

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

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting held on July 6, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers at 3 Primrose Street.

M. Ku, Chair
D. Delia, Vice Chair
D. Cruson, Secretary
D. Leidlein
J. Vouros
R. Harriman-Stites
D. Zukowski

L. Rodrigue
A. Uberti
1 Staff
30 Public

Mrs. Ku called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved that the Board of Education go into executive session regarding the evaluation of the Superintendent. Mrs. Harriman-Stites seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 1 – Executive Session

The Board came out of executive session at 6:47 p.m.

Item 2 – Pledge of Allegiance

Mrs. Ku requested moving the discussion of the Hawley HVAC to after reports.

Item 3 – Consent Agenda

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education approve the consent agenda which includes the minutes of June 15, 2021 and the correspondence report. Mr. Cruson seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 4 – Public Participation

Item 5 – Reports

Chair Report: Mrs. Ku noted that CABA will be starting affinity groups for boards of education in an effort to support boards in their work addressing racism and equity and they are also looking for boards to submit resolutions for the next legislative session. We will meet again July 20 to follow up on the Hawley discussion.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Rodrigue spoke about our staffing update and that we reposted our coordinator of equity and inclusion position. The finalists will go through several rounds before reaching her, a PEAC representative and two students. She provided Newtown data regarding the Kids in Crisis presentation from the previous meeting. The new turf and track are being installed in the high school stadium. She thanked Bob Gerbert and his staff for their efforts in getting the schools ready for fall. There is no further guidance from the state yet but there will be meeting in July.

Mr. Vouros asked what was holding up finding the coordinator.

Dr. Rodrigue said the committee felt the candidates were not as qualified and not the right fit. Mrs. Uberti noted that we interviewed four candidates but decided to repost. We made some changes such as the whole committee interviewing all of the candidates who applied.

Committee Reports:

Mrs. Harriman-Stites said the Policy Committee met and reevaluated the policies on the agenda.

Mr. Delia said the Joint Work Group for the non-lapsing fund met twice last week and are nearing an agreement.

Mrs. Ku thanked everyone for being part of this work group and was impressed how they represented the board.

Item 7 – New Business

Discussion of Hawley HVAC Project:

Mrs. Ku invited Bob Mitchell and Mr. Rosenthal to join the conversation.

Dr. Rodrigue provided two viable options around the project and potential uses of space.

Option one is less costly with a nine-month construction period. The challenges are moving students to Sandy Hook and Reed because Middle Gate and Head O'Meadow are too far and would need additional buses. Both principals feel this would work.

Option two has multiple phases with summer and school year work. Some students could remain at Hawley but will not be able to access certain areas of the school. We would need an outside walkway. This option would be more costly and there are potential safety concerns with students and staff on campus during the work.

Mr. Mitchell said we want to get a good number for the cost difference between options one and two. With these documents we know it's actually buildable.

Mr. Rosenthal said the Superintendent did a good job covering the phasing options. This is an education decision which was covered well. The option that makes the most sense is less expensive. The process is to get it on the ballot in November and to have everything to the Secretary of State's office by Labor Day.

Mr. Delia was concerned about price increases and if the project could come in lower.

Mr. Mitchell said we were carrying a significant contingency of a little over 10% and are certain we are carrying enough.

Mr. Delia asked if there was a guarantee of air quality.

Mr. Mitchell noted that it would be tested every day.

Mrs. Leidlein was concerned about the Hawley parking lot and if students are in the building where the equipment would be put on site.

Mr. Mitchell said we don't want to lose the baseball field so we will need a staging area and we could possibly lose the gym for a period of time.

Mr. Rosenthal said anticipated busing and moving costs haven't been determined. American Rescue Plan funds might be used and Bob Tait was looking into that possibility.

Mr. Vouros asked if there would be representatives from the Board on this project along with Bob Gerbert.

Mr. Ku said there will be meetings where Board members are assigned to the committees.

Mr. Vouros stated that he didn't want option two because no students should be in the school during the project.

Ms. Zukowski was comfortable with option one.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites said we would have additional information by July 20 to help in our decision.

Mrs. Ku stated the public needs to weigh in on this.

Mr. Cruson said option one will add approximately 10 minutes for transportation.

Mrs. Leidlein said the past year there has been anxiety for our children and asked if we will need any additional resources to prepare students for being in a different school. She also asked if there has been any thought about potential resources to help the students feel a sense of community being in the other school.

Chris Moretti said he was confident the parents, students, and staff at Hawley will rise and make it work. We need to plan for the incoming kindergarten class that year and our exiting fourth graders. We will do whatever we can to be part of the larger community. About 175 students will go to Sandy Hook and 130 to Reed. There will be some families with siblings in different schools. Counselors, psychologists, and social workers will work together.

Dr. Rodrigue will recommend having students visit the schools.

Mr. Delia asked in option one there is one PE teacher for two buildings and if there would be issues with gym usage.

Mr. Moretti will work with the principals regarding his PE teacher to determine when and where that person would be needed. His biggest hurdle is having five to nine-year-old students on a construction site and traveling through the building.

Mr. Cruson said in option one students could return to Hawley before the end of the school year and was worried about the change to a new building at that time.

Mr. Moretti feels there is a beauty in the early return and they would celebrate being back. It would be a wonderful way to end the year.

Mr. Delia was not in support of option two. He wants to make sure we are adequately staffed to meet the needs of the students and is in support of additional staff if needed.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites wants to know what this will look like and that the students will be part of the culture in the school.

Mr. Gerbert said a concern with option two is air sampling and relying on a tight seal in an old building. There could be other distractions including noise and other pitfalls to work in an occupied building. Option one will be a much cleaner job.

Mrs. Ku thanked Mr. Rosenthal and Mr. Mitchell for being here.

Mr. Mitchell noted that Bob Gerbert is a superior facilities manager.

Item 6 – Old Business

Second Read of Policies:

Mrs. Harriman-Stites said incorrect policies were sent to the Board. Only policies 3160 and 3171 will be discussed tonight.

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education approve policies 3160 Budget Procedures and Line Item Transfers and 3171 Non-Lapsing Education Fund. Mr. Cruson seconded.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites said we just changed Board of Finance to town's fiscal authority. In policy 3171 there are a few other changes but we wanted this policy in place due to time constraints and having it in place for the non-lapsing fund.

Motion passes unanimously.

Item 7 – New Business (continued)

Letter to State Officials:

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education approve the letter to the State officials. Mr. Cruson seconded.

Mr. Delia spoke about the letter he and Ms. Zukowski developed. Dr. Rodrigue also reviewed the letter.

Ms. Zukowski questioned the sentence in paragraph three regarding board members being in the field of education.

Mr. Delia felt it shows member of the Board have experienced this with their students.

Dr. Rodrigue noted that she made that suggestions because it was important for them to hear there are educators on our Board.

Mr. Cruson felt it makes it sound like all of us are in the field of education and suggested a change.

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved to amend the motion to have the second sentence in the third paragraph read, "As a board which includes many professionals in the field of education, we understand the challenges we have faced and will face." Mrs. Harriman-Stites seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Mrs. Ku proposed a change in the third sentence of the second paragraph

MOTION: Mrs. Ku moved to amend the motion for the third sentence of the second paragraph to remove the words "and staff based on" be replaced with "dependent on State DPH guidance."

Mr. Cruson seconded. Vote: 2 ayes, 5 opposed (Mr. Delia, Mr. Cruson, Mrs. Leidlein, Mrs. Harriman-Stites, Ms. Zukowski) Motion fails.

MOTION: Mr. Delia move to amend the motion for this sentence to say "making masks optional for students and staff dependent on State DPH guidance. Mr. Cruson seconded.

Motion passes unanimously.

Vote on main motion: 6 ayes, 1 nay (Mrs. Ku) Motion passes.

Communications Sub-Committee Newsletter:

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education approve the August 2021 Communications Sub-Committee Newsletter. Mr. Cruson seconded.

Mr. Cruson said we focused on volunteers and will put this out before school starts the second or third week of August.

Mrs. Ku appreciated the newsletter and Ms. Zukowski thanked the volunteers who spoke to them.

Motion passes unanimously.

Nurses Contract:

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education approve the ratified Newtown Public School Nurses Contract for the period July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2024.

Mrs. Ku said this was a very productive negotiations and she appreciated the expertise and support the nurses bring to our schools.

Motion passes unanimously.

Healthy Food Certification:

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the board of education or governing authority certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition standards during the period of July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups. Mr. Cruson seconded.

Mrs. Vadas said this is the first year we have to do this because the high school is included. Motion passes unanimously.

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the board of education or governing authority will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event, and 3) the food items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An "event" is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The "regular school day" is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. "Location" means where the event is being held. Mr. Cruson seconded.

Mrs. Vadas said all food purchases have to run through the program. Food items will change at the high school for them to comply.

Motion passes unanimously.

Minutes of July 21, 2021:

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education approve the minutes of June 21, 2021. Mr. Vouros seconded. Vote: 6 ayes, 1 abstained (Mr. Cruson) Motion passes.

Item 8 – Public Participation

Connie Cooper, 13 Todds Road, Sandy Hook, as a member of the Democratic Town Committee she thanked the Board for their work to promote antiracism in our schools. She is a retired teacher in Waterbury which is a diverse community. Being married to a black man she learned what it was like to live as a black person. We should be open to learning from black people. Stereotypes fill the void that a lack of exposure to diversity leaves. You have opened a window to teach and model the truth. Consequences of straying off course lets our students and society down. She appreciates your hard work advocating for antiracism.

Justin Birtwell, 13 Roosevelt Drive, Newtown, has two school age children, thanked the Board for their long-term service to this community. Discussing race is crucial but he was concerned about how it is addressed. Talking about race we are using terms that come from critical race

theory. Talking about race is an opportunity to build a better society. Good discussions about race is the answer. Critical race theory encourages intolerance and divides people. If the Board of Education is going to promote and introduce the concepts of critical race theory he asked that equal weight is given to refusing the tenets of critical race theory.

Carrie Grummons, 5 Black Walnut Drive, has four children. They moved here from California and almost didn't because of the lack of diversity here. We knew we would work hard to teach our children how to be allies to their black and brown peers. It's important to learn about black history.

Kathleen Banas called in from Orchard Hill Road and spoke about a book to be made part of the curriculum called "Lies My Teacher Told Me" by James Loewen and read quotes from parents. She disagrees with the author and asked to have it discussed at the next board meeting.

Eric Paradis, 85 Riverside Road, thanked the Board for working on equity, inclusion, not being silent, and taking some leadership.

Kimberly Rackley, 8 Thunder Ridge, thanked the Board for taking those first steps. She is a third generation educator and a home educator. She wants Newtown students to get a good historical education. You have an ethical duty to teach children about our past. Students learn best in a diverse community. The Board has an ethical duty to teach truth over propaganda.

Item 9 – Executive Session

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education go into executive session regarding the evaluation of the Superintendent and the extension of the contract for the Director of Business and invited Dr. Rodrigue. Mr. Cruson seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Executive session ended at 6:47 p.m.

Item 10 – Public Session

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education extend the employment contract of Dr. Lorrie Rodrigue as Superintendent of Schools, through and including June 30, 2024, and MOVE FURTHER that the Board Chairperson be authorized to finalize and execute the employment contract with Dr. Rodrigue for the period July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2024. Mr. Cruson seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education approve the one-year contract extension for the Director of Business. Mr. Cruson seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

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

Item 11 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Daniel J. Cruson, Jr.
Secretary

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

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting held on June 15, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers in the Municipal Office Building.

M. Ku, Chair	L. Rodrigue
D. Delia, Vice Chair (7:25)	A. Uberti
D. Cruson, Secretary	T. Vadas
D. Leidlein (7:00)	15 Staff
J. Vouros	30 Public
R. Harriman-Stites	1 Press
D. Zukowski	

Mrs. Ku called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. and stated it was being recorded and live streamed.

Item 1 – Executive Session

MOTION: Move that the Board of Education go into executive session to interview the candidate for the Reed Intermediate Assistant Principal and invited Dr. Rodrigue and Jenna Connors. Executive session ended at 7:00 p.m.

Item 2 – Pledge of Allegiance

Item 3 – Vote on Reed Intermediate School Assistant Principal Position

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved moved that the Board of Education appoint Jenna Connors Assistant Principal at Reed Intermediate School to begin on or about July 1, 2021 with salary per the Newtown Association of School Administrators contract. Mr. Vouros seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Dr. Rodrigue was thrilled to have Ms. Connors move to Reed. She did an outstanding job at Hawley and will be greatly missed.

Ms. Connors thanked the Board, Dr. Rodrigue, Mrs. Uberti and Dr. Correia for the trust they've placed in her in this role as well as that of the interview committee. She also thanked the Hawley staff and leadership team who are truly a family she will miss. Mrs. Ku was very pleased and congratulated Ms. Connors.

Item 4 – Consent Agenda

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved that the Board of Education approve the consent agenda which includes the donation to Newtown High School and the correspondence report. Mrs. Harriman-Stites seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 5 – Public Participation

Melissa Gomez, 6 Old Gate Lane, called in. Many students have not been resilient due to Covid isolation and mental health issues are on the rise including children overdosing. We need to adjust policies with the low number of cases and parents should have the option for their children to wear masks.

Alexa Pignone-Tilden, 50 Birch Hill Road, said there has been a steady decline in her child attending school because of having breathing issues wearing the mask and anxiety going to school. Wearing the mask should be a choice by parents.

Bobbi Jo Pellicone, 13 Surrey Trail, agreed with everyone. The pandemic is over but there are psychological issues for students. We need to move on and give the children hope. We followed the science but the children are the least at risk. We don't want the children to think they will be masked next year.

Jenna Steeves, 306 Berkshire Road, stated that children have been attacked physically, emotionally and psychologically from issues outside their control that exist in our school system. Statistics tell us they should not be required to wear masks or at least have that choice. When her child is not vaccinated will a mask need to be worn or will there be pressure to be vaccinated?

Liza Luellen, 10 Wills Road, said her two oldest children are getting Wilson and the youngest is non-verbal. They are struggling with the masks which is not what is best for her family.

Julie Flood, Warren, Connecticut, said her daughter attends school here. It's important for parents to have a choice. There are a lot of problems with children getting the vaccine and masks are taking away their oxygen. We need to have rights and choices.

Kerrie Newall, Redding, Connecticut, said her child attended a private school in Newtown and summer camp. She had a medical exemption for the mask which had to be sent to the State so she homeschooled her son. She wants parents to have the choice.

Janet Kuzma, 12 The Boulevard, believes the Board can take a stand to make masks optional and tell the state we are in a good spot. You have the power to take a stand.

Anthony Mascaro, 260 Cowley Road, Woodbury, has children in Newtown schools. When they test for Covid 19 in Connecticut the positivity is only based on the people tested and not the entire population. It's below 1% of the people getting tested. The PCR test is not designed to detect Covid. Mental damage has been done to our children due to the masks.

Tom Damon, 18 Horseshoe Ridge, agrees with everyone. He wanted factual evidence to keep the mask policy as there are a lot of facts to back up not wearing them. Please do what you can do support the community members.

Whitney Flood, 194 Woodville Road, Warren, CT, has a daughter in Newtown. She agrees with everyone. It's time for parents to have the mask option.

Alison Hobbs, lives in another town but children go to Newtown schools. Both children had mask exemptions from their pediatrician and a specialized doctor and she was told by their school to go to the nursing supervisor to speak to the doctors. It was determined they had to wear the masks but could have breaks. She asked for the Board's support to help them stand up for their children.

Jenn Larkin 10 Marlin Road, thanked the Board and Dr. Rodrigue's leadership. She asked that the Board hear what parents are saying which is just asking for a choice.

Item 6 – Reports

Chair Report: Mrs. Ku stated we would have a special meeting next week to approve the reentry plan for fall and will be updated when the State offers guidance. Charter Revision met last week and a question was the ordinance for Board elections and political balance on the Board. She

attended the National School Boards conference last week to advocate for funding for school buildings. The Hawley HVAC project is important this year.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Rodrigue thanked everyone for being here. She was at Sandy Hook School this afternoon and watched the students crying when they were leaving. There were challenges this year but great positives too. She provided photos of the various events including the seniors walk through of the elementary schools in their caps and gowns, prom and graduation. Dr. Rodrigue highlighted the summer building projects to get ready for the next school year.

Mr. Delia spoke about the high school graduation which was phenomenal and thanked Dr. Longobucco, Mrs. de Brantes, Dr. Rodrigue and her staff and was moved by seeing the students together and the joy of the families. The middle school moving up ceremony was extremely well done and he was impressed the way the students conducted themselves. He would love to see graduation in the stadium continue.

Committee Reports:

Mr. Cruson said the Communications Subcommittee worked on their volunteer newsletter and started to discuss the next one for November which focuses on opportunities regarding scholarships, the career center, and college application.

Mr. Vouros spoke about the Curriculum and Instruction Committee meeting which met June 8 and discussed modern US history. There are 20 curriculum projects being written this summer. Two will be new courses at the middle school which are project adventure and kitchen science. Summer school classes are being offered. Mrs. Uberti will also report on high school project lead the way.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites said the Policy Committee met last week and continues discussing the freedom of speech policy and made some changes to policies on the agenda. They also discussed the school volunteer policy.

Mr. Delia said the CFF Committee met yesterday. The Hawley project was discussed including the out-placing of students into temporary classrooms which would take place a year from now. We will get clarification from the Public Building & Site Commission. There are two plans with one to empty the building for nine months or to do it in three phases.

Mrs. Ku stated we need to get clarification if it could be done over three summers. Mr. Vouros asked to please be mindful about the educational impact to these children and let us know what the least disruption would be for them. Mrs. Ku wanted the decision for construction integrated with the children.

Mr. Delia noted that he and Mrs. Ku attended the ribbon cutting for Workspace in Bethel which is a home school center and will be a wonderful resource for students.

Mr. Cruson attended the high school end-of-year awards ceremony which was impressive with 75 different awards.

Financial Report and Transfers:

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education approve the financial report and transfers for the month of May 31, 2021. Mr. Cruson seconded.

Mr. Delia noted that the CFF committee reviewed this and is in full support of this motion.

Mrs. Vadas presented the report. There was a discussion about the special education contingency amount.

Mr. Cruson asked why we don't transfer money from that account to cover a shortfall.

Mr. Delia said we should make adjustments to other line items and keep this for other expenses.

Dr. Rodrigue said the original purpose was to make sure we were in the black with special education in the current budget. The only time we would put it into non-lapsing is if there is a surplus. The process is still in flux.

Mr. Delia asked the Policy Committee to look at the transfers policy.

MOTION passes unanimously.

Item 7 – Presentations

Newtown Middle School Kids in Crisis Program:

Dorrie Carolyn said the Parent Connection Board of Directors unanimously voted to fund Kids in Crisis Teen Talk for Newtown Middle School. It has been extremely successful in the high school for three years. Denise Qualey from Kids in Crisis was also at the meeting. This program will provide service during the day as well as afternoon and nights.

Mr. Vouros asked who would be on the middle school team.

Mrs. Qualey said they would hire a full time clinician for the middle school.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites said the Board and the public need to understand we can have this is because of the Parent Connection and she encouraged everyone to attend their fund raising events.

Mr. Vouros asked if it was possible to get the grant to move it into grades five and six.

Dr. Rodrigue wants to see how it works in the middle school first.

Item 8 – Old Business

COVID 19 Update:

Dr. Rodrigue said the dashboard that tracks cases will not be kept up over the summer but the local health department will. We are finishing our template for the State which has to be posted by June 23. We added a Board meeting for Monday in the Reed Library at 6:30 p.m. to discuss the plan which will be an evolving plan as we wait for further guidance following the executive orders that are in place until July 20. Today we had two positive cases at the middle school in the same cluster.

Whitsons Food Service Amendment:

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education approve a one-year renewal "Amendment 5" to Whitsons initial agreement for food services dates July 1, 2016 and the State of Connecticut as authorized by section 2202(a) of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (the Act) (P.L. 116-127) and extended by Food and Nutrition Services with an effective date of July 1, 2021. The terms and conditions in the original agreement as amended will apply. Mr. Cruson seconded. Motion passes unanimously. Mr. Cruson seconded.

Mr. Delia said the CFF Committee was in full support of this renewal.

Motion passes unanimously.

Second Read and Possible Action on Policies:

Mrs. Harriman-Stites asked to table the discussion of these policies as we received questions Sunday and need to speak to counsel.

Mrs. Ku felt we need to change our approval practice to be able to get through these sooner.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites noted that the Board needs to get their questions to them prior to the Policy Committee meeting especially when we need legal counsel to review.

Mr. Delia said if something happens to a member we should just rely on the other members to take care of the policy.

Item 9 – New Business

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education approve the 2021-2022 budget adjustments. Mr. Cruson seconded.

Mrs. Vadas spoke about the adjustments by the Board of Finance and the Legislative Council.

Motion passes unanimously.

Out-of-district Tuition:

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved to approve the out-of-district tuition rate of \$20,200. Mr. Cruson seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

First Read of Policies:

Mrs. Harriman-Stites reported that in Policy 3160 Budget Procedures and Line Item Transfers and Policy 3171 Non-lapsing Education Fund they decided to adjust the language to change “Board of Finance” to “Town’s fiscal authority.” Policy 5145.6 Student Grievance Procedure is to be rescinded.

Minutes of June 1, 2021:

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education approve the minutes of June 1, 2021. Mr. Cruson seconded. Vote: 6 ayes, 1 abstained (Mrs. Leidlein) Motion passes.

Item 10 – Public Participation

John Steeves, 306 Berkshire Road, said it’s terrible to see children in masks. We can’t follow the agenda handed down. This has made us reevaluate whether we will keep them in school. Politics shouldn’t be in school. Critical race theory is coming. Sandy Hook’s morning announcement is good morning “citizens” instead of “boys and girls”. It’s a disgrace the masks went this far.

Kate McGrady, 26 Philo Curtis, read a quote from Martin Luther’s “I Have a Dream” speech. To ignore color is to ignore reality. Black history is American history.

Erica Sullivan, 127 Castle Hill Road, has two children in school and referred to the Tulsa massacre. She wants a culturally responsive education in the classroom. American history should be inclusive of all voices.

Benjamin Rackley, 8 Thunder Ridge, has been homeschooling his children for six years. They moved from Alabama where their children were threatened to Pennsylvania where his children had issues with classes, students and staff. Finally a book with racial slurs came home. That town was very similar to Newtown and when they came here they talked to parents about their children’s experiences and learned that there have been racial slurs in the high school and nothing was done for days. This cannot be okay or who we are. He is confident you will figure this out and act quickly. The absence of feelings for other people has allowed this country to become what it is right now.

Wendy Leon Gambetta, 19 Saw Mill Ridge Road, called in and said it was imperative Newtown children learn about racism and that a solid grasp of history is important to understand the roots of these problems. We need to learn about all Americans, not just white Americans.

Nerlande Foote, 14 Bears Hill Road, supports diversity and inclusion. Classrooms should welcome diverse perspectives. We need our classrooms to be inclusive, teach American history, and talk about the painful parts. Teach students not to tolerate racism.

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education go into executive session for a discussion and possible action on non-union wages for 2021-2022 and the evaluation of the superintendent and invited Dr. Rodrigue and Mrs. Vadas. Mr. Cruson seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 11 – Executive Session

Executive session began at 9:45 p.m. and ended at 10:35 p.m.

Item 12 – Public Session

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education approve the salary adjustments for all non-union employees for 2021-2022 as per the Superintendent's recommendation. Mr. Cruson seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

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

Item 13 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Daniel J. Cruson, Jr.
Secretary

Correspondence Report
06/15/2021 – 07/05/2021

Date	Name	Subject
6/15/21	Jean Griffin	Middle Gate School virtual art show
6/15/21	Meredith Campbell Britton	COVID-19 mitigation strategies
6/15/21	Michelle Ku	Communication for CRC Members
6/15/21	Donna Norling	Curriculum and Instruction Minutes
6/15/21	Jennifer Atherton	Next Year's Mask Policy
6/15/21	Melissa Martucci Gomez	Mask Mandate for Fall 2021
6/16/21	Jenna Connors	Thank You
6/17/21	Kate McGuirk	Re: Request for Information
6/18/21	Kathy June	BOE Mailing – June 21, 2021
6/21/21	Kathy June	BOE Meeting
6/21/21	Caitlin Lucian	Thank you! Re: Back to School Plan
6/21/21	Aaron Carlson	21/22
6/22/21	Lorrie Rodrigue	Re: Fall 2021
6/22/21	Jill Michaels	Plan
6/22/21	Lorrie Rodrigue	Document shared with you: "returntoschool2021 Updated"
6/23/21	Sara McCallum	Thank you
6/23/21	Jose Sabillon	BOE Meeting
6/24/21	Melissa Martucci Gomez	THANK YOU
6/25/21	Lorrie Rodrigue	Re: Thank you
6/30/21	Lorrie Rodrigue	Re: thank you and kudos
7/1/21	Michelle Ku	How about August 3?
7/2/21	Kathy June	BOE Mailing – July 6, 2021
7/3/21	Dan Delia	Re-entry Letter
7/5/21	Lorrie Rodrigue	Document shared with you: "Hawley School HVAC Planning"
7/5/21	Michelle Ku	Information for 7/6 Meeting

TO: Lorrie Rodrigue, Superintendent
FROM: Suzanne D'Eramo, Director of Human Resources
RE: Superintendent's Report – Certified Staffing Update for JUNE 2021
DATE: July 2, 2021

JUNE 2021

CERTIFIED RESIGNATION/RETIREMENTS: (effective June 30 unless otherwise noted)
Meredith Adams – RIS LMS

CERTIFIED NEW HIRES (for 2021-22):

SHS

Lauren Ioli - school psychologist

MGS

Caitlin Jones – classroom teacher
Olivia Sabbagh – classroom teacher
Timothy Nott – classroom teacher
April Mignone - .5 FTE reading
Meghan Plunkett – SPED
Samantha Velazquez – SPED

HOM

Rebecca Gregoire – SPED

RIS

Lauren Moore – classroom teacher
Myranda Panagrosso – classroom teacher
Meghan Quinn – classroom teacher
Marlo Verrastro-Ruggiero – reading/LA consultant
Sara Wasley – LMS

NMS

Meg Johnson – math specialist
Tania Santiago – Spanish
Chelsea Morin – Spanish
Amanda Garrison – SPED

NHS

Aaron Ovsiew – music/band director

POSITION CHANGES – EXISTING CERTIFIED STAFF (for 2021-22)

HAW

Melissa Massett - kindergarten

RIS

Jenna Connors – assistant principal

NMS

Kerry McKeegan – math interventionist
Ron Chivinski – project adventure
Beth Iacofano – kitchen science

NHS

Theresa Talluto – English
Ryan Eberts – academic officer

CERTIFIED OPEN POSITIONS (for 2021-22):

HAW/SHS/HOM – .5 FTE math interventionists

RIS – grades 5, math interventionist, social worker

NMS – SPED

NHS – SLP

ADDITIONAL DISTRICT HIRING NOTES:

Here is a recap of all non-certified staff we have hired for the month of June:

Custodian = 1



TeenTalk Report for Newtown HS

TeenTalk is a school-based mental health program that reaches students through individual counseling, group sessions, and presentations. This report describes the student population served by TeenTalk and summarizes services provided by the TeenTalk counselor during the 2020 - 2021 school

year.

Profile of students who received individual counseling (67 students)

	TeenTalk Newtown High School	
	N=	67
Individual Counseling totals	%	(n)
Gender		
Male	26.87%	18
Female	71.64%	48
Non Binary	1.49%	1
Grade		
9	26.87%	18
10	34.30%	23
11	23.88%	16
12	14.93%	10
Race		
White	91%	61
Black	1.49%	1
Asian	2.98%	2
American Indian/Alaska native	1.49%	1
Bi-racial	1.49%	1
Unknown	1.49%	1
Ethnicity		
Hispanic	10.44%	7
Not Hispanic	89.55%	60
Referral Source		
Admin	1.49%	1
Guidance	40.29%	27
Social Worker/Psychologist	38.80%	26
Friend	2.98%	2
Self	7.89%	6

Parent	5.97%	4
Teacher	1.49%	1

Services provided by TeenTalk counselor

# Students who received individual counseling	67
# Individual counseling sessions	291
# Family sessions	5
# Informal contacts	193
# Clinical collaborations	249
# Parent/guardian support	111
# Crisis safety assessments	25
# School team meetings	4
# Referrals	21
# Topic groups	4
# Presentations	6

Top 3 Presenting Problems

	%	n
Anxiety	28.4%	19
Depression	14.9%	10
Crisis Safety / Assessment SI	22.4%	15

SBIRT results

SBIRT is an evidence-based practice used to identify, reduce, and prevent problematic use, abuse, and dependence on alcohol and illicit drugs

- 30 students screened

Over the past year	n	%
TOBACCO		
NO substance use	28	93.3%
Once or twice substance use	2	6.7%
Monthly substance use	0	0%
Weekly plus substance use	0	0%
ALCOHOL		
NO substance use	28	93.3%

Once or twice substance use	2	6.7%
Monthly substance use	0	0%
Weekly plus substance use	0	0%
MARIJUANA	N	%
NO substance use	28	93.3%
Once or twice substance use	1	3.3%
Monthly substance use	0	0%
Weekly plus substance use	1	3.3%

Ohio Scales Report

The Ohio Scales are completed by students who receive ongoing TeenTalk individual counseling at the start of services and again at the time of follow-up. The **Problem Severity Scale (P)** includes 20 items covering common problems reported by youth who receive behavioral health services. The **Functioning Scale (F)** includes 20 items about the student's level of functioning in a variety of areas of daily activity (e.g., interpersonal relationships, recreation, self-direction and motivation). Scores for each scale are classified into one of three clinical categories: Normal, Borderline Impairment, and Critical Impairment.

Number of INITIAL ASSESSMENTS 15
Number of FOLLOW-UP ASSESSMENTS 13

Change in Average Score



Youth reported a **26% improvement** on the Problem Severity Scale between the initial and follow-up assessments.



Youth reported an **8% improvement** on the Functioning Scale between the initial and follow-up assessments.

Counselor-rated progress

Looking back at the student's presenting problem, did the student achieve progress on this issue? (Scale of 1-5) (61 students were screened)

65.6% students were rated as having a score of 3 (some improvement) or more

	n	%
5. A great deal of improvement	0	0%
4. Moderate improvement	14	23.0%
3. Some improvement	26	42.6%
2. Little improvement	19	31.1%
1. No improvement	2	3.3%

Skills gained by students in counseling

TeenTalk Counselor identified skill development gains achieved by clients of the TeenTalk Program

- **58 students** - Identified healthy coping strategies
- **43 students** - Increased emotional regulation
- **30 students** - Improved interpersonal communication skills
- **19 students** - Increased self-awareness
- **10 students** - Improved time management/organization skills
- **2 students** - Reduced maladaptive behaviors
- **2 students** - Improved social decision making

End of year case status summary - students in counseling

TeenTalk Counselor provided a status update for each student who participated in individual counseling throughout the school year

- **28 students (41.8%)** – Case closed – casework complete, goals achieved
- **17 students (25.4%)** – Ongoing – counselor expects to meet with student again next school year
- **13 students (19.4%)** – Case closed – student left school or ended contact
- **5 students (7.5%)** – Case closed – student graduated
- **2 students (2.9%)** – Other – student referred to other services/provider
- **2 students (2.9%)** – Other – provided case support

Middle School Demographics

Averages of Central (583 students), Eastern (845 students) and Western Middle School (638 students)

	Average
Caseload	50 students
	Actual
Top 3 Presenting Problems	Anxiety – 35.92%
	Depression – 8.45%
	Disruptive behavior – 8.45%
	Averages
Individual Counseling Sessions	275
In person	165
Remote	110
Informal Check ins	34
Services:	
Clinical Collaborations	158
Crisis Risk assessments	5
Parental support	
In Person	6
Email and/or Phone	81
School / team meetings	50

Hawley HVAC Options

Option 1

Single Phase Project

- Single phase - 9 month construction of HVAC
- No students or staff on campus while work is going on to ensure optimal safety
- Begins in June of 2022 through April of 2023

Advantages:

- Less costly (close to 90% construction documents, cost is at \$7.1 million)
- Single construction plan (without starts and stops)
- Completion sooner in 9 month timeline
- No safety concerns or traffic issues since students and staff will not be present on campus throughout renovation
- No need to build additional partitions/walls to rotate groups in and out of various sections of the building
- No abatement activities with staff or students present (elimination of asbestos and lead paint)
- If the project should run over, it will not impact the following school year since there is a summer in between
- 4th graders from Hawley will experience RIS (ahead of their transition year).
- All Hawley students will be in buildings with full HVAC during this temporary period.

Challenges:

- Moving all students to other building sites for duration of the project
- Bus transportation to other buildings where space is possible - will work with transportation company for efficiency (cost to be determined at time of contract)
- Shared space for PE, unified arts, cafeteria
- Moving expenses

Option 2

Multiple Phase (Sections of Building)

- 1st phase - 1921 building - most intensive renovation
- June 2022 through winter break 2022
- 2nd phase - 1948 building - winter break through April 2023
- 3rd phase - 1997 building - April 2023 through July 2023
- Students could be moved in and out of sections of the building with wall partitions in place.

Advantages:

- Some students and staff can potentially remain in certain sections of the building while construction is underway; less space needed in other buildings
- Only need transportation for smaller groups of students or grade levels (fewer buildings needed to utilize space)
- When moved, groups of Hawley students would be in buildings with full HVAC during this temporary period.

Challenges:

- More costly project (close to 90% construction documents, cost at \$7.8 million)
- Potential noise, dust, abatement of asbestos and lead, other interruptions, etc. while groups are present in the building
- Potential safety concerns with students and staff on campus during construction/renovation

- Challenge accessing areas of the building: cafeteria, gyms, all purpose room, bathrooms)
Note: additional costs might be incurred if construction had to include the building of an outdoor walkway so students and staff could access other parts of the building while construction is underway.
- Bus drop off and pick up with equipment on campus during construction could pose additional challenges
- Lack of predictability; might need to make unexpected alternative plans for the movement of students and staff (e.g., project running over could impact the following school year)
- Bus transportation to other buildings in district - will work with transportation company for efficiency (cost to be determined at time of contract)
- Moving expenses (moving groups of staff and student three times during the phases)

Hawley HVAC Planning & Needs

Hawley

Grades K-4

Average 3 sections per grade level.

15 total classrooms needed as well as additional resource rooms, office space, and use of shared space (such as cafeteria, gym, etc.)

Utilize other district elementary and intermediate schools (SHES and RIS) to absorb Hawley students and staff for the entire 9-month period. Holding off on the need to use HOM or MG due to distance and transportation.

Sandy Hook - Potential 9-10 rooms

Can provide four (4) classrooms (w/ restrooms).

Possibly six additional rooms including use of a computer lab and other specialized rooms used for resource space.

Grades K-1-2 from Hawley could relocate to SHS.

Move preschool from SHS to Newtown Community Center

Reed Intermediate- Potential 6-8 classrooms

Can provide four (6-8) classrooms and potentially in one wing of RIS.

Grade 3 and 4 from Hawley could relocate to RIS

***Alternative Space**

Newtown Middle School - Potential of 4-5 classrooms, if needed

Other Considerations

Both moving and potential transportation costs are not included in the anticipated costs for the project. These would be figured out once our plan is finalized and the project is approved through the referendum process.

- We believe we can use only schools and space in closer proximity to Hawley such as SHS and RIS - with some repurposing of space temporarily (such as move of pre-school).
- We will be putting out a bid for transportation in the coming year. This would certainly need to be a part of the negotiation as we configure the transportation needs for Hawley students to transport our students to other buildings outside of the Hawley district (e.g., Sandy Hook and Reed).
- Current bus company can work with same routes if only transporting to Sandy Hook and Reed (since students attend Reed and are currently on those buses).
- The goal would be to configure and plan for bus routes in the best interest of students now going to another school (either SHS or RIS) and with the most optimal ride time.

A positive is that our elementary schools follow a single schedule and have the space conducive for elementary instruction. Spaces can be shared and even utilized as a shared experience at times with two teachers (co-teaching). Moving students to other elementary schools would not impact the elementary experience that occurs in all buildings.

The building principal and his lead teacher would make themselves available on a daily basis to Hawley students and staff at the various buildings throughout the period during construction. Remaining visible would be integral to the support of students and staff.

Governor Ned Lamont
CT State Capitol
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Governor Lamont,

Thank you for your guidance through a very difficult period in our state, country and world. By allowing school and district leaders flexibility through the pandemic, the needs of the students and staff were better met and challenges were faced and dealt with based on local needs.

Newtown's administrative team has prepared a re-entry plan and presented it to the board. This plan was met with overwhelming support because it directly addresses challenges presented last year with an approach that is thoughtful, compassionate to all stakeholders, and forward-thinking. A few items of mention are the emphasis on mental health and support, and **making masks optional for students and staff based on current health metrics, discussions with our local health director, and stakeholder feedback which will allow for that critical "face-to-face" connection between teacher and student.** The Newtown re-entry plan covers much more than these items and we have enclosed the complete plan for your reference.

The dynamic environment facing public education presents many challenges and we appreciate your continued support. **As a board which consists of many professionals in the field of education, we understand the challenges we have faced and will face.** Our administrative team will continue its diligent work, in concert with local health officials, in order to determine the best path for our students.

Again, thank you for your continued support, and we look forward to working with you to make decisions that serve our students' best interests; for they are the reason we do what we do.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Newtown Board of Education,

Dr. Michelle Ku, Chair

Cc: Acting Commissioner Charlene M. Russell-Tucker
Enclosure: Newtown Public Schools Return to School Plan

Business/Non-Instructional Operations

Budget Procedures and Line Item Transfers

In accordance with Connecticut General Statutes §10-222, the Newtown Board of Education shall prepare an itemized estimate of its budget each year for submission to the Board of Finance and the Legislative Council for review and appropriation. Such budget estimate shall include, but is not limited to, the following major object line item categories:

- 100 - Salaries
- 200 - Employee Benefits
- 300 - Purchased Professional Services
- 400 - Purchased Property Services
- 500 - Other Purchased Services
- 600 - Supplies
- 700 - Property
- 800 - Other

Following the annual appropriation, the Board of Education shall meet and revise such itemized estimate, if necessary, and adopt a final appropriated budget for the year. Line items in the budget may be allocated more specifically by the Superintendent or his/her designee in the development, administration and monitoring of the budget after the initial approval of the budget by the Board of Education. The Superintendent shall present for Board approval any proposed additional staff that exceeds the staffing summary approved concurrent with the fiscal year budget. Hiring of additional staff that would be legally mandated will be brought to the Board for approval at the next scheduled Board meeting if all attempts for the Board of Education to meet prior to the hiring are unsuccessful.

The Superintendent and/or his/her designee shall be responsible for administering and monitoring the budget through the course of the year. The Superintendent or his/her designee shall maintain a system of appropriate expenditures and encumbrance accounting that is organized to conform to the requirements for State and Federal accounting reports. A monthly budget report shall be prepared in the same format as the annual object detail budget (as a minimum), showing for each major object code line item, the appropriated budget amount, transfers, expenditure to date, encumbered amounts, and current balance.

Such budget report shall be presented to the Board of Education at the regularly scheduled meeting in the month following the period for which such report is prepared, except the year-end report which shall be completed and presented by the end of August. The year-end report shall reflect all major object codes in positive balance. The Superintendent or designee shall recommend to the Board of Education and the Board shall approve transfers from one major object code to another.

Business/Non-Instructional Operations

Budget Procedures and Line Item Transfers (continued)

~~Any movement by the Board to expend funds that would otherwise render a major object code in a negative balance shall be preceded by a Motion to Transfer Funds between major object codes to maintain a positive balance in the account from which the funds will be expended. However, this action would not take place if there were expected incoming supplemental funds recognized by the Board.~~

For effective and efficient administration of day-to-day operations, budget transfer authority is granted to the Superintendent or the Director of Business, as his/her designee, under the following restrictions:

No transfer between major object codes may be made without prior Board of Education approval. Notice of major object codes falling into a negative balance will be included in the monthly financial report.

No transfers within major object codes, whether individual or cumulative, of \$10,000 or more shall be made unless authorized by the Board.

If the emergency transfer of \$50,000 or less is needed and the Board is unable to meet in advance, the Board will take action at its next regularly scheduled meeting. In addition, all transfers within an object summary category under \$10,000 will also be approved at the next meeting.

The Board of Education shall not expend more than the amount of the total appropriation and the amount of money received from other sources for school purposes. If any occasion arises whereby additional funds are needed by the Board of Education, the Chairperson of the Board of Education shall notify the Board of Finance, Board of Selectman, or appropriating authority and submit a request for such necessary additional funds. No additional funds shall be expended until such supplemental appropriation is granted and no supplemental expenditures shall be made in excess of those so authorized.

Adding Funds to the Non-Lapsing Educational Account

1. Each year, before August 31st, the Newtown Public Schools Director of Business will recommend to the Board to deposit into a non-lapsing account any unexpended funds from the Board's prior fiscal year general operating budget, provided such amount does not exceed the percentage of the total budgeted appropriation for education for such prior fiscal year as referenced in C.G.S. 10-248a.
2. Each year, before August 31st, the Board will forward a request to transfer unexpended funds from the previous year's budgeted education appropriation, to the non-lapsing education account. The transfer request will include each account number and the amount to be transferred. If known, the specific use for the funds will be communicated.

Business/Non-Instructional Operations

Budget Procedures and Line Item Transfers (continued)

Removing Funds from the Non-Lapsing Educational Account

The Board will vote to forward a request and explanation to the ~~Board of Finance~~ Town's fiscal authority for use of funds from the Non-Lapsing Education Account. The Board may also request that an amount of funds be designated for a specified purpose and the Board may use all or some of the designated funds for the specified purpose. If funds are no longer needed for the specified purpose, the Board may remove the designation from any remaining funds, and inform the ~~Board of Finance~~ Town's fiscal authority of the change.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-222 Appropriations and budget. (as amended by PA 13-60, An Act Concerning the Consolidation of Non-Educational Services)

Charter, Town of Newtown, 2008, P. 28

Policy adopted: April 4, 2017
Revised: June 16, 2020

NEWTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Newtown, Connecticut

Business and Non-Instructional Operations

Non-Lapsing Education Fund

The Newtown Board of Education (Board) may request the Town's ~~Board of Finance~~ fiscal authority deposit into a non-lapsing account any unexpended funds from the Board's prior fiscal year general operating budget, provided such amount does not exceed the percentage of the total budgeted appropriation for education for such prior fiscal year as referenced in C.G.S. 10-248a.

Prior to any expenditure from the Non-Lapsing Education Fund the Board of Education shall vote to authorize such spending. The transfer of monies shall follow the process as laid out in policy 3160 (Budget Procedures and Line Item Transfers).

The Board may designate these funds for a specific purpose. The Board will expend these funds for such previously designated specific purpose except that they may also be used for other planned, extraordinary or emergency expenditures which may be necessary but not otherwise budgeted.

The account shall be subject to the annual audit as required by State statute. The Board shall review the fund balance on an annual basis.

(cf. 3160 – Budget Procedures and Line Item Transfers)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-222 Appropriations and budget 10-248a Unexpended education funds account

Business and Non-Instructional Operations

Non-Lapsing Education Fund

Section 1. The Board of Finance of the Town of Newtown established a Non-Lapsing Fund (the "Non-Lapsing Fund") in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes 10-248a¹ on May 12, 2014.

Section 2. The Board of Education may, subject to the approval of the ~~Board of Finance~~ Town's fiscal authority, deposit into the Non-Lapsing Fund all or a portion of any unexpended funds from the prior fiscal year from the budgeted appropriation for education for the Town, provided that the amount deposited into the Non-Lapsing Fund shall not exceed the amount set forth in Section 10-248a of the Connecticut General Statutes.

The ~~Board of Finance~~ Town's fiscal authority may authorize deposits into the Non-Lapsing Fund in each fiscal year such that the total amount in the Non-Lapsing Fund may accumulate without limitation over time if not expended.

Section 3.

- A. The Board of Education may, subject to the approval of the ~~Board of Finance~~ Town's fiscal authority, authorize expenditures from the Non-Lapsing Fund for any of the following educational purposes:
- i. Any Capital expenditures which have been previously approved in the five year Capital Improvement Plan;
 - ii. Emergency conditions or replacements to capital items not previously included in the five year Capital Improvement Plan;
 - iii. Special Education expenses in accordance with the March 20, 2018 Board of Education resolution establishing a Special Education Contingency line item; and
 - iv. Any expenses that the Board of Education determines are necessary to support students or that are in the best interests of the Newtown Public Schools.
- B. The Board of Education shall authorize each expenditure from the Non-Lapsing Fund.

¹Sec. 10-248a. Unexpended education funds account. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020, and each fiscal year thereafter, notwithstanding any provision of the general statutes or any special act, municipal charter, home rule ordinance or other ordinance, the board of finance in each town having a board of finance, the board of selectman in each town having no board of finance or the authority making appropriations for the school district for each town may deposit into a nonlapsing account any unexpended funds from the prior fiscal year from the budgeted appropriation for education for the town, provided (1) such deposited amount does not exceed two per cent of the total budgeted appropriation for education for such prior fiscal year, (2) each expenditure from such account shall be made only for educational purposes, and (3) each such expenditure shall be authorized by the local board of education for such town.

Business and Non-Instructional Operations

Non-Lapsing Education Fund

- C. The Board of Education shall submit a summary of the Non-Lapsing Fund's balance and expenditures for the prior fiscal year to the ~~Board of Finance~~ Town's fiscal authority on an annual basis.

Section 4. The Non-Lapsing Fund balance comes from an appropriation that was approved by the voters of the Town for educational purposes and the Board of Education shall use the Non-Lapsing Fund for educational purposes. The Board of Education shall not consider the Non-Lapsing Fund as a source of funding which may be used to reduce the annual appropriation for education by the Town.

NEWTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Newtown, Connecticut

Regulation Adopted June 24, 2020

District Highlights

Newtown Public Schools

Our schools are enriched when parents and members of the community volunteer. Whether for 20 minute every few months or more continuously throughout the school year, volunteers play a huge part within the Newtown Public Schools, although very often it is not obvious just how much they really do. From volunteering for school events like Field Days and Book Fairs, to helping support after-school activities, to working in concert with staff and administration to improve student experiences, volunteers can be found working hard across the district.

In this newsletter, we get a chance to look at a cross section of the ways that volunteers make their mark on our school district. We talked with a couple of Parent Teacher Association presidents, touched base with a couple members of the Parent Educators Advisory Council, spoke with several volunteers helping with school-day and after-school activities, and took “A Closer Look” at a parent who has been heavily involved for years in multiple schools. We hope that you will enjoy hearing about all of the opportunities for parents and members of the community to make a difference in the schools and maybe even be inspired to jump in and bring new ideas into the district’s schools’.

Daniel Cruson Jr. and Deborra Zukowski
BoE Communications Subcommittee

**August 2021
Vol 1 Issue 5**

Board of Education Communications Sub-Committee

Members:

Daniel Cruson - Chair
Deborra Zukowski

You can email the board at:

newtownboe@newtown.k12.ct.us



At Our Core

Parent Teacher Associations

By Daniel Cruson

Starting 50 years ago when the National Congress of Parents and Teachers and the National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers integrated to become the National PTA, Parent Teacher Associations became a big part of schools across the country. The Newtown PTAs do a lot for their schools, not just for the students but also for the staff and the buildings themselves. Katie Burke, the PTA president at Head O’ Meadow Elementary School shared that her PTA works with the school to finance and organize a variety of Cultural Arts programs each year including Christine’s Critters, science enrichment programs and a bilingual singing group. All of these are organized to reinforce what teachers are teaching the kids while supporting a fun learning environment. In addition to these programs, she also shared that the PTA helps to keep morale up with events and social opportunities such as Teacher Appreciation luncheons, family fun nights, Picnic at the Park, and Virtual Bingo Night.

Karyn Holden, the president of the Reed Intermediate School PTA, shared that her PTA also organizes events to bring families together. However there is a larger focus on organizing events, such as movie nights, that allow the kids to be a bit more independent than at the Elementary schools. The PTA also brings in speakers that can give kids an opportunity to explore careers, such as artists and scientists. She

shared that beyond programs, the PTA works with the principal on filling needs for the school that are not covered in the budget. For instance, the Reed PTA recently purchased an additional water bottle filling station for the school which was especially needed for the 20-21 school year. Finally, she mentioned ways that the PTA has shown appreciation for the staff on a monthly basis, including treats and assorted events.

The only way that these types of activities can happen is with volunteers. While many parents may be reluctant to step forward to help, thinking that it is a huge time commitment, Ms. Burke mentioned that there are many ways to help the PTA that fits into any schedule. Something as simple as attending a meeting and sharing a suggestion can make a huge difference in the success of the activity.

That is just one way that parents might get involved with the PTA at their school though. Ms. Holden shared her own journey to becoming involved in the PTA, which began at Sandy Hook shortly after the tragedy because she wanted a way to be more involved. She started by making time to go to Board of Education meetings and providing updates to fellow parents to keep them engaged. While her original intent did not include becoming as involved as she now is, the ability to have a personal relationship with staff while bringing smiles to the faces of the students resulted in her taking on larger and larger roles until reaching the position of president. Ms. Burke on the other hand had always had a desire to be involved with the school her children attended and felt joining the PTA was a good way to accomplish this. At first, she was a bit reluctant to join because of the stigma that has developed through the modern media's portrayal of PTAs, but after talking to current PTA members and understanding exactly what the PTA does for the school she was fully on board.

From bringing joy to the students at Newtown Schools, to showing support and appreciation for the staff that make the schools run, to fundraising to make all these objectives possible, the PTAs play a huge role in the schools. However, this requires parents with all sorts of views and experiences to work together and become a community. One of the final thoughts that Ms. Holden shared was that by becoming involved in the PTA you are getting involved in the school and meeting wonderful families and staff that you would not have necessarily met otherwise. Ms. Burke also shared a similar sentiment, as well as the fact that the PTA is happy to have people step forward and suggest new ideas. She added that there are many things that the PTA does for their school that would not happen otherwise because it is simply not in the school district budget. This makes parents' PTA contributions an important and ever-present part of the schools throughout Newtown.

I would like to thank Karyn Holden and Katie Burke for taking the time to talk to me for this article.



School Day Volunteers

By Deborra Zukowski

Three long-time volunteers shared their personal experiences as parent volunteers for their children's schools. Christi Carlson has lived in Newtown for about fourteen years, volunteering at Hawley School for the last ten. Amy Habboush has lived in Sandy Hook for ten years and has been volunteering for the last six at Middle Gate School. Kathleen Shope moved to Newtown in 2014, and has been volunteering every year since, first at Middle Gate School and now at both Reed and Middle Gate. While the rest of this article highlights only some of their volunteer experiences, it shows the wide range of volunteer opportunities available within the K-6 schools.

Christi Carlson first started volunteering when her oldest began kindergarten. She is an active PTA member as well as a general school volunteer. As the Hawley library volunteer coordinator, she sets up a schedule at the beginning of the year. Each class has 2-4 library volunteers, rotating months. When the class goes to the library, the day's volunteers join to help with checking books in and out, putting them away, and otherwise assisting the librarian during the day's lesson as needed. This year, she is also co-chair of the 4th Grade Celebration. She has ordered the 4th grade T-shirts, formed a committee responsible for gathering well-wishes and pictures for the yearbook, helped recruit sponsors, booked activities and more. She enjoys being a part of the effort because "it is nice to send the 4th graders off to Reed with a big celebration of their Hawley years!"

Like Christi, Amy started volunteering when her oldest entered kindergarten. She started as a PTA member, helping with Staff Appreciation Week, Breakfast Cart Monday, and Luncheon Friday. She served as PTA president for three years, though now continues as an active member at large. One of Amy's favorite activities is kindergarten registration. "It is fun to welcome new families to Middle Gate! As a volunteer we usually collect some information and medical forms from families and get to give parents and their incoming kinder a tour of the school. ... I like to be a friendly face for them to feel free to ask their questions." This year, she helped out during SBAC testing by coordinating snacks for all third grade classes, adding a preprinted note of encouragement with each one. Amy also helps make the school more inviting by decorating four of the bulletin boards at the school including the main one that greets the students as they enter.

Kathleen Shope began volunteering in 2014 when her oldest was in kindergarten, admitting that she was "a bit selfish" when she started. She wanted to make sure that her son "looked his very best" for picture day. She found, though, that she quite enjoyed helping all of the students during the day. So, every year she would volunteer and help them all look their best. In 2018, she was asked to chair the event and started getting even more involved. She then decided to sign up for "pretty much anything that I was able to do." One of her other favorite activities is Diversity Day that helps students better understand the challenges that face those with physical disabilities. During the day, students participate in activities like writing their names while masked and navigating a wheel chair around cones.

All three have been Room Parents. At the beginning of the school year, parents are asked if they might be available to help with classroom activities. Teachers may directly send a notice to parents, or the school's PTA may have a check box on their membership form. Room parents help plan classroom celebrations and assist with class enrichment activities. They also act as a liaison between the teacher and the PTA/parents for non-curricular needs. Doing so helps the teacher stay more focused on the students. All three have also volunteered at their schools' Holiday Boutique, another of their favorite activities! Every year, the boutiques provide students with the opportunity to select gifts for family and friends. Excited students arrive, peruse the gifts, count out money, and leave with the pride of finding the "perfect" gift.

Volunteering at the schools benefits the students by enabling more opportunities for enriching activities and events and by having familiar and comforting faces nearby. It helps volunteers get to know others who they might not have met otherwise. It creates communities between parents, teachers, staff, and students. And finally, it creates memories. Amy recalls being asked if she was the “boss of the school” as the students got to know her but couldn’t quite figure out why she was there. Christi remembers the parent/student tug of wars during field days and the look on the students’ faces when they see their parent in the library. Kathleen remembers the day she helped a girl free her brooch from her necklace prior to the class picture and then hearing a boy ask if his collar was proper.

When asked if there were something that could be improved, all three agreed that they would love to see more parents involved. Special events need people to plan them, money to pay for added expenses, and hands to ensure that participants have the opportunity to enjoy and learn. Right now, it’s basically the same group of parents, and that group tends to get smaller as their children progress from one school to the next. Having a small group means that the volunteers have more to do, sometimes more than they really have time for. Increasing the number of volunteers would help even out the workload and it would increase the opportunities for volunteers to meet new people

DID YOU KNOW?

There are numerous activities needing many different talents and contributions so there is likely a place for everyone. Whether for an occasional hour or continuously during the year, if you have the time and flexibility to join, please keep an eye out for flyers in backpacks or on social media. These flyers often request help for activities like field days, the holiday boutique, and grade-level celebration events. You can also ask your child’s teacher or other parents and neighbors about opportunities. And, you can join the school’s PTA to participate in their school activities and fund raisers. Also, district administration and the Parent Educator Advisory Council are reaching out to members of the broader Newtown community in part by partnering with the senior center.

Extracurricular Volunteers

By Deborra Zukowski

As alluded to above, volunteering while students are in school is very important for the younger elementary grades but such opportunities decrease in later grades. While there are opportunities to volunteer for extracurricular activities at all grade levels, the need for help and the breadth of what volunteers can bring to such activities expands as students grow older. This article highlights a few of the many extracurricular volunteering opportunities that are available across our schools.

Hawley Fathers’ Club

Aaron Cox has been a school volunteer and an active Hawley PTA member ever since his oldest, now in 8th grade, started at Hawley School. His middle child will be heading to Reed next year and his youngest will be starting first grade. All told, he expects to be a Hawley volunteer for about 15 years.

One evening after a meeting about four years ago, he and Principal Moretti were chatting about how there were very few fathers in the PTA. Mr. Moretti then spoke about his experience at a prior school. The school had a Father’s Club that organized annual pancake breakfasts for Mother’s Day. Soon thereafter,

Aaron began thinking about starting a Father's Club for Hawley. He put together a one-page flyer asking for volunteers to help plan a bird house construction event. He personally reached out to other PTA members to see if more fathers were available to help. That year, 4-5 fathers worked together to plan and gather the materials needed to build bird houses. On the day of the event 40-50 families joined, each constructing their own bird house. Participants enjoyed the hands-on activity and took pride in what they had built together. Since then, the club has continued to offer events including more "build it nights," pumpkin carving, trips to sports games like Sound Tigers hockey matches, car washes, and school-wide BBQs. During the pandemic, when group-oriented activities were prohibited, the club still hosted the pumpkin carving event delivering 75 pumpkins directly to family homes.

The club uses its events to help raise money for other PTA and school needs. For example, some funds have been used to purchase items for the Maker Space in the Hawley library and often there is money available to help fund Staff Appreciation Week. When asked what he had hoped the club would accomplish when he first designed that one-page flyer, Aaron replied that he hoped that it encouraged more fathers to become active in the school community and, more generally, that parents – both moms and dads – would see how the club (and the PTA) bring joyful evenings to Hawley students and staff.

Hawley Fathers' Club meets monthly during the school year at Hawley Elementary School, with seven to ten fathers joining. Meetings are typically short – no more than 45 minutes.

Newtown Middle and High School Theater Productions

Marie Armstrong has been volunteering with musicals and plays for about seven years, ever since her oldest first participated in musical theater. She currently works with Mrs. Matson, the Newtown High School Choral Director who directs and choreographs musicals, though has also helped out with middle school plays when her children were younger. Volunteering gives her an opportunity to take a break from the detail-oriented mindset needed as a project manager and lets her enjoy the creativity that comes with theater. It also introduces her to many other like-minded parents and volunteers.

Prior to volunteering with middle and high school theater productions, Marie volunteered in community theater helping actors with their costumes. She now uses her organizational skills and costuming talents to help Newtown students and to offload costuming work from Mrs. Matson. She guides the other costuming volunteers, helps plan the look of the outfits with the director and students, coordinates the costume/prop sewing efforts, and assists the actors with their costumes during the show.

Usually, most costumes are rented though some have been custom made. The volunteers may also make drapes, wall-hangings, and other fabric-related items. During the months prior to the show, Marie gathers with others who volunteer their sewing talents or are willing to learn how to sew to help out. The preceding weeks can be very busy as the volunteers meet to sew and craft – and have tea together. Their efforts are more than rewarded during the show as they help with broken zippers, relish the faces of the actors when they don the outfits, and interact with such talented, kind, and courteous students.

While students – especially in high school – take the lead both onstage and off, theater offers lots of opportunities for volunteers to assist. They can help students create props, build sets, apply make-up, and take photographs during the show as well as behind the scenes. In addition, they can help with advertising, ticket sales, lobby decorations, and audience management. Marie encourages others to get involved. "Find out what your sweet spot is and share." Like her, you may be well rewarded.

Newtown High School Sports Programs

Newtown High School offers 32 sports programs with a total of 56 freshman, junior varsity, and varsity teams according to Matt Memoli, the school's Athletic Director. There were 22 volunteer coaches for the fall-winter and spring seasons this year, including Newtown Boys Volleyball Varsity Team Assistant Coach Tony Nocera and Newtown Girls Softball Varsity Team Assistant Coach Lindell (Lin) Hertberg.

Tony Nocera lives in New Milford and is the head coach for the New Milford Girls Volleyball varsity team, having started the position about nine years ago. One day while he was officiating a girls volleyball game, Newtown Coach Sandy Doski approached and asked if he would help out with the Newtown Boys Volleyball varsity team. Though he had been cutting back on other coaching activities at the time, he respected both the coach and the program and so accepted the offer. That happened five years ago and he has been an assistant coach ever since.

As assistant coach, Tony does whatever needs to be done to help the team play well. For example, he oversees drills and gives the players feedback. He also gathers game statistics and publishes them online. And, he films every match for the players to use when college recruitment time comes around. What he likes best is that he simply gets to coach. As a head coach for New Milford, he knows how much non-sport "stuff" head coaches must do. They reserve space, handle emails and phone calls, address scheduling conflicts, and monitor the academic success of their student athletes. As a Newtown volunteer, he just gets to enjoy the players, the other staff, and the sport. So every year, he always looks forward to the spring volleyball season.

Tony volunteers with the goal of helping every player improve. In addition, with each passing year he feels he becomes a better coach. Both the year's experience and the camaraderie of other coaches who are very knowledgeable about the sport – and who are always at the ready to bounce ideas off one another – help him continue to grow as a coach.

Lin Hertberg and his wife moved to Newtown with their three daughters in 1971. In 1975, he started coaching for the Parks and Rec girls' softball team when his daughters began playing and continued coaching the team for ten years. In 1980, he became a coach for the Parks and Rec girls basketball team, continuing for 21 years. In recognition of his dedication and positive impact on the players, he was inducted into the Newtown Bee's Sports Hall of Fame in 2000. So, by the time he was approached by Newtown Girls Softball Coach Paul LaFrancesca in 2000 to join the coaching staff, he was an experienced and well-established figure in girls' sports.

From mid March to early June, Lin joins the team every day but Sunday (when they don't play). He helps the coach and players during practice and tracks game statistics, but mostly he's there to support the players both on and off the field. He often writes letters to the players cheering their accomplishments and cherishes the hundreds of notes he has received in return. Over the years, he has forged many long-lasting relationships. Even as we were sitting down for our interview a woman passing by, who had played on his softball team in the mid-1970s, enthusiastically said "hi" to her coach.

Lin has gone beyond the day-to-day duties of coaching. He has also worked to ensure the field that the girls play on is fit for a team of winners. He has donated dugouts to replace benches, a scoreboard, and team banners. When asked what he would like to see improved his answer was, simply, his age remarking "If you do something you really enjoy, time goes very very quickly."

DID YOU KNOW?

On June 5th Matt Memoli, the Newtown High School Athletic Director, presented Lin Hertbert with a plaque to honor his contributions to the Girls Softball Program while standing in the pitching circle of the newly named Lindell Hertberg Softball Field. "This really is the least we can do to honor and thank him for all he does," Matt said to us recently. Congratulations Lin!

*Newtown International Center for Education (NICE)*¹

Cathy Filiato has been an active volunteer for 16 years, helping out at Middle Gate School as both a class parent and reading literacy assistant. She was also active in the Middle Gate PTA and worked with another PTA volunteer to bring cultural arts activities and events into the school. When her children moved up to Reed, she helped out at the library. As her children moved on to high school and beyond, she shifted her volunteering focus to NICE.

NICE has been active in the Newtown High School for over a decade. Its mission statement, available at: <https://nicenewtown.wixsite.com/nice>, reads "The Newtown International Center for Education (NICE) is an educational organization that aims to prepare students and teachers to be culturally and globally literate citizens through academic learning opportunities and real-world experiences, cultural exposure, and discussion of global issues." It is led by teachers who cultivate relationships with international sister schools and plan cultural and educational trips for the students.

During the 2019-2020 school year, NICE planned to offer trips to sister school locations in Spain and China. During these types of trips, students stay with local families. It also planned a service-oriented trip to India, an ecological study trip to Panama, and a historic and cultural guided tour of England and France. Finally, it planned to host students from its Japanese sister school in March. Unfortunately, all planned trips except Spain and India were canceled due to the pandemic. The visit from the Japanese student delegation was also canceled.

Though the organization has not been able to sponsor any trips during the pandemic, the connections made earlier still live on. Recently, a fundraiser was launched to collect money for oxygen gas lines needed to retrofit a building that Newtown students had visited during the recent trip to India into a COVID treatment facility. While the event has passed, collections are still being accepted and future fundraisers may be organized. For more information, go to https://twitter.com/NHS_TWEETS/status/1397249862895382533/photo/1.

NICE relies on community support and volunteers. There is a complementary organization, the NICE Parent & Community Organization (PCO) that assists the teachers by canvassing for host families, fundraising to offset the costs of student trips, chaperoning, interviewing students who wish to participate in trips, and more. Cathy is the current president. She stepped up to help the organization in part because it provides students with the opportunity to personally connect with people from other cultures. She has also hosted families, finding it very fun showing the students around her town and state. After a earlier experience, she posted "Our family has hosted a student from Spain and two students from China. It has been an amazing experience for us. Through the exchanges we learned so much about other cultures and about our own. I recommend hosting a NICE exchange student, you will make a lifelong friend and have an experience you will never forget!"

Unfortunately volunteer support is waning, and the NICE PCO is at risk of being dissolved. Initially, there were eight volunteers (both parents and teachers) on the PCO Board though that number is now

three, including Cathy who will unfortunately have had to step back. Time commitments are flexible and meetings are held during the evenings. Most events occur in the evenings or on weekends. The NICE PCO is open to anyone who values the importance of preparing Newtown students for a multicultural future.

¹ The Newtown International Center for Education was previously highlighted in the “Past Efforts” article from the BOE Newsletter for Equity and Diversity, available at:

https://newtown.campuscontact.com/_theme/files/Board%20of%20Education/BOE%20Newsletters/2020-2021/District%20Highlights%2011_2020.pdf

Parent Educator Advisory Council (PEAC)

By Daniel Cruson Jr.

Volunteer opportunities aren't just available at the individual school level, but also at the district level. At the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year, Dr. Rodrigue convened the Parent Educator Advisory Council (PEAC). The goal of PEAC is “To promote a partnership between educators and parents that will embrace core values, further a common language for all stakeholders, and support District priorities in the best interest of students”. The council is divided into four sub-committees: Partnerships, Communications & Branding, Budget/Operational Plan and Diversity & Equity. All these groups count parents who bring a variety of experiences and expertise as an important part of their membership. Dr. Christianne Golesky, a member of the Budget/Operational Plan sub-committee, said that she joined right at the start when Dr. Rodrigue called for volunteers. As an administrator in another district, she saw it as a good opportunity to contribute to her community in a meaningful way. Dr. Monica Kwarcinski, a member of the Communications sub-committee, was another parent who also said she joined right at the beginning. She was previously involved in PTAs and saw PEAC as a great way to get to know the district and community members better.

Both Dr. Golesky and Dr. Kwarcinski were very excited to talk about the work that they have done on their respective sub-committees. Dr. Kwarcinski talked about her sub-committee’s research into communication apps and the pending release the Blackboard app for Newtown Public Schools. This new app, which is scheduled for release in time for the 2021-2022 school year, was the result of careful research and review to find a way to enhance communication between the school district and parents.

Blackboard will bring together all of the different systems that are

currently used within the district so that parents have one location to go for information on their students and the schools.

Dr. Golesky shared that the Budget sub-committee had been hard at work helping the community understand what goes into the budget and the impact it has in the school. To this end, they created instructional spotlight videos and she said that it was fantastic to present them to the community. She also told me about the work to create elections at each school, to get the students excited to vote for something that would have an impact on the schools. This created an opportunity for civic education and simultaneously got families talking about the importance of voting. By timing the activities around the Budget Referendum in April it created a school to home connection, getting the children excited and hopefully the parents would then be excited to participate in the referendum.



When Dr. Kwarcinski and Dr. Golesky joined, right at the inception of PEAC, neither was sure what to expect. However, both agreed that looking back they had no regrets and would jump in again. Dr. Golesky shared that it has been a great opportunity to see what makes Newtown unique and special as well as getting a behind the scenes look at how things are done in the school district. Dr. Kwarcinski felt it was a great way to be more involved in the district but cautioned that it requires all members to roll up their sleeves and be an active participant. Both made it clear that they were looking forward to continuing their work in their respective sub-committees and seeing what new ideas come to fruition through the collaboration between the staff and the parents.

I would like to thank Dr. Monica Kwarcinski and Dr. Christianne Golesky for taking the time to discuss their work on PEAC.

A Closer Look

with Laura Taylor, President of the NHS Marching Band and Guard Parent Corporation
By Deborra Zukowski

How long have you been a Newtown school volunteer?

15 years, since 2006.

Please share a brief history of your volunteer activities.

Sandy Hook School – As a parent volunteer in and out of the class room for six years and in a variety of other activities wherever I was needed with the time I had to help out including Family Fun Fair, guest storytelling, room mom, arts and crafts, school newspaper support, chaperoning, teacher appreciation, an active role on the PTA Board and more.

Newtown Middle School – PTA Board two years and an active volunteer with the NMS Jazz band chaperoning trips to the University of New Hampshire Clark Terry Jazz Festival and the CT State Fantastic Festivals. I loved hosting the teachers’ luncheon at NMS. It was a great opportunity to see the staff and to give them a little treat and a break in their day. My husband also chaperoned the DC trip with my son’s 8th grade class.

Newtown High School - For the last six years I have been involved with the Marching Band and Guard program at NHS and in the last three years have served as President of the band parent organization. The NHS Marching Band and Guard Parent Corporation supports year-round band and guard programs from Fall Marching Band and Guard, to Winter Percussion and Winter Guard. It takes the efforts of many parents to support the band and guard programs. We also have an active alumni group who return and support fundraisers year after year. Led by Director of Bands Kurt Eckhardt [now retired], there is a dedicated staff who generously give their time to the programs and our students. The band parent organization is there to provide support including chaperoning, pit crew which involves building props and moving equipment on and off the field each week, management of our annual home show which is the largest fundraiser and many other activities. This allowed Kurt and the staff to focus on the music, the performers, and the show.



In a much smaller capacity, I've also supported teacher appreciation events, SAT testing day, the Blue and Gold Jazz Bands and a spring musical.

How did you find out about volunteer opportunities and what did you do to let school staff know of your interest to help?

The PTA was a great place to start. They were very good about sharing information and encouraging people to help

Many teachers reach out to parents, especially in the younger grades, and I think it's important to ask teachers where they need help from parents. Sometimes it was as simple as sending in a few boxes of Kleenex and other times it was hosting an appreciation lunch or chaperoning a trip.

Get to know the Principal and ask what they need. I've been very fortunate to have known and worked with several outstanding Principals in Newtown.

Do you have a personal philosophy about volunteering?

I have a few thoughts here...

- Almost everyone can find the time to do something. Do what you can. Even a small contribution can make a big difference when it comes to helping a teacher, a program, etc.
- Get involved because it will help you stay more connected with your kids.
- Teachers, administration, support staff, and coaches give so much of themselves for our children, honor them by volunteering.

From your experience as a volunteer and working with others, what does it take to be a volunteer?

No experience necessary!

A willingness to help.

Find your niche, if you don't like to be out front, there are plenty of behind the scenes opportunities.

Use your talents. You'd be surprised what you have to bring to the table.

How have volunteers enriched classroom and extracurricular activities for students and staff?

I hope that by giving teachers a hand, it allows teachers more time to focus on the lesson and the students. Teachers give so much of themselves to their students, it's important to support them.

In terms of extracurricular activities, it's also been a great opportunity to get to know my children's friends, watch them grow into young adults. And, I cherish the relationships I've cultivated with parents and staff.

As a long-time volunteer, how have volunteer experiences/responsibilities changed as you moved from school to school? How have interactions with the students and staff changed?

In elementary school there are more opportunities to support in-classroom activities such as guest story time or arts and crafts projects. In the older grades there is more focus on out of classroom support and chaperoning.

At any grade level, there is always a need to volunteer with or take a leadership role with the PTA or other extracurricular activity organizations. Those organizations play a key role in fundraising, event planning, program advocacy, teacher support, and more.

Are there volunteers that stood out? What do you feel made them special?

I have had the honor to work alongside many volunteers and volunteer leaders in my 15 years as a NPS parent. Jen Taylor, Tracey Jaeger, Mara Street were three of the most committed volunteer leaders during my time at SHS. Each has a passion to help, talents to contribute (communication, organization, and leadership) and huge hearts – they care about others.

In my time volunteering with the NHS Marching Band and Guard, I’ve been blessed to volunteer with well over 300 families. The band parent leaders who came before me set a high bar and were very generous with their time as I adjusted to my role. The Board during my tenure has been a great support and we could not do what we do without the help of parents, grandparents, and sibling volunteers.

What advice would you give to current and future volunteers?

Get involved and if you are involved, look into stepping that up to a leadership role.

Get active in the PTA at your school or in the parent organization for your children’s activities! You will get to know other parents, be more aware of what is going on with your kids, and have fun.

Is there anything else that you feel should be included in this conversation?

Get involved!

Congratulations to Laura, a Newtown Public School 2021 Profiles in Professionalism honoree. And, thank you to those who nominated such a well-deserving person!



NEXT ISSUE

In our next issue we will be talking about the ways we help our students succeed after High School. We will take a look at scholarship opportunities, the Capstone projects, Portrait of a Graduate, and more!

AGREEMENT

BETWEEN

NEWTOWN BOARD OF EDUCATION

AND

NEWTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOL NURSES

LOCAL 1303 of COUNCIL 4
**AMERICAN FEDERATION OF STATE,
COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES**

JULY 1, 2021 - JUNE 30, 2024

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AGREEMENT

This agreement is made and entered into between the NEWTOWN BOARD OF EDUCATION (hereinafter referred to as the "Board") and UNION LOCAL 1303 OF COUNCIL 4, AMERICAN FEDERATION OF STATE, COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES (hereinafter referred to as the "Union").

Article 1 Recognition

1.1 The Board recognizes the Union as the exclusive representative for the purposes of collective bargaining with respect to wages, hours, and other conditions or employment for all school nurses employed by the Board excluding nurse substitutes, the school health nurse supervisor, temporary nurses (defined as working 65 days or less), and all other employees of the Board not specifically included in the unit.

Article 2 Board Rights

2.1 Except where such rights, powers and authority are specifically relinquished, abridged or limited by the provisions of this Agreement, the Board has and will continue to retain whether exercised or not, all the rights, powers and authority heretofore had by it, and shall have the sole right, responsibility and prerogative of management of the affairs of the Board of Education and direction of the working forces, including, but not limited to those rights provided by Conn. Gen. Stat. 10-220 and the following:

- a) To determine the care, maintenance and operation of equipment and property used for and in behalf of the purposes of the Board.
- b) To establish or continue policies, practices and procedures for the conduct of Board business and, from time to time, to change or abolish such policies, practices, or procedures.
- c) To discontinue processes or operations or to discontinue their performance by employees.
- d) To select and to determine the number and types of employees required to perform the Board's operations, and to create, modify and/or eliminate positions accordingly.
- e) To employ, transfer, promote or demote employees, or to lay off, furlough, terminate or otherwise relieve employees from duty for lack of work or other legitimate reasons when it shall be in the best interests of the Board.
- f) To prescribe and enforce reasonable rules and regulations for the maintenance of discipline and for the performance of work in accordance with the requirements of

the Board, provided such rules and regulations are made known in a reasonable manner to the employees affected by them. Nothing in the preceding sentence shall be construed to prevent the Board from taking disciplinary action against an employee for conduct not prohibited by a specific rule or regulation if the employee should reasonably have known that such conduct was improper.

- g) To create job specifications and revise existing job specifications, subject to the Union's right to negotiate the assigned wage rates.
- h) To determine the work year, work day and work schedules for employees.

Article 3 Saving Clause

3.1 If any provision of this agreement is, or shall at any time be, found contrary to law, then that provision shall not be applicable except to the extent permitted by law and the Board and the Union shall jointly consider the effect of such a finding and determine what, if any, future action may be required. During this period all other provisions shall continue in effect.

Article 4 Work Year

4.1 The work year shall be one hundred eighty-six (186) days. Subject to prior approval by the Nursing Supervisor, a nurse may work up to two (2) additional days beyond the 186-day work year in order to perform job duties that cannot be performed during the 186-day work year. Any further additional work days beyond such two (2) days shall require the prior approval by the Superintendent. The Board shall compensate the nurse at the rate of 1/186 of the nurse's salary (pro-rated for partial days) for each additional day worked in accordance with the provisions of this section.

Article 5 Work Day

5.1 The regular workday shall be eight (8) hours for full-time nurses. However, in recognition of the professional, salaried nature of school nurse positions, the parties acknowledge that employees' professional responsibilities will sometimes extend beyond the regular workday. Part-time positions shall be as established by the Board. Subject to the approval of the superintendent and the principal, and amendment by the Board, the nursing supervisor will establish the work schedule for the nurse in each building.

5.2 The Board will use its best reasonable efforts to provide each full-time nurse with a total of thirty (30) minutes for lunch and/or other break time per day (as part of the paid work day), with the understanding that emergencies or educational/operational concerns may sometimes prevent such breaks. Nurses will remain in the building and be accessible during such breaks, in order to address emergencies or other pressing concerns.

Article 6
Sick Leave & Other Disability Leaves

6.1 Nurses shall receive at the beginning of each school year 15 days per year (pro-rated for the first year of employment if a nurse begins employment after the start of the school year) until a total of 150 days is reached. Any nurse who is regularly scheduled to work fewer than twenty (20) hours per week shall be credited with sick leave on a pro-rated basis, based on the length of the part-time nurse's regular work day.

Employees shall be entitled to use three (3) sick days each school year in the event of serious illness for the employee's spouse, child or parent.

6.2 Nurses shall be paid full salary (less amount of any worker's compensation payment) for absence from school for personal injury caused by an accident arising out of, or in the course of, employment for a period up to 150 days from the date of the injury, if medically warranted, without loss of, or charges against, her/his annual or accumulated sick leave. This provision shall also apply for any absence caused as a result of exposure to specified communicable diseases. In such case, the 150-day limit shall not apply. Diseases specified are HIV infection, AIDS, mononucleosis, hepatitis, meningitis, legionnaire's disease, pneumonia, tuberculosis, and shingles.

6.3 Upon approval by the Board, leave of absence without pay shall be granted to a nurse for disability due to medical or other extenuating circumstance for a period of up to one calendar year.

6.4 All insurance benefits to which the nurse is entitled shall remain in effect during any portion of a leave of absence in which the nurse receives sick leave benefits. The right to prepay the Board for cost of such coverage shall be allowed if the nurse is not entitled to receive such sick leave benefits for any period of approved leave.

Article 7
Personal Days

7.1 Five personal days shall be allowed with pay each year for personal, legal, religious, business or family matters, i.e., birth of a child, marriage, serious illness in the household or immediate family, that requires the absence of the nurse during school hours. These personal days shall be in addition to any sick leave accumulated. It is expressly agreed that such leaves are not to be for extension of vacation periods, recreation, or holidays. Any nurse who is regularly scheduled to work fewer than twenty (20) hours per week shall be credited with personal leave on a pro-rated basis, based on the length of the part-time nurse's regular work day.

7.2 Nurses shall be granted leave with full pay for a period of five days following a death in the household or immediate family. Immediate family members shall be defined as parents, foster parents, guardians, brothers, sisters, mother-in-law, father-in-law, spouse, children, stepchildren, or grandchildren. Three days will be granted for brothers-in-law or sisters-in law

and grandparents. In special cases, allowance may be made by the superintendent or his designee.

7.3 Notification of such leave shall be made, in writing, to the principal at least 24 hours before taking such leave (except in the case of emergencies) and the nurse shall state the reason for taking such leave as set forth in 7.1).

7.4 For leaves of absence other than those covered by any portion of this agreement, the rate of deduction from the nurse's salary shall be the per diem rate of the year's basic salary.

**Article 8
Health Insurance**

8.1 A. The following High Deductible Health Plan shall be the sole health insurance plan:

HDHP		
Cost Shares Provisions	In-Network	Out-of Network (OON)
Annual Deductible (individual/aggregate family)	\$2,250/\$4,500	
Medical Cost Share	0%/100% (no member copays or coinsurance)	20/80% after deductible, up to co-insurance maximum
Prescription Drug Coverage	Subject to deductible then: \$10 Generic, \$30 Preferred Brand, and \$50 Non-Preferred Brand, up to co-insurance maximum	20/80% after deductible, up to co-insurance maximum
Coinsurance Maximum	\$0 Medical \$1,000/2,000 RX (Includes In-Network Post Ded. RX Copays)	\$2,250/4,500 (Includes OON Medical and OON RX Coinsurance)
Annual Combined In and Out of Network Out-of-Pocket Maximum ⁽¹⁾	\$5,500 individual coverage/\$11,000 family coverage (includes deductible and in-network and out-of-network cost shares)	
Lifetime Maximum	Unlimited	Unlimited
Preventive Care	Deductible not applicable	20% after deductible, subject to co-insurance limits

(1) Note: If a participant incurs no out-of-network services after the deductible the total Out-of-Pocket Max would be limited to \$3,250/\$6,500.

Following exhaustion of the applicable deductible, prescription drugs shall be subject to post-deductible co-payments of \$10/30/50.

The Board will fund forty-five percent (45%) of the applicable HSA deductible (with pro-rated funding of the deductible for employees who are hired after commencement of the insurance plan year). The Board shall deposit one-half of its contribution into the employee’s HSA in September and the remaining one-half of its contribution of its contribution in January.

The parties acknowledge that the Board’s contribution toward the funding of the HSA plan is not an element of the underlying insurance plan, but rather relates to the manner in which the deductible shall be funded for actively employed nurses. The Board shall have no obligation to fund any portion of the HSA deductible for retirees or other individuals upon their separation from employment.

Wellness Incentive: The HSA plan set forth in this Article shall include a wellness incentive program, designed to provide early diagnosis and appropriate information to patients so that they and their health care professionals can determine appropriate, timely courses of treatment as needed. The wellness program will include preventive physical examinations. If the employee and the employee’s spouse (if applicable) complete one preventive physical examination during the term of the contract, the Board will make a one-time contribution into the employee’s HSA, in the following amounts, as applicable:

Individual coverage: \$100
 Family coverage: \$200

For the purposes of this paragraph, the measurement period for completing the physical examination will be the calendar year. The Board will make its additional HSA contributions on or about the July 1st following completion of the calendar year during which the physical exams are completed.

A Health Reimbursement Account (“HRA”) shall be made available for any employee who is precluded from participating in a Health Savings Account (“HSA”) because the employee receives Medicare and/or veterans’ benefits. The annual maximum reimbursement by the Board for employees participating in the HRA shall not exceed the dollar amount of the Board’s annual HSA contribution for employees enrolled in the HSA.

8.1 B. Employees shall contribute towards the expenses of group medical and dental insurance coverage for each full-time employee, spouse and children as follows:

	Effective July 1, 2021	Effective July 1, 2022	Effective July 1, 2023
HSA	19.0%	20.0%	21.5%
Dental	21.5%	21.5%	21.5%

The Board shall pay the remaining cost. Premium contributions will be deducted in equal payments as a regular part of the bi-weekly payroll program and subject to an IRC Section 125 Plan.

Employees must work thirty (30) hours or more per week to be eligible for medical and must complete six months employment prior to enrollment in the dental plan.

8.2 The Board may change insurance carriers at any time during the term of this agreement provided the Union receives prior notification and provided all benefits and services supplied by a new carrier shall be comparable to all benefits and services supplied by the former carrier. If the Union does not agree that the benefits and services are comparable, the Union may forward the matter through the Grievance and Arbitration process under this agreement. Should this occur, the Board will not implement this change of carrier until the arbitrator has made a ruling.

8.3 The employee's option to cancel coverage or to reinstate coverage may be made during an open enrollment period, for a minimum of 20 calendar days, established annually by the Board in May or June. In addition, the option to reinstate coverage may be made upon a qualified change in family status, such as marriage, divorce, birth of a child, spousal benefit coverage loss, etc.

8.4 For all purposes under this Article, a dependent child shall be as defined under applicable law.

8.5 The medical benefits will provide unlimited coverage for in-network services and a \$1,000,000 maximum lifetime benefit for out-of-network.

8.6 The Board shall maintain a "Section 125" salary reduction agreement that shall be designed to permit exclusion from taxable income of the employee's share of health insurance premiums. The Board makes no representations or guarantees as to the initial or continued viability of such a salary reduction agreement and shall incur no obligation to engage in any form of impact bargaining in the event that a change in law reduces or eliminates the tax exempt status of employee insurance premium contributions.

8.7 In the event the total cost of a group health plan offered under this Agreement triggers an excise tax under Internal Revenue Code §49801 ("Cadillac" tax), or any other State or Federal Law, the Parties agree to a reopener limited to alternatives to address the impact of the Cadillac Tax.

Article 9

Life Insurance

9.1 Life insurance and accidental death and dismemberment benefits in the amount of \$100,000 will be provided and paid for by the Board for all full-time employees, and \$50,000 for part-time employees working at least 17.5 hours per week on a regular schedule.

Article 10
Indemnification

10.1 The Board agrees to provide indemnification to nurses in accordance with Section 10-235 of the Connecticut General Statutes.

Article 11
Employment of Nurses

11.1 All registered, professional school nurses employed full-time or part-time by the Newtown Schools shall be licensed registered nurses in the State of Connecticut. Starting compensation will be determined by the Board based on education, applicable experience, and existing salary structures. Further, members of the nursing staff will be given full consideration prior to filling any new or vacated position for which they are qualified. Nurses will be responsible to the Director of Pupil Services, School Health Nurse Supervisor and the principal of the school(s) in which they are performing their work.

11.2 When the Board decides to fill a vacancy or new position within the nurses' bargaining unit, it shall post notice of the vacancy or new position on the district's website for a period of five (5) days. Such notification shall indicate that interested candidates shall apply for the position using the district's electronic process. The Board shall also notify the President of the Union or designee regarding such postings by email at the time of such postings.

Article 12
Seniority

12.1 Seniority shall mean the total length of continuous employment as a school nurse with the Board. A break in service due to an approved paid or unpaid leave of up to one year will not constitute a break in continuous employment. However, the time on unpaid leave will not be credited as part of the total length of employment.

12.2 Whenever a position is eliminated, or has the hours of work reduced, the affected employee in said position shall have the right to displace the least senior employee in the same classification with the same hours or less as long as the employee has the skills and ability to perform the work. Final move is subject to the superintendent's approval.

12.3 Employees laid off shall be placed on a recall list and shall have recall rights for the next vacancy for up to eighteen (18) months after their layoff.

12.4 If a bargaining unit employee is laid off and is recalled within the recall period set forth in Section 12.3 above, the employee will be given seniority credit for the period of employment prior to the layoff. If an employee is rehired after the expiration of the recall period, the employee will be hired as a new employee and will not be given seniority credit for the period of employment prior to the layoff.

12.5 The Board shall not fill any vacancy from outside until all qualified nurses on the recall

list have been given the opportunity to fill the position. A nurse on the recall list who is notified of a recall opportunity shall accept or reject the appointment in writing within five (5) calendar days after receipt of notification. If the nurse rejects the appointment offer or does not respond within five (5) calendar days after receipt of such notification, the name of the nurse shall be removed from the recall list.

12.6 On or about December 1 of each year, the Board shall supply the Union with a seniority list inclusive of names, date of hire and home address for each bargaining unit member.

**Article 13
Case Load**

13.1 A reasonable attempt will be made by the administration to conform to State recommendations.

**Article 14
Clerical Help**

14.1 Periodic clerical help will be provided for nurses whenever possible.

**Article 15
Travel**

15.1 All nurses, full-time or part-time, who are required by assignment to travel between schools shall be reimbursed at the published IRS rate.

**Article 16
Maternity Leave**

16.1 Maternity leave shall be granted to the nurses in accordance with the Family And Medical Leave Act (FMLA), if applicable.

**Article 17
Jury Duty**

17.1 Any nurse who is called for jury duty shall receive the necessary leave to fulfill her/his legal obligations. This leave shall not be deducted from sick leave. The nurse shall receive a rate of pay equal to the difference between her/his applicable salary and the jury duty salary.

The employee called for jury duty shall notify the superintendent in writing as soon as the employee has received either (a) a notice from the court indicating that she/he has been selected for service on the jury panel, or (b) notice to appear in court for service on the jury panel.

Article 18 Workshops

18.1 Upon request in writing from a nurse, the superintendent may grant workshop or conference leaves to nurses without loss of pay.

18.2 When a nurse is requested by the Nursing Supervisor and/or the Director of Pupil Services to attend a workshop that is considered to be an integral part of the district's goals on a non-work day, the nurse will receive \$150 per day, pro-rated for less than six (6) hours for their attendance.

Article 19 Grievance Procedure

19.1 A "grievance" is a claim based upon the interpretation, meaning, or application of any of the provisions of this agreement or claim based on the discriminatory application of written personnel policies relative to employment, a copy of which is on file in each school office.

19.2 A "grievant" is a person or persons making the claim. If a grievance affects a group of members of Local 1303, Council 4, a member or members of Local 1303, Council 4 may submit such grievance in writing directly to the superintendent and the grievance process will begin at Level Two, provided the written grievance is submitted to the superintendent 15 days following the event or condition on which the grievance is based. The grievance shall not be processed to a higher level unless at least one member of Local 1303, Council 4 submits the grievance in writing and in accordance with Sections 19.9, 19.10, and 19.11.

19.3 A "party of interest" is the person or persons making the claim and any person who might be required to take action, or against whom action might be taken, in order to resolve the claim.

19.4 "Superintendent" for the purpose of this section shall mean and include the superintendent and/or his/her designee.

19.5 The purpose of this procedure is to secure, at the lowest possible administrative level, equitable solution to the grievances that from time-to-time arise. Both parties agree that these proceedings shall be kept as informal and confidential as may be appropriate at any level of the procedure.

19.6 Nothing herein contained shall be construed limiting the right of any nurse having a grievance to discuss the matter informally with any appropriate member of administration.

19.7 Since it is important that grievances be processed as rapidly as possible, the number of days indicated at each level should be considered as a maximum and every effort should be made to expedite the process. The time limits specified, however, may be extended by mutual agreement. As used in this Article, "days" shall mean days when school is in session, provided that during the summer months when school is not in session, "days" shall then mean calendar

days other than Saturdays, Sundays and holidays.

19.8 Level One — Principal or Immediate Supervisor

19.8.1 Within fifteen (15) days following the event or condition on which the grievance is based, a grievant with a grievance shall first discuss it with her/his principal or immediate supervisor (and a representative of the Union if the grievant so desires) with the objective of resolving the matter informally. The principal or immediate supervisor shall give the grievant a written response within five days.

19.9 Level Two — Superintendent of Schools

19.9.1 In the event that the grievant is not satisfied with the disposition of the grievance at Level One, she/he may file a written grievance with the superintendent within five (5) days after the written response at Level One.

19.9.2 Within ten (10) days after receipt of the written grievance, the superintendent shall meet with the grievant (and a representative of the Union if the grievant so desires) in an effort to resolve it. The grievant should be given a written response to her/his grievance within ten (10) days after such meeting, such response to be signed by the superintendent and constitute the superintendent's decision on the grievance.

19.10 Level Three — The Board of Education

19.10.1 In the event that the grievant is not satisfied with the disposition of the grievance at Level Two, she/he may submit such written grievance to the Board within fifteen (15) days after the meeting at Level Two. Within twenty (20) days after receiving the written grievance, the Board shall meet with the grievant (and a representative of the Union if the grievant so desires) for the purpose of resolving the grievance. The decision on the grievance at Level Three shall be rendered by the Board within ten (10) days after such meeting.

19.11 Level Four — Binding Arbitration

19.11.1 If the decision of the Board does not resolve the grievance, the Union may submit such grievance to final and binding arbitration in accordance with the provisions set forth below, including but not limited to section 19.11.3.

19.11.2 Notice of intention to submit to arbitration under section 19.11.1 above must be in writing addressed to the Superintendent of Schools. The submission to arbitration must be made not later than thirty (30) days following receipt of the Board's decision.

19.11.3 In cases involving the discharge of a nurse, the hearing shall be promptly held before an arbitrator to be mutually selected by the parties.

In all other cases, the Board shall have the option to select either the Connecticut State Board of Mediation and Arbitration or the American Arbitration Association to hear the grievance. If

the Board wishes to select the American Arbitration Association to hear the grievance, it shall so notify the Union, in writing, within ten (10) working days of receipt of the Union's written notice of intent to proceed to arbitration. In the event that the Board does not so notify the Union within such time period, the Board shall thereby waive its right to select the American Arbitration Association to hear the grievance. Not later than ten (10) days after receipt of notice from the Board designating its selection of an arbitration agency, or, in the event no such notice is received, within ten (10) days after the period for providing such notice has expired, the Union shall file for arbitration with the appropriate arbitration agency, with a copy to the Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee. The parties shall share the arbitration filing fee equally. For any case in which the Board exercises the option to have the American Arbitration Association hear the grievance, the Board shall pay the arbitrator's per diem fees.

19.11.4 The arbitrator shall have no power to add to, delete from, or modify in any way any of the provisions of the agreement.

19.11.5 No reprisals of any kind shall be taken by either party or by any member of the administration against any participant in the grievance procedure by reason of such participation.

19.11.6 If the grievant fails at any level to appeal a grievance to the next level within specified time limits, the grievance shall be waived. Failure of the Board at any level to comply with the time limits regarding responding to a grievance shall permit the grievant to appeal the grievance to the next level.

Article 20 Discipline

20.1 All disciplinary action shall be applied in a fair manner and shall not be incongruous to the infraction for which the disciplinary action is being applied. All disciplinary action may be appealed through established grievance procedures.

Article 21 Non-Discrimination

21.1 The Board and the Union agree that there shall be no discrimination against any nurse because of age, race, creed, color, religion, sex, nationality, marital status, disability, ancestry, genetic information, sexual orientation or gender identity or expression or membership or non-membership in the Union.

Article 22 Payroll Deductions

22.1 The Board agrees to deduct from the pay of all its employees who voluntarily authorize such deductions from their wages such membership dues, initiation fees and reinstatement fees as may be fixed by the Union.

22.2 The Union dues deduction shall be made equally over 22 pay periods.

22.3 Dues deducted shall be remitted to the financial officer of Council 4 together with the list of employees from whose wages such deductions have been made. The Board shall make every effort to remit these no later than 15 days following said deduction.

22.4 The Union agrees to indemnify and hold the Board harmless against any and all claims, demands, suits, or other forms of liability that shall, or may, arise out of, or by reason of, action taken by the Board for the purpose of complying with the provisions of this Article.

22.5 The Employer agrees to deduct from the wages of any employee who is a member of the Union a PEOPLE deduction as provided for in a written authorization. Such authorization must be executed by the employee and may be revoked by the employee at any time by giving written notice to both the employer and the Union. The employer agrees to remit any deductions made pursuant to this provision promptly to the Union together with an itemized statement showing the name of each employee from whose pay such deductions have been made and the amount deducted during the period covered by the remittance. The Union agrees to indemnify and hold the Board harmless against any and all claims, demands, suits, or other forms of liability that shall, or may, arise out of, or by reason of, action taken by the Board for the purpose of complying with the provisions of this section.

Article 23 Labor-Management

To help achieve and promote a harmonious relationship and effective communication, the Union and the Board agree to meet periodically to discuss matters of mutual concern. Such meetings will be carried out by the Superintendent of Schools and the President of the Union (or designee) on a quarterly basis. The President of the Union (or designee) will be responsible for disseminating the information from these meetings to the members of the bargaining unit. The President of the Union (or designee) shall have the ability to attend such meetings without loss of pay.

Article 24
Salary Schedules

24.1 The salary schedule is as follows:

GWI:	1.50%	Steps New-5: 1.5% Step 6: 2.0%	Steps New-5: 1.5% Step 6: 2.0%
	<u>7/1/2021</u>	<u>7/1/2022</u>	<u>7/1/2023</u>
Step			
New Hire	59,011	59,896	60,795
1	61,040	61,956	62,885
2	63,139	64,086	65,047
3	65,139	66,116	67,107
4	67,353	68,364	69,389
5	70,452	71,509	72,582
6	73,566	75,038	76,538

There shall be no step movement for 2021-22. There shall be step movement for 2022-23, and 2023-24.

24.2 Employees hired before July 1, 2015 shall be entitled to an annual longevity payment made the first pay period in December based on the following years of service with the Board:

10 Yrs.	\$ 500
15 Yrs.	\$ 700
20 Yrs.	\$ 900
25 Yrs.	\$1,100

24.3 Nurses who earn a Bachelor's Degree will receive a stipend of \$250, and those who earn a Master's Degree shall receive a stipend of \$500 paid the first pay period in December.

24.4 It is understood that the salary schedule has been developed with current special procedures for children with special needs included as an expected responsibility of today's school nurse, including invasive procedures such as catheterization or ostomy care, suctioning, tube feeding and long-term intravenous intervention. While on duty, the school nurse is the first contact for all on-the-job employee injuries.

24.5 Employees shall be paid salaries, via direct deposit, in accordance with the salary schedule. Confirmation of payment shall be sent by e-mail. Employees will be paid in 26 equal consecutive payments. Salary deposits will be made bi-weekly, on alternate Fridays. When a payday falls on a bank or school holiday, the deposits will be made on the working day prior to the holiday.

Article 25
Pension

Employee participation in the Town of Newtown retirement plans shall be subject to the terms of such plans, as may be amended from time to time. Employees hired on or after July 1, 2017 shall only be eligible to participate in the Town's Defined Contribution Plan.

Article 26
Summer Assignments

Members of the bargaining unit shall be considered first for all summer assignments. Priority shall be given to the nurse and/or nurses who currently work in the school during the regular school year for such summer assignments. If the nurse and/or nurses who work in that school refuse the assignment, priority shall be given to the most senior nurse who applies for the position. If no member applies for the summer assignments, the Board shall fill such assignments with external candidates.

Article 27
Duration

26.1 The duration of this agreement shall be four years beginning July 1, 2021 and continuing and remaining in full force and effect to and including June 30, 2024.

THE NEWTOWN BOARD OF EDUCATION

By: _____
Michelle Ku, Chair

_____ Date

LOCAL 1303-215 OF COUNCIL 4, AFSCME, AFL-CIO

By: _____
President

_____ Date

By: _____
Staff Representative, Council 4, AFSCME

_____ Date

**Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut**

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting held on June 21, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. in the Reed Intermediate School Library.

M. Ku, Chair	L. Rodrigue
D. Delia, Vice Chair	A. Uberti
D. Cruson, Secretary (absent)	1 Staff
D. Leidlein	15 Public
J. Vouros	1 Press
R. Harriman-Stites	
D. Zukowski	

Mrs. Ku called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and stated it was being recorded and live streamed.

Item 1 – Pledge of Allegiance

Item 2 – Presentation of Plan for Safe Return to In-person Instruction and Continuity of Services for the 2021-2022 School Year

Dr. Rodrigue said this plan should be viewed as evolving and needs to be posted publicly by June 23. She had spoken with our Director of Health with her intentions and evaluated the data we had from the first day we shut down last March. She also reflected on the multitude of vaccination clinics we had and those across the state and also reviewed the stakeholder feedback. She was mindful of the opinions along the way and stated that we will return to school in full next year.

Dr. Rodrigue presented the five areas the Connecticut public school districts had to consider when developing this plan which include Health and Safety Strategies, Continuity of Services, Public Comment, Periodic Review Process and Understandable and Uniform Format. She doesn't know what changes will be made from the State but she feels opening up in full is the right way to go. Our top priority is the safety of our students and staff. She also thanked Donna Culbert for her help.

Item 3 – Public Participation

Stephanie Stroeve, 7 Possum Ridge Road, said this was an excellent plan and supports most of it. She was disappointed about the quarantining. She can't imagine a whole class using Google Meet. She would love to see the mental health component moved into the chart. Elementary students need support also. She also mentioned working on the health metrics.

Janet Kuzma, 12 The Boulevard, thanked Dr. Rodrigue and she feels like they were heard. She's very pleased her child can make the choice.

Jenn Larkin, 10 Marlin Road, thanked the Board for hearing them. It's a fantastic plan. Regarding co-teaching, it sounds phenomenal and they should do it at the elementary level.

Item 4 – Discussion and Possible Vote on Plan

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education approve the plan for safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services for the 2021-2022 school year. Mrs. Harriman-Stites seconded.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites appreciated the thought that went into this plan and likes the ideas of putting mental health in the chart. She asked what the staff reaction was to the plan.

Dr. Rodrigue met with the union and focused on mitigation strategies and going back in full. Many staff have been vaccinated and feel indifferent about entering the buildings with or without masks.

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved to amend the motion to add a mental health piece to the chart. Mrs. Harriman-Stites seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Ms. Zukowski wanted to know the options for a medically fragile child unable to wear a mask. Dr. Rodrigue said it was very narrow as to what constituted not able to wear a mask. We did not have any. Most of those students were in cohort D but it's something the nurses work on with the parents.

Ms. Zukowski referred to cohort D students and wanted to know the options for extremely fragile students.

Dr. Rodrigue said they are exempt and don't need to wear a mask.

Mr. Vouros stated that since there will be no early release on Wednesdays if it was possible for students to remain in school for the last two hours so teachers could work with the students that need the help to catch up.

Dr. Rodrigue said we have been working with principals and staff as to when students can be supported. The issue she sees is more instructional time lost. We lost a lot which is why we decided to not take Wednesday afternoons off. Not every student will need that support.

Mrs. Uberti noted that we don't feel we have fully assessed the degree of learning loss yet. We are looking forward to a normal atmosphere again. We are working with principals about creative ways to provide support before and after school.

Mrs. Ku referred to quarantining and asked if only direct contacts will be contacted. Dr. Rodrigue said everyone was contacted back 48 hours.

Donna Culbert, Director of Health, stated we always notify contacts although there are times we aren't absolutely sure. It lets people be mindful of symptoms. Regarding the metrics, sometimes exposure takes place from an event but it could have happened elsewhere.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites asked that regarding volunteers, what process will ensure a person will be vaccinated.

Dr. Rodrigue said they will have to show us their card.

Mrs. Ku asked if staff have to wear a mask if not fully vaccinated.

Dr. Rodrigue said we typically do the same thing as we do with students and will make it optional with staff. No teacher she spoke to will come into a school without a mask if not vaccinated. We felt it should be optional for all, but not for volunteers.

Mrs. Ku had mixed feelings about this. The district is responsible for the students and we employ the staff.

MOTION: Ms. Zukowski moved to amend the motion to add that unvaccinated staff who work closely with medically fragile children must wear a mask. Mr. Delia seconded.

Mrs. Ku asked if we are legally able to ask staff for their vaccination record.

Dr. Rodrigue said we shouldn't be asking per legal counsel.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites said it was a consistency issue. If we ask volunteers, it's important enough to ask staff who work with students. If not, we shouldn't ask volunteers.

Dr. Rodrigue said we consider the staff as the school community. If students can come in without a mask, it's for staff also.

Mrs. Ku can't support this motion as it is because she has an issue with anyone having to show a vaccination record. She liked the way it was worded for volunteers.

Vote: 6 nays. Motion fails.

MOTION: Mrs. Ku moved to amend the motion to read that all adults working with students should wear a mask unless fully vaccinated. Mr. Vouros seconded.

Mr. Delia suggested instead of using "should wear a mask" to use "will be encouraged to wear a mask." We can't tell people to wear a mask.

Vote: 5 ayes, 1 nay (Mrs. Leidlein) Motion passes.

MOTION: Mrs. Harriman-Stites moved to amend the motion to read that volunteers working with students should wear a mask unless fully vaccinated. Mr. Delia seconded.

Mrs. Leidlein said there is a big difference between volunteer and staff member and felt like it was lessening the language if we used "should" instead of "will be encouraged."

Dr. Rodrigue noted we decided volunteers should wear a mask if unvaccinated.

Vote: 6 nays. Motion fails.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites referred to the mask section which states that unvaccinated students don't have to wear a mask. There's a different standard for staff and volunteers.

Mrs. Uberti said adults who regularly work with students would exclude volunteers because they are not regularly working with students.

MOTION: Mrs. Harriman-Stites moved to amend the motion to move the sentence about masks from the volunteers section and put it in the masks section after the sentence we just approved in the previous motion. Full section should now read "all adults working with students should wear a mask unless fully vaccinated. However, volunteers working with students will be asked to wear a mask unless fully vaccinated." Ms. Zukowski seconded.

Vote 5 ayes, 1 nay (Debbie Leidlein) Motion passes.

Mr. Delia asked if we were sending a letter to the Governor with the plan. It might be important for our input to be heard.

Dr. Rodrigue said this goes to the State Department of Education but a letter can go from the Board.

Vote on plan: Motion passes unanimously.

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education go into executive session to approve the salary adjustment and one-year contract extension for the Assistant Superintendent per the Superintendent's recommendation. Mr. Vouros seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 5 – Executive Session

Executive session began at 8:34 p.m. and ended at 9:25 p.m.

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education approve the salary adjustment and one-year contract extension for the Assistant Superintendent per the Superintendent's recommendation. Mr. Vouros seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

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

Item – 6 Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Michelle Ku
Chair