important to address mechanisms for communication to ensure that all staff has the ability to participate and provide information and their professional opinion to the team through various means.

- Under the collective supervision of district and school leaders, enhance consistent practices in the planning and scheduling of PPTs
- Develop a practice for using a PPT agenda
- Better orient parents in the PPT process (timelines, information that will be shared, opportunities to voice concerns, etc.) and their role and responsibilities as a member
- Provide information on the SPED website for parents regarding the PPT process and resources
- Clarify all participants invited and their role at the PPT
- Collect and present information and data (inclusive and comprehensive process), including SRBI progress monitoring

*A sample policy to consider.*

## **Students**

### **Foreign Exchange Students**

Students from foreign countries, whose residence in Newtown is sponsored by a local service club, the American Field Service or by Cultural Homestay International by other district approved exchange programs, may be enrolled in the appropriate school for not more than one year without the payment of tuition upon application to and approval of the school principal.

### **Immigration Compliance**

Students from foreign countries will have to comply with the appropriate United States Immigration Department regulations.

~~The Board encourages international studies. Students are encouraged to participate in international exchange programs and other activities that advance cultural awareness and promote mutual understanding and respect for the citizens of other countries. To that end, it allows foreign exchange students on one year J-I visas, who are residing with families in the community to enroll on a non tuition basis in the local schools. Students who apply must not have the equivalent of a high school diploma from a foreign school system. Students who are accepted and placed in grade 12 will only receive an honorary diploma. (alternative language: A high school diploma may be awarded at regular commencement exercises to all foreign exchange students who successfully meet the academic requirements during the year in which they attend.) Further, they must meet those criteria established by the administration in the areas of language competency, residency, and deportment. Only foreign exchange students sponsored by organizations screened by the administration will be accepted. No more than two (2) students at the high school may be accepted for any school year. (or: The Board reserves the right to limit the number of exchange students in a given year.)~~

~~With Board approval, a District school may establish a sister school relationship with a school in another country.~~

~~Students entering the United States on F-I visas, may enter the local school system, only upon payment of the full, unsubsidized public education costs before entering the United States. Further, students on F-I visas may remain in the United States for no more than twelve (12) months. The local district, is prohibited by law, from waiving the tuition fee of students on F-I visas.~~

~~Exchange students must comply with immunization requirements set forth in state law. Once admitted, exchange students become subject to all District policies and regulations governing students.~~

~~Exchange students will be encouraged to participate in all student activities and will be eligible to participate in interscholastic athletics, provided academic requirements and Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) criteria are met.~~

# Students

## Foreign Exchange Students (continued)

Legal Reference:       Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act of 1996  
                              Connecticut General Statutes  
                              10-27 International studies, exchange programs. Advisory committee.

*Plyler vs. Doe*, 457 U.S. 202 (1982)

Policy adopted:

rev. 6/04

rev. 3/05

rev. 11/07

NEWTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Newtown, Connecticut

*CABE's revised sample policy.*

## Students

### Attendance/Excuses/Dismissal

#### Attendance

Connecticut state law requires parents to cause their children, ages five through eighteen inclusive, to attend school regularly during the hours and terms the public school is in session. Parents or persons having control of a child five years of age have the option of not sending the child to school until ages six or seven. Mandatory attendance terminates upon graduation or withdrawal with written parent/guardian consent at age seventeen.

A student is considered to be “in attendance” if present at his/her assigned school, or an activity sponsored by the school (e.g., field trip), for at least half of the regular school day. A student who is serving an out-of-school suspension or expulsion should always be considered absent. A student not meeting the definition of “in attendance” shall be considered absent.

*Note: P.A. 15-225 requires the SBE to define “disciplinary absence” by January 1, 2016 to assist local boards of education calculate district and school chronic absenteeism rates.*

Classroom learning experiences are the basis for public school education. Time lost from class is lost instructional opportunity. The Board of Education requires that accurate records be kept of the attendance of each child, and students should not be absent from school without parental knowledge and consent.

#### Definitions (related to chronic absenteeism)

**Chronically absent child:** An enrolled student whose total number of absences at any time during a school year is equal to or greater than ten percent of the total number of days that such student has been enrolled at such school during such school year.

**Absence:** An excused absence, unexcused absence or disciplinary absence, as those terms are defined by the State Board of Education ~~or an in-school suspension that is greater than or equal to one half of a school day.~~ [pursuant to CGS 10-198b.](#)

**District chronic absenteeism rate:** The total number of chronically absent children in the previous school year divided by the total number of children under the jurisdiction of the Board of Education for such school year.

**School chronic absenteeism rate:** The total number of chronically absent children for a school in the previous school year divided by the total number of children enrolled in such school for such school year.

## Students

### Attendance/Excuses/Dismissal

#### Excuses (continued)

**Note:** ~~The use of the state approved definitions of “excused” and “unexcused” absences are for state purposes for the reporting of truancy. Districts are not precluded from using separate definitions of such absences for their internal uses such as involving decisions on areas such as promotion and grading.~~

A student’s absence from school shall be considered “excused” if written documentation of the reason for such absence has been submitted within ten (10) school days of the student’s return to school and meets the following criteria:

- A. For absences one through nine, a student’s absences from school are considered “excused” when the student’s parent/guardian approves such absence and submits appropriate documentation to school officials.

~~Such documentation includes a signed note from the student’s parent/guardian, a signed note from a school official that spoke in person with the parent/guardian regarding the absence, or a note confirming the absence by the school nurse or by a licensed medical professional, as appropriate. Documentation should explain the nature of and the reason for the absence as well as the length of the absence. Separate documentation must be submitted for each incidence of absenteeism.~~

- B. For the tenth absence and all absences thereafter, a student’s absences from school are considered excused for the following reasons:

1. Student illness (must be verified by a licensed medical professional to be deemed excused, regardless of the length of the absence);
2. Student’s observance of a religious holiday;
3. Death in the student’s family or other emergency beyond the control of the student’s family;
4. Mandated court appearances (documentation required);
5. The lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends (no parental documentation required);
6. Extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by District administration and to be in accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidance.

- C. A student’s absence from school shall be considered unexcused unless:

1. The absence meets the definition of an excused absence and meets the documentation requirements; or
2. The absence meets the definition of a disciplinary absence, which is the result of school or District disciplinary action and are excluded from these State Board of Education approved definitions.

## Students

### Attendance/Excuses/Dismissal

#### Excuses (continued)

When the school in which a child is enrolled receives no notification from a parent or other person having control of the child is aware of the child's absence, a reasonable effort shall be made by school personnel or volunteers under the direction of school personnel to notify by telephone and by mail such parent or other person having control of the child.

~~The required mailed notice shall include a warning that two unexcused absences from school in one month or five unexcused absences in a school year may result in a complaint filed with the Superior Court alleging the belief that the acts or omissions of the child are such that the child's family is a family with service needs. (effective 8/15/17)~~

Responsibility for completion of missed classwork lies with the student, not the teacher. Unless a student has an extended illness, all make-up work will be complete within five days after the student returns to school.

#### Excused Absences for Children of Service Members

An enrolled student, age five to eighteen, inclusive, whose parent or legal guardian is an active duty member of the armed forces, as defined in section 27-103, and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting, shall be granted ten days of excused absences in any school year and, at the discretion of the Board of Education, additional excused absences to visit such child's parent or legal guardian with respect to such leave or deployment of the parent or legal guardian. In the case of such excused absences such child and parent or legal guardian shall be responsible ~~to~~ for obtaining assignments from the student's teacher prior to any period of excused absence, and for ensuring that such assignments are completed by such child prior to his or her return to school from such period of excused absence.

#### Chronic Absenteeism

The Board of Education, in compliance with statute, requires the establishment of attendance review teams when chronic absenteeism rates in the District or at individual schools in the District meet the following circumstances:

1. A team for the District must be established when the District chronic absenteeism rate is 10 percent or higher.
2. A team for the school must be established when the school chronic absenteeism rate is 15 percent or higher.
3. A team for either the District or each school must be established when (a) more than one school in the District has a school chronic absenteeism rate of 15 percent or higher or (b) a District has a District chronic absenteeism rate of 10 percent or higher and one or more schools in the District have a school chronic absenteeism rate of 15 percent or higher.

## Students

### Attendance/Excuses/Dismissal

#### Chronic Absenteeism (continued)

The membership of attendance review teams may consist of school administrators, guidance counselors, school social workers, teachers, chronically absent children, parents or guardians of chronically absent children, and representatives from community-based programs who address issues related to student attendance by providing programs and services to truants.

Each attendance review team shall be responsible for reviewing the cases of truants and chronically absent children, discussing school interventions and community referrals for such truants and chronically absent children and making any additional recommendations for such truants and chronically absent children and their parents or guardians. Each established attendance review team shall meet at least monthly.

The District shall utilize the chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan developed by the State Department of Education when it becomes available. *(SDE to develop by 1/1/16.)*

The District shall annually include in information for the strategic school profile report for each school and the District that is submitted to the Commissioner of Education, data pertaining to truancy and chronically absent children.

The Principal or his/her designee of any elementary or middle school located in a town/city designated as an alliance district may refer to the children's truancy clinic established by the Probate Court serving the town/city, a parent/guardian with a child defined as a truant or who is at risk of becoming a truant. *(An attendance officer or a police officer shall deliver the citation and summons and a copy of the referral to the parent/guardian.)*

#### Dismissal

No school, grade, or class may be dismissed before the regularly scheduled dismissal time without the approval of the Superintendent or his/her designee.

No teacher may permit any individual student to leave school prior to the regular hour of dismissal without the permission of the Principal.

No student may be permitted to leave school at any time other than at regular dismissal without the approval of the student's parent/guardian. If a court official with legal permission to take custody of a child, or if a police officer arrests a student, the parent/guardian should be notified of these situations by the administration.

(cf. 5142 - Student Safety)

(cf. 5113.2 - Truancy)

(cf. 6113 - Released Time)

## Students

### Attendance/Excuses/Dismissal (continued)

Legal Reference

Connecticut General Statutes

10-220(c) Duties of boards of education (as amended by PA 15-225)

10-184 Duties of parents (as amended by PA 98-243 and PA 00-157)

10-185 Penalty

10-198a Policies and procedures concerning truants (as amended by PA11-136, An Act Concerning Minor Revisions to the Education Statutes and PA 14-198, An Act Concerning Excused Absences from School for Children of Service Members, and PA 16-147, An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee)

10-198b State Board of Education to define “excused absence,” “unexcused absence,” and “disciplinary absence”

10-198c Attendance review teams.

10-198d Chronic absenteeism (as amended by PA 17-14

45a-8c Truancy clinic. Administration. Policies and procedures. Report. (as amended by PA 15-225)

~~PA 15-225 An Act Concerning Chronic Absenteeism~~

10-199 through 10-202 Attendance, truancy - in general

~~Action taken by State Board of Education on January 2, 2008, to define “attendance.”~~

~~Action taken by State Board of Education on June 27, 2012, to define “excused” and “unexcused” absences.~~

PA 17-14 An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Department of Education

Policy approved:

NEWTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Newtown, Connecticut

## **Students**

### **High School Attendance**

#### **Attendance Philosophy**

The faculty of Newtown High School believes that learning experiences that take place in the classroom are meaningful and essential to the entire education process.

Absence from class represents an irretrievable loss in terms of opportunity for interaction and exchange of ideas among students and between students and teacher. Therefore, classroom attendance is an integral part of the student's course of study.

#### **Definitions**

**Absence:** In general, an absence occurs when a student is not present for the entire school day.

**Documented Absence:** A documented absence occurs when a student is absent from one or more classes with parent/guardian consent. This consent must be communicated with the school for the absence to be documented.

The Appeals Committee will consider the following categories of Documented Absences in its review of credit restoration:

- Serious illness, disabilities or handicapping condition
- Extraordinary family emergencies
- Educational reasons, including college visits
- Religious observations

**Undocumented Absences:** An undocumented absence, i.e., truancy, occurs, when a student is absent for the entire school day or part of a day without parental consent, or with parental consent when the school deems that consent not to be in the best interest of the student.

**Appeals Committee:** The Appeals Committee will review a student's losing class credit. Loss of class credit will occur when a student has not attended a sufficient number of classes (see D. Loss of Class Credit).

The Appeals Committee is convened by the assistant principal and made up of five members that include faculty, staff and administration.

**Class Cut:** A class cut occurs when a student is present in school but absent from class for more than ten minutes without permission. Permission must be obtained from a member of the faculty, staff, or administration.

**Exemptions:** School-approved field trips, including mentoring and job shadowing, as well as sports activities, i.e., State and league championships, are considered days in class.

**Tardiness:** Tardiness occurs when a student is late to class without permission. Permission must be obtained from a member of the faculty, staff, or administration. (For lateness beyond ten minutes, see Class Cut above.)

### **Reporting Absences**

On any day when the student is not in school, the parent or guardian is responsible for calling the attendance office at 203-426-7656 (24 hours/7days) with an explanation.

If the parent/guardian does not call the school, a written explanation is required within two school days of when the student returns to school.

If a parent or guardian does not contact the school, the student has an Undocumented Absence.

### **Penalties**

1. The penalties for undocumented Absences, i.e., truancy, are as follows:
  - The first Undocumented Absence, i.e., truancy, will result in a one-day Saturday detention.
  - Further Undocumented Absences, i.e., truancies, will result in suspension.
2. The penalties for Class Cutting are as follows:
  - First occurrence: Teacher may contact parents and assign a detention or equivalent.
  - Second and third occurrence: The administration will contact parents and assign detention or equivalent.
  - Further cutting may result in suspension.
3. Students will receive a grade of zero and have no right to make up any work they miss as a result of Class Cutting or an Undocumented Absence.
4. Students will be allowed to make up missed work without grade penalty for Documented Absences. It is the responsibility of the student to obtain assignments for Documented Absences. All work, including quizzes, and tests, should be completed within two (2) school days of return, unless the time is extended by the teacher.

### **Tardiness**

Promptness to class is expected. On the third Tardiness to any class, and any succeeding Tardiness to that class, a school detention or equivalent will be assigned. There will be a grade penalty for work missed due to being tardy.

**Loss of Class Credit**

1. A student will lose credit for a course after missing ten (10) classes of any semester course or after missing the twenty (20) classes in a year-long course. This is regardless of whether the student has missed the classes due to Class Cutting, Undocumented Absences, or Documented Absences.
2. Based on school records, parents will be notified after a student misses the fifth class for a semester course or misses the tenth class for a year-long course.
3. Appeals for credit restoration must be submitted in writing by a student or parent/guardian to the principal's office within ten (10) days of notification of loss of credit. Decisions regarding appeals will be made by the Appeals Committee (see Definitions). Four or five members must rule in favor of the appeal to restore credit.
4. The Appeals Committee will only consider the following categories of Documented Absences in its review of credit restoration:
  - Serious illness, disabilities or handicapping condition
  - Extraordinary family emergencies
  - Education reasons, including college visits
  - Religious observations

**Long-Term Illness**

Long-term illness requires a homebound tutor to enable the student to maintain class work and course credit. Arrangements should be made by contacting guidance counselors, attendance staff, or a member of the administration.

**Permission to Leave School**

Before administrative permission is given for a student to leave a school or school grounds or for a recognized senior privilege, a written note from the parent or guardian should be presented to the building principal or designee. In emergency situations a telephone call from the parent or guardian may suffice. Students 18 years of age or older may sign themselves out.

Regulation approved:

NEWTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Newtown, Connecticut

*Existing policy, presently numbered 7-100 adopted 3/12/96, appropriate as written except for addition of legal reference.*

## Students

### School Attendance Areas

The Board of Education will design and maintain attendance areas that are responsive to approved educational programs and efficient utilization of school facilities.

The boundaries for each attendance area will reflect these priorities:

1. Rated school building capacity, current enrollment, and future enrollment projections
2. Ages of students
3. Proximity of student's residence to the school
4. Safe access for walking or bus routes
5. Needs of district wide programs

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-226a Pupils of racial minorities.

10-226b Existence of racial imbalance.

10-226c Plan to correct imbalance.

10-226d Approval of plan by state board.

Policy adopted:

NEWTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Newtown, Connecticut

*A “broader” succinct version of this mandated policy, leaving all relevant detail to the administrative regulation.*

## **Students**

### **Homeless Students**

Children who meet the Federal definition of “homeless” will be provided a free and appropriate public education in the same manner as all other students of the District and will not be stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their status as homeless. No homeless student will be denied enrollment based on lack of proof of residency or due to barriers such as fines, fees and absences. No Board policy, administrative regulations, or practice will be interpreted or applied in such a way as to inhibit the enrollment, attendance, or school success of homeless children.

Homeless students will be provided services comparable to other students in the District in compliance with federal and state law. Access to District programs include public preschool programs administered by the District.

The Superintendent will appoint a Liaison for Homeless Children who will perform the duties as assigned by the Superintendent and detailed in the administrative regulation accompanying this policy. Additionally, the Liaison will coordinate and collaborate with the State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth as well as with community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children and youths.

(cf. 5143 – Student Health Assessments and Immunizations)  
(cf. 5146 – Child Abuse and Neglect)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-253(e) School privileges for children in certain placements, non-resident children and children in temporary shelters.

17a-101 Protection of children from abuse. Reports required of certain professional persons. When child may be removed from surrounding without court order.

17a-103 Reports by others.

17a-106 Cooperation in relation to prevention, identification and treatment of child abuse and neglect.

46b-120 Definitions.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, (P.L. 107-110-Sec 1032) 42 U.S.C. §11431-11435, as amended by the ESSA, P.L. 114-95.

## **Students**

### **Homeless Students**

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes (continued)

Federal Register: McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program, Vol. 81, No. 52, 3/17/2016.

Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (section 438 of the General Education Provisions Act, as amended, added by section 513 of P.L. 93-568, codified at 20 U.S.C. 1232g.)

Dept. of Educ. 34 C.F.R. Part 99 (May 9, 1980 45 FR 30802) regs. Implementing FERPA enacted as part of 438 of General Educ. Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g) parent and student privacy and other rights with respect to educational records, as amended 11/21/96, and Final Rule 34 CFR Part 99, December 9, 2008, December 2, 2011.

Policy adopted:

cps 11/04  
rev 10/13  
rev 11/16

NEWTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Newtown, Connecticut

*A suggested regulation to consider.*

## Students

### Homeless Students

In order to appropriately implement the policy pertaining to homeless children, youth and students placed in shelters, in compliance with all applicable federal and state statutes, the following regulations are established.

#### Definitions:

Homeless ~~students~~ children and youths are federally defined as “individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.” This definition includes the following types of ~~students~~ children and youths who are:

- a. sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason;
- b. living in motels, hotels, ~~trailer parks~~ or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- c. living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- d. abandoned in hospitals;
- e. ~~awaiting foster care placement; (delete as of 12/10/16)~~
- f. have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
- g. living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, bus or train stations, or similar settings;
- h. migratory children living in the above described circumstances.

Connecticut’s residency definitions contained in C.G.S. 10-253(d) defines non-residency as children residing with relatives or non-relatives, when it is the intention of such relatives or non-relatives and of the children or their parents or guardians that such residence is to be (1) permanent, (2) provided without pay and (3) not for the sole purpose of obtaining school accommodations. In addition, C.G.S. 10-253(e) indicates that children in temporary shelters are entitled to free school privileges from either the school district in which the shelter is located or from the school district in which the child would otherwise reside, if not for the need for temporary shelter. The district has an obligation to identify homeless and migratory children.

**“Enroll” and “enrollment”** are federally defined to include attending classes and participating fully in school activities.

**“Unaccompanied youth”** includes a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

## Students

### Homeless Students (continued)

#### District Obligations Regarding Placement of Homeless Students:

- a. District policy must remove barriers to the identification, enrollment and retention of homeless children and youth, including such barriers as outstanding fees, fines or absences.
- b. The District must continue the student's education in the "school of origin" which is the school the child attended when permanently housed or the school of last enrollment. The District must presume that keeping a homeless child or youth in the school of origin is in such individual's best interest unless doing so is contrary to the request of the individuals' parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth. **OR**
- c. The District must enroll the homeless student in any public school that non-homeless students who live in the area where the child is actually living are eligible to attend. The school selected based on a homeless child or youth's best interest shall immediately enroll such child even if he/she missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness.
- d. The District is required, "to the extent feasible" to keep the homeless child or youth in the school of origin unless it is against the wishes of the parent/guardian. If the District determines that it is not in the child's or youth's best interest to attend the school of origin, the District will provide a written explanation of its determining reasons, in a manner and form that is understandable.
- e. The homeless child's right to attend the school of origin extends for the duration of homelessness. When the child or youth completes the final grade served by the school of origin; it also includes the designated receiving school at the next level for all feeder schools.
- f. If a child becomes permanently housed during the academic year, he/she is entitled to stay in the school of origin until the end of the school year.
- g. A child who becomes homeless in between academic years is entitled to attend his/her school of origin for the following academic year.
- h. The District must provide written explanation, including the right to appeal, whenever the school District sends the homeless child to a school other than the school of origin or a school requested by the parent/guardian.
- i. With an "unaccompanied youth," the District's homeless liaison must assist in the placement/enrollment decisions, considering the youth's wishes, and provide notice of appeal under the Act's enrollment disputes provision.
- j. The District's liaison must participate in professional development and technical assistance provided by the State Office of the Homeless Coordinator.
- k. The definition of "school of origin" includes preschools operated by a local school district.
- l. Information about a homeless student's living situation shall be treated as a student education record, subject to FERPA protections and shall not be deemed to be directory information.

## Students

### Homeless Students (continued)

#### Appeal Procedures: (Enrollment Disputes)

- a. C.G.S. 10-186 currently defines the process for resolving issues involving homeless ~~students~~ children and youths. The state is required to establish an appeal process.
- b. ~~Federal law requires school districts to allow homeless students to “stay put.” “The child shall be immediately admitted to~~ In a dispute over eligibility the child or youth shall immediately be enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute and all available appeals.
- c. The District’s homeless liaison shall carry out the dispute resolution process expeditiously and, in the case of an unaccompanied youth, ensure that the youth is immediately enrolled in school pending the final resolution of the dispute and all available appeals.
- d. The parent/guardian shall be made aware of the right to appeal the decision to the Board of Education. The Board shall issue a written decision on the dispute within **10 business** days of the receipt of the appeal and hand deliver the written decision and a notice of right-to-appeal to the State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youths to the parents/guardians (or student if applicable). The decision of the State Coordinator shall be final.

#### Educational Services to be Provided to Homeless Students:

1. Educational services are to be comparable to those received by other students in the school.
2. Such students may be entitled to such services, through Head Start programs, as Title I, state/local remedial programs, special education, limited English proficiency, vocational education, gifted/talented, school nutrition programs and preschool programs administered by the District.
3. Homelessness alone is not to be considered a sufficient reason to separate students from the mainstream school environment.
4. Homeless students may be segregated for short periods of time only for health and safety emergencies or to provide temporary, special or supplemental services.

#### Transportation Obligations of the School District for Homeless Students:

1. Services must be comparable to those provided other students in the selected school.
2. Homeless students must be provided transportation to the school of origin, if requested by the parent/guardian, if the school is within the school district.

## Students

### Homeless Students

#### Transportation Obligations of the School District for Homeless Students: (continued)

3. If the school of origin is in a different school district from where the child is currently living, both school districts are to agree on a method for sharing the responsibility and costs, or share the costs and responsibility equally.
4. When a student obtains permanent housing, transportation to the school of origin must be provided until the end of the academic year, if it is in the student's best interest to remain in that school.

#### Enrollment Requests from Homeless Parents:

1. The selected school is required to immediately enroll the child, even in the absence of records normally required for enrollment. Parents/guardians may be required to submit contact information.
2. The last school attended must be contacted to obtain records.
3. If the child lacks immunizations or immunization/medical records, the enrolling school MUST refer the parent/guardian to the liaison in order to get help obtaining immunizations and records.

#### Privacy

1. Schools must treat information about a homeless child's or youth's living situation as a student education record subject to all protections of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
1. Such information shall not be deemed to be directory information.

#### District Liaison for Homeless Students:

The District's liaison for homeless students is [the Director of Pupil Services](#).

The duties of the local liaison are:

- a. Ensure homeless children and youth are identified by school personnel and through outreach and coordination with other agencies and entities.
- b. Ensure homeless children are enrolled in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in the school district's schools.

## Students

### Homeless Students

#### District Liaison for Homeless Students: (continued)

- c. Ensure that homeless families and homeless children receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start Programs and ~~Even-Start~~, preschool programs administered by the District. ~~and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services, and other appropriate services.~~
- d. Inform parents/guardians ~~are informed~~ of homeless children and youth of educational and related opportunities available to their children, and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.
- e. Ensure that public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youth is ~~are~~ disseminated where such children receive services ~~(For example, family shelters, soup kitchens, and schools)~~ in locations frequented by parents/guardians of such children and unaccompanied youth, including schools, shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens in a manner and form understandable to parents/guardians of homeless children and youths and unaccompanied youth.
- f. Ensure that enrollment disputes are mediated.
- g. Inform parent/guardian ~~is fully informed~~ of all transportation services, including to the school of origin, and is assisted in accessing those services.
- h. Ensure that homeless children and youths receive referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services and other appropriate services.
- i. ~~Must~~ Assist unaccompanied youth in placement/enrollment decisions, including considering the youth's wishes in those decisions, and providing notice to the youth of the right to appeal such decisions.
- j. ~~Must~~ Assist children who do not have immunizations, or immunization or medical records, to obtain necessary immunizations, or immunization or medical records.
- k. ~~Must~~ Collaborate and coordinate with state coordinators and community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children.
- l. Indicate that a child or youth or his/her immediate family is eligible to participate in a local district program and authorized to affirm such individual/family for the HUD homeless assistance program. (This qualification can be done provided the District liaison has received the mandatory training.)
- m. Provide the State Coordinator the reliable, valid, and comprehensive data needed to fulfill the federally required data collection.

## **Students**

### **Homeless Students**

#### **District Liaison for Homeless Students:** (continued)

- n. Participate in professional development and other technical assistance activities, as determined appropriate by the State Coordinator.
- o. Ensure that school personnel providing services to homeless children and youth receive professional development and other support and that unaccompanied youths:
  - i. are enrolled in school;
  - ii. have opportunities to meet the same challenging State academic standards the State has established for other children and youth; and
  - iii. are informed of their status as independent youths under Section 480 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1087VV) and that such youth may obtain assistance from the District to receive verification of such status for purposes of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.
- p. Coordinate special education services for homeless children and youth identified as eligible within the local District.

## Students

### Eligibility for Honor Rolls

To recognize outstanding scholastic achievement, motivate students to do well in their studies, and teach students the importance of meeting all their responsibilities, the Board of Education hereby establishes the following categories of honors and the criteria for eligibility for said honors.

~~To be eligible for honors a student must receive a grade C or 70 in all subjects including physical education.~~

### High School (9-12)

#### Honor Roll

To be named to the High Honor Roll a student must:

1. Be enrolled in five or more courses. A minimum of four courses must be in areas of study other than independent study and released work experience.
2. Have an overall average of 90 or higher for the marking period.
3. Receive a grade of 85 or higher in each course used in determining the overall average and have no incomplete grades.

To be named to the Honor Roll a student must:

1. Be enrolled in five or more courses. A minimum of four courses must be in areas of study other than independent study and released work experience.
2. Have an overall average of 85 or higher for the marking period.
3. Receive a grade of 80 or higher in each course used in determining the overall average and have no incomplete grades.

### Middle School (7-8)

#### Honor Roll

Achievement grades in all subjects will be considered to determine eligibility for the honor roll. A student must receive an overall achievement grade average of 85% or higher.

A grade of C+ or lower in any subject or a Pass (P) designation will exclude the student from the honor roll. Note: Pass/Fail (P/F) option for grading may be used only if stated in Individual Educational Plan (IEP) or through prior arrangement by a team consisting of a school counselor, parent, teacher, and administrator.

When the computer calculates the average, it will use the following numerical letter grades:  
A+ (97-100) C+ (77-79) EFFORT GRADES A (93-96) C (73-76) A Outstanding A- (90-92)  
C- (70-72) B Very Good B+ (87-89) D+ (68-69) C Satisfactory B (83-86) D (66-67) D Needs to  
Improve B- (80-82) D- (65) F Unsatisfactory NM = No Mark F = Below 65 P/F = Pass/Fail  
I= Incomplete

A “major subject” is a course that meets five times a week.

Publication of the “Honor Roll” will conform to the District’s policy pertaining to directory information.

- ~~(cf. 0521—Nondiscrimination)~~
- ~~(cf. 5121—Examination/Grading/Rating)~~
- ~~(cf. 5121.1—Class Rank)~~
- ~~(cf. 5124—Reporting to Parents)~~
- (cf. 5125 - Student Records/Confidentiality)
- (cf. 5145.15 - Directory Information)
- ~~(cf. 5126—Awards for Achievement)~~
- ~~(cf. 6121—Nondiscrimination)~~
- ~~(cf. 6145.51—National Honor Society)~~
- ~~(cf. 6146.1—Grading/Assessment Systems)~~
- ~~(cf. 6146.11—Grade Weighting/Class Ranking)~~

Policy approved:

NEWTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Newtown, Connecticut