

***In consideration of public health, open meetings and the Governor's Executive Order No. 7B dated March 10, 2020 regarding PROTECTION OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND RESPONSE - FURTHER SUSPENSION OR MODIFICATION OF STATUTES, this meeting will include an option for the public to live-stream or phone in to listen to the audio of the meeting. Please note that public comment will be received by phone at the beginning of this meeting. Alternatively, the Board encourages the public to email any comments for Board consideration to [NewtownBOE@newtown.k12.ct.us](mailto:NewtownBOE@newtown.k12.ct.us)***

***To view this meeting, the live stream link is: <https://bit.ly/3foqQMQ>  
For public participation and to listen to the meeting, please call 1-646-558-8656  
The PIN is 910 782 0716#***

Board of Education Special Meeting  
August 4, 2020

3 Primrose Street (virtual meeting)  
7:00 p.m.

*As citizens of our community, we will conduct ourselves in accordance with Newtown's Core Character Attributes as displayed in our character tree. We will be responsible for our actions and show respect for each other. We will interact peacefully, productively, and politely. We will be trustworthy and honest and show compassion toward others. Newtown's continued success is contingent upon our ability to persevere, to follow through with our commitments, and to stay focused on the greater good.*

#### A G E N D A

- Item 1                    PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
  
- Item 2                    CONSENT AGENDA
  - Minutes of July 21, 2020
  - Correspondence Report
  
- Item 3                    \*\*PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
  
- Item 4                    REPORTS
  - Chair Report
  - Superintendent's Report
  - Committee Reports
  
- Item 5                    OLD BUSINESS
  - Update on Newtown Public Schools Re-Entry Plan Fall 2020
  
- Item 6                    NEW BUSINESS
  - Discussion about Proposal for Transportation Route Changes
  - Action on Authorization of Signature
  - First Read of Policies
    - 0523 Equity and Diversity
    - 6114.8 Pandemic/Epidemic Emergencies
    - 6172.61 Distance Learning Plan Due to Health and Safety School Closure
  
- Item 7                    \*\*PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
  
- Item 8                    ADJOURNMENT

***\*\*During the first Public Participation, the Board welcomes commentary regarding items on the agenda. After being recognized, please state your name and address for the record. We request that speakers be respectful and limit comments to not more than three minutes. The Board of Education does not discuss personnel items or student matters in public. During the second Public Participation, commentary may address the agenda or may introduce issues for the Board to consider in the future. The Board does not engage in dialogue during either public comment period. If you desire more information or answers to specific questions, please email the BOE: [NewtownBOE@newtown.k12.ct.us](mailto:NewtownBOE@newtown.k12.ct.us)***

**Board of Education  
Newtown, Connecticut**

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting held virtually on July 21, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

M. Ku, Chair	L. Rodrigue
D. Delia, Vice Chair	A. Uberti
D. Cruson, Secretary	R. Bienkowski
D. Leidlein	1 Staff
J. Vouros	1 Press
R. Harriman-Stites	60 Public
D. Zukowski	

Mrs. Ku called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. from the municipal center where it was being recorded and live-streamed. All Board members were on video except for John Vouros who joined by phone. Staff on video were Dr. Rodrigue, Mrs. Uberti, Mr. Bienkowski and Dr. Purcaro.

Item 1 – Pledge of Allegiance

Mrs. Ku asked that the Verkada camera discussion be moved to the end of the meeting after the re-entry presentation.

Item 2 – Consent Agenda

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education approve the consent agenda which includes the minutes of July 7, 2020, the donation to the Sandy Hook School Music Department, and the correspondence report. Mr. Cruson seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 3 – Public Participation

Dennis Brestovansky, 11 Longview Heights Road, spoke about the Verkada camera lease payment. He referred to comments in the June 2 Board meeting video and didn't think pre-payment was a good move. It's better to put that money into the non-lapsing fund. It's no real benefit to taxpayers and the future was highly uncertain now. He also noted the change in the Board of Finance non-lapsing fund policy and suggested adding "taxpayers" to the wording because that's who the money belongs to.

Katherine Burke, 48 Taunton Hill Road, thanked the re-entry committee for their time and effort. She asked if the presenters could share what the virtual option would look like if children stayed home.

Item 4 – Reports

Chair Report: Mrs. Ku said that they attended the Board of Finance meeting where they discussed the policy they are considering with a discussion of the procedure for the non-lapsing account. There was a lot of comparing from the 2014 Board of Finance minutes to those we passed in recent years and thought there might be a conflict. They also talked of having a joint meeting with the Board of Finance and Board of Education and having a memorandum of understanding regarding the Education non-lapsing account.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites asked the purpose of the meeting between the two boards and the charge. Mrs. Ku wasn't sure of the charge but they want to discuss what the procedure is and be sure our policy is in line with what they see as the procedure they approved in 2014. It would be a working committee on this policy.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Rodrigue said she was hosting a Community Conversation around diversity and equity and will include the resolution. We have close to 50 staff and community members joining. There will be a discussion tonight about another change to the school calendar and emphasized the importance of staff training in the fall.

**Committee Reports:**

Mr. Delia reported that he attended his first EdAdvance meeting today where they discussed the grant they received for space for their Head Start Program in Plymouth.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites said the Policy meeting last week went through personnel policies including racial harassment and the new diversity and equity policy which will be presented to the Community Conversation group. They are also finalizing the pandemic and distance learning policies.

Mr. Delia stated he did a high school walk-through with Bob Gerbert and Allen Adriani from the Sustainable Energy Commission and thanked Bob for taking the time to do that for us as he did learn a lot.

Item 5 – Old Business

Policy 4-102 Health Examination – Initial Employment of Personnel:

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education approve rescinding Policy 4-102 Health Examination – Initial Employment of Personnel. Mr. Cruson seconded.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites said this is no longer appropriate as other districts don't require physical examinations and this will save money also.

Motion passes unanimously.

Item 6 – New Business

Presentation of the Re-Entry Plan:

Dr. Rodrigue spoke about the formation and work of the Re-entry Committee. She feels strongly that the Newtown community will continue to demonstrate a collective effort to work toward returning students to school with safe and reasonable standards of care and precaution. Our task was very clear to develop a plan with all models of re-entry based on the State plan and how this would be safety operationalized in accordance with our own buildings and classrooms. She thanked all of the members of our staff and community who worked tirelessly on this committee which had a very rigid timeline.

Two surveys were sent with the first to obtain feedback regarding distance learning and the second to gain a confidence level of returning to school in the fall. Another one will go out in early August to get a more accurate count of students returning in the fall. Our plan was made to be flexible and fluid responding to changes that may occur, and there is a collective responsibility that is critical for everyone to follow. We have an improved distance learning model and have mapped out the need for academic and social/emotional supports for students. The plan also includes requirements, recommendations by the State, and other precautionary measures.

Mrs. Uberti and Dr. Purcaro presented the plan.

Mrs. Uberti began by speaking about the six guiding principles from the State's plan which directed school districts to return to school full-time with in-person instruction in the fall.

Connecticut is at low risk which is why the Governor made this decision. Should the community spread increase with a moderate risk, we would adapt the hybrid model, and if there is

widespread community transmission with high risk, all schools will be closed and we would go to the distance learning model.

We organized our plan around six pillars which include Governance, Wellness, Instruction and Technology, Social/Emotional Learning, Facilities, and School Operations. The focus of the Governance Pillar was to establish the vision and priorities of the plan, oversee its development, and ensure effective coordination of the plan. One requirement was to appoint a District COVID-19 Health and Safety Compliance Liaison and she will be in that position. Nurses will serve as building liaisons. Communication will be very important and the Superintendent will continue to update the Board, meet with community groups and PTA Presidents, as well as hold office hours for parents, staff, and the community. We also plan to send weekly updates to the school community as well as have them posted on the district website.

The Wellness Pillar focuses on promoting the health and well-being of our community and to ensure the health and safety of our students and staff which is the most important consideration of this plan. An important factor is training staff and students on protocols on sanitation. Nurses will provide training presentations for students and families. There will be a screening checklist for parents to use at home before leaving for school.

Dr. Purcaro spoke about the Instruction and Technology Pillar which includes planning for a full-time reopening in the fall and provisions for students who will remain home as they will be required to do remote learning instruction. We will be identifying learning gaps as well as equity, inclusion and access in regards to online instruction for all students. Professional development time will be used to give teachers time to address student learning needs at the start of the school year. The three modes of learning were explained. They include on-site learning, hybrid learning, and full distance learning.

Mrs. Uberti spoke about the Social/Emotional Learning Pillar to ensure students, parents and staff are supported as we transition back to school and that students have the opportunity to develop a relationship with their teacher. SRBI teams will review data to identify students in need of extra support and develop plans for them so that no child is left behind. We will look to other groups like our Safe School Climate Committee to create opportunities for students and staff that support hope, wellness, and optimism.

The Facilities Pillar focused on identifying practices and resource to protect the health and safety of students and staff. They worked to develop clear safety expectations including, but not limited to, safety devices, PPEs, cleaning and sanitizing, signs, and ventilation.

The School Operations Pillar focused on creating a logistics plan that supports a safe, organized transition back to school which includes planning for building usage, outdoor spaces, athletics, and transportation.

Mrs. Ku thanked everyone on the re-entry committee for their hard work. This is an amazing plan.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites appreciated being part of this committee and asked about purchasing what we need and if there was any talk from the State assisting us with the costs.

Dr. Rodrigue meets weekly with the Superintendents and Fran Rabinowitz so we are ordering supplies and haven't run into any problems. She has that outlined in the financial information. Mrs. Leidlein asked if there were guarantees that we will receive the materials prior to the beginning of school.

Dr. Rodrigue said we were working on the dividers and desk shields through a company in Danbury. They feel confident we will get what we need. Other items include signage, face shields and face masks.

Mr. Delia asked about State funding and if masks are mandated by the State if we had to pay for them.

Dr. Rodrigue said there would be some funding for that but is still unclear of how much. Part of that will be the CARES funds.

Dr. Rodrigue said the Board of Education is an entity of the State so she believes the State should be providing the PPE for the schools.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites felt we should write to the State as a Board stating they should supply us PPE.

Mrs. Ku would work on that with Mrs. Harriman-Stites.

The question of quarantining was raised. Dr. Rodrigue said we will be working closely with our Director of Health regarding whether a whole family has to quarantine. There will also be thresholds about what constitutes the closing of a classroom, a building or an entire district. Legislators and senators are looking to speak to the Governor and Commissioner of Education to be sure they clarify that to the public.

Mr. Vouros asked what was happening with the Pre-K program and if parents would be responsible for making sure temperatures are taken before children leave the house to get on the bus.

Dr. Rodrigue said Pre-K students would stay home if they aren't feeling well or have a temperature.

Mrs. Uberti said that evaluations are in place for our Pre-K students so we are going to offer that program. They are awaiting further guidance from the state.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites asked the threshold for staff not returning to school and the reasons.

Dr. Rodrigue said there are clear guidelines in terms of age and underlying medical conditions. Human Resources is dealing with staff who have come forward. That also includes a staff member who lives with someone with a medical condition. There will be some who need accommodations.

Mr. Delia asked if someone came in contact with a person who had the virus would they have to work from home.

Dr. Rodrigue said they would have to work virtually from home.

Mrs. Uberti stated they would have to have a substitute teacher in that room. We have also increased the number of subs per school.

Mr. Delia was concerned about the subs and not being able to secure them.

Dr. Rodrigue said Human Resources was putting out a survey to all of our subs to understand their comfort level. The other thing is to go out into the community through our PTAs to help. She feels we'll be okay but it is a concern but too early to tell. In terms of payment, we raised the pay for subs a year ago.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites wants the public to understand why we are going with the full school model and if we would consider the hybrid model.

Dr. Rodrigue said our numbers are the lowest in Connecticut which is why we are looking for a full, all in. We have a solid plan but there are still challenges ahead.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites said the State is requiring us to go with the all in model.

Dr. Rodrigue said this was out of our control. We were not able to choose the model.

Ms. Zukowski asked if class assignments would be influenced by families who opt to stay remote.

Mrs. Uberti stated that we are going to be looking at a few factors for teacher placement. We have to prepare for a hybrid so we are establishing cohorts. Also, we are looking at a balance of students for teachers with students in school and those getting instruction at home.

Mrs. Leidlein felt that social distancing has to have an effect in the classroom. She asked if the teachers will have time to discuss the way of teaching with these requirements and have adequate planning, collaboration, and PD time to meet the instruction criteria in the classroom. Mr. Delia worried that teachers would be overwhelmed and have to change models. He wants them to have what they need to deliver the curriculum.

Mrs. Uberti said we all have that concern. This is not going to be perfect and we will need patience from parents and teachers. We want to start working on a concrete plan to support students and want models on how a lesson can be delivered.

Dr. Rodrigue said there will be a shift in what teachers are doing in the PLCs to discuss the changes needed.

Mr. Vouros referred to the substitute issue and was concerned we won't have enough.

Mr. Delia agreed.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites referred to the delivery of the curriculum. We have to support teachers with social emotional issues and there are resources for them. She feels we should have the wellness Wednesday in all models. She also asked if there would be a deep cleaning on Saturdays.

Dr. Rodrigue said it will just be Wednesdays. She expects to be in frequent contact with Board and the community as things may change rapidly.

Mrs. Ku said we will need information on substitutes. We need to send the plan to the State by Friday.

**MOTION:** Mr. Delia moved that the Board of Education approve the Newtown Public Schools Re-Entry Plan Fall 2020. Mr. Cruson seconded.

Mr. Delia was in full support of the plan and thanked everyone.

Motion passes unanimously.

#### 2020-2021 School Calendar:

Dr. Rodrigue said that multiple Superintendents approached the State about whether they would consider reducing the minimum number of school days to 177. Originally, the State was not going to offer that but since then, they reversed their position and allowed districts to add three days of staff training at the beginning of the year. She proposed to move the student start day to September 3<sup>rd</sup> with Thursday and Friday as half-days and focus on the protocols with students.

Ms. Zukowski felt if we have to transition between learning models it might make sense to have a staff development day between those transitions.

Dr. Rodrigue said they had that same conversation but it has to be in the beginning of the year. Mr. Vouros asked if it made sense to have Thursday and Friday as professional development days and have the students start after Labor Day.

Dr. Rodrigue felt it was better to use those two half-days to work with students before they come back from the break.

Mr. Cruson was concerned with dropping below the 180 days and was struggling with an education gap. He didn't want to drop below the 180 days and would rather add a day at the end.

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved to adjust the school calendar to include Wednesday, September 2 as an all-day professional development day and the students first day of school will start on September 3 as a half-day. Mr. Vouros seconded. Vote: 6 ayes, 1 nay (Mr. Cruson)  
Motion passes.

Item 5 – Old Business (continued)

Verkada Camera Lease Payment:

Mrs. Ku said the payment was approved at the June 2 meeting to pay down the remaining three years of the Verkada lease. At the last meeting we approved holding the payment check until this meeting so another motion is needed. There are three options which include sending the check for \$374,797.44, reissuing a check for an amount covering the third year of the lease only, or rescinding the motion of June 2 which would result in no payment at all. We need to clarify the amount to cover the third year only.

Mr. Bienkowski contacted Verkada and asked if we made one payment could it be applied to the third year but the person he had spoken to earlier left the company and the new individual was unable to give him an answer. He sent him an email explaining the situation so he is waiting for an answer.

Mrs. Ku said the previous arrangement was we would have to pay all three years.

Mr. Bienkowski said an advance payment would come off the final fifth year.

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved to cancel sending the pre-payment check for the Verkada camera lease.

Ms. Zukowski seconded.

Mr. Delia originally was not in support of this motion. We are not receiving any financial benefit from Verkada and he didn't think it was the right decision. We will need this money for the re-entry and he will push and work with the Board of Finance to make sure this money goes into the non-lapsing fund to be used for returning to school.

Ms. Zukowski said she voted for using the funds as long as we don't use the money for something else. It can go into the non-lapsing fund and be used for charges for returning to school and, if not used for COVID recovery, we can use it at the end of the year and pay off the Verkada lease.

Mr. Cruson referred to the budget surplus for expenses for re-entry and needed all of the numbers to make a decision.

Mrs. Ku said there are still unknown costs which we need to keep in mind.

Dr. Rodrigue and Mr. Bienkowski reviewed the financial information.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites stated we would ask the Board of Finance to put \$600,000 into the non-lapsing fund because without it we would not be able to handle the known costs we have. She asked where this money would go if they don't approve our request.

Mr. Bienkowski said it would go into the Town's fund balance.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites stated that if she votes against making the payment the money would go into the non-lapsing account for unknown expenses but there is no guarantee.

Mrs. Leidlein said even if we make the Verkada payment we still have well over the amount anticipated we have to pay for the Covid expenses in our schools.

Mr. Bienkowski said there would be approximately \$500,000 left.

Ms. Zukowski said if we have anything left after paying for Covid she would put that into our non-lapsing account to build the budget back up.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites agreed with Ms. Zukowski and stated that future years will be difficult budget years. Having \$125,000 removed from budget does help. For the good of the Board and of other Boards she would support the motion.

Mr. Delia was not in support of making the payment is because we aren't receiving a financial benefit from Verkada. He was also concerned if something happens with the cameras when we've already paid them.

Mrs. Ku initially supported it because it would be reducing the amount of tax burden in future years. Her concern is the Covid expenses have been the focus of our surplus. She wants to make sure we clarify whatever we put in is for educational needs in the future and not just for Covid. Special education costs are a very good reason to do that. She will support the motion in good faith that we will be supported in our action this evening.

Vote: 5 ayes, 2 nays (Mr. Cruson, Mrs. Leidlein) Motion passes.

Item 7 – Public Participation - none

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

Item 8 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

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Daniel J. Cruson, Jr.  
Secretary



## Mission – Goals – Objectives

### Equity and Diversity

The Board of Education (Board) is committed to the success of every student in each of our schools and to achieving the mission of ensuring that all students graduate ready for college post-secondary education, career and life. The Board believes that the responsibility for student success is broadly shared by District staff, administrators, teachers, community and families. The Board is focused on closing the opportunity gap and creating learning communities that provide support and academic enrichment programs for all students. [or: The Board believes that every student has the potential to achieve and it is the responsibility of the District to give each student the opportunity and support to meet his or her highest potential.]

### Definitions

For the purposes of this policy the following terms shall have these meanings:

- A. “Diversity” includes characteristics of persons including, but not limited to race, culture, color, creed or religion, national origin, gender, mental and physical ability, age, marital status, family structure, citizenship status, sexual orientation, sexual expression or identity, economic status, veteran’s status, and any other protected class in conformance with federal, state and local laws.
- B. “District staff” includes all employees, consultants and contractors of the Newtown Public Schools.
- C. “Educational equity” means raising the achievement of all students while (1) narrowing the gaps between the lowest and highest performing students, and (2) eliminating the racial or cultural predictability and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories including rates of graduation.
- D. “Institutional racism” means the collective failure of a public or private organization to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their race, color, culture or ethnic origin which can be seen or detected in practices, processes, systems, attitudes and behavior. It looks beyond individual acts of prejudice to the systemic biases that may be built into institutions. These systemic biases discriminate against and disadvantage people of color through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness or racial stereotyping.

The concept of educational equity extends beyond formal equity, where all students are treated the same, to fostering a barrier-free environment where all students, regardless of their race, class, or other personal characteristics such as creed, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, age, economic status, gender, sexual orientation including gender expression or identity,

**Mission – Goals – Objectives**

**Equity and Diversity (continued)**

pregnancy status, marital status, physical appearance, or the presence of any sensory, mental or physical disability, have the opportunity to benefit equally.

The responsibility for the disparities among our youth rests with adults, not the children. The Board is aware that student achievement data from across the country reveal similar patterns and those complex societal and historical factors contribute to the inequities faced by students. Rather than perpetuating such disparities, the Board believes the District must address and overcome this inequity and institutional racism, providing all students with the support and opportunity to succeed. This means differentiating resource allocation, within budgetary limitations, to meet the needs of students who need more supports and opportunities to succeed academically. The district will provide additional and differentiated resources to support the success of all students, including students of color.

District schools will significantly continue to change/improve its practices in order to achieve and maintain racial equity in education. Educational equity means raising the achievement of all students while (1) narrowing the gaps between the lowest and highest performing students and (2) eliminating the racial predictability and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories.

With these commitments in mind, the Newtown Public Schools shall:

- Provide every student with equitable access to high quality and culturally relevant instruction, curriculum, support, facilities and other educational resources, even when this means differentiating resources to accomplish this goal.
- Create multiple pathways to success in order to meet the needs of its diverse students, and shall actively encourage, support and expect high academic achievement from all racial groups.
- Recruit, employ, support and retain a teacher, administrator, instructional and support workforce that is balanced and reflects the diversity of the student body.
- Provide professional development to strengthen employees' knowledge and skills for eliminating cultural, racial and ethnic disparities in achievement.
- Ensure that each school creates a welcoming culture and inclusive environment that reflects and supports the diversity of the District's student population, their families and communities.
- Remedy the practices, including assessment, that lead to the over-representation of students of color in areas such as special education and discipline, and the under representation in programs such as talented and gifted and Advanced Placement.
- Review existing policies, programs, professional development and procedures to ensure the promotion of racial equality, and all applicable new policies, programs and procedures will be developed with a racial equity approach.

**Mission – Goals – Objectives**

**Equity and Diversity (continued)**

- Include other partners who have demonstrated culturally specific expertise, including families, government agencies, institutions of higher learning, early childhood education organizations, community-based organizations, businesses, and the community in general, in meeting the District's high goals for educational outcomes.
- Provide, consistent with state regulations and District policy and within budgetary considerations, materials and assessments that reflect the diversity of students and staff, and which are geared towards the understanding and appreciation of culture, class, language, ethnicity and other differences that contribute to the uniqueness of each student and staff member.
- Ensure staff and leaders set goals to promote and monitor the implementation of goals outlined in the Diversity & Equity Resolution
- Familiarize students and staff with clear expectations for being an "upstander" to maintain a safe, civil, and respectful school community

The Board recognizes that these are long-term goals that require significant work and resources to implement in all schools. All District employees are responsible for the success and achievement of all students. The Superintendent is authorized to develop procedures to implement this policy, including an action plan with clear responsibility. Annually, the Superintendent shall report to the Board on the progress towards achieving the goals outlined in this policy.

(cf. 0521 – Nondiscrimination)

(cf. 1110.1 – Parental Involvement)

(cf. 1110.3 – School Governance Council)

(cf. 1210 – Community Associations)

(cf. 1212 – Volunteers)

(cf. 1330 or 3515 – Use of School Facilities)

(cf. 1205 – Participation by the Public)

(cf. 4111 – Recruitment and Selection)

(cf. 4111.1/4211.1 – Affirmative Action)

(cf. 4118.11 – Nondiscrimination)

**Mission – Goals – Objectives**

**Equity and Diversity (continued)**

(cf. 4118.113/4218.113 – Harassment)

(cf. 4118.3 – District Minority Recruitment Plan)

(cf. 4131 – Staff Development)

(cf. 5118.1 – Homeless Students)

(cf. 5131.911 – Bullying/Safe School Climate Plans)

(cf. 5145.4 – Nondiscrimination)

(cf. 5145.42 – Racial Harassment)

(cf. 5145.5 – Sexual Harassment)

(cf. 5145.51 – Peer Sexual Harassment)

(cf. 5145.52 – Harassment)

(cf. 5145.53 – Transgender and Non-Conforming Youth)

(cf. 5145.6 – Student Grievance Procedure)

(cf. 6115 – Ceremonies and Observances)

(cf. 6121 – Nondiscrimination)

(cf. 6121.1 – Equal Educational Opportunity)

(cf. 6141.21 – Religions in the Public Schools)

(cf. 6141.22 – Religious Accommodations)

(cf. 6141.311 – Programs for limited English Proficient Students)

(cf. 6171 – Special Education)

(cf. 9133 – Board of Education Advisory Committees)

## Mission – Goals – Objectives

### Equity and Diversity (continued)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes  
46a-60 Discriminatory employment practices prohibited.  
10-15c Discrimination in public schools prohibited. School attendance by five-year olds. (Amended by P.A. 97-247 to include “sexual orientation” and P.A. 11-55 to include “gender identity or expression”)  
10-153 Discrimination on account of marital status.  
17a-101 Protection of children from abuse.  
Connecticut State Board of Education, “Position Statement on Culturally Responsive Education,” adopted May 4, 2011  
Title VII, Civil Rights Act, 42 U.S.C. 2000e, et seq.  
29 CFR 1604.11, EEOC Guidelines on Sex Discrimination.  
Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. 1681 et seq.  
34 CFR Section 106.8(b), OCR Guidelines for Title IX.  
Definitions, OCR Guidelines on Sexual Harassment, Fed. Reg. Vol 62, #49, 29 CFR Sec. 1606.8 (a) 62 Fed Reg. 12033 (March 13, 1997) and 66 Fed. Reg. 5512 (January 19, 2001)  
Section 8525, ESEA as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act  
*Meritor Savings Bank. FSB v. Vinson*, 477 U.S. 57 (1986)  
*Faragher v. City of Boca Raton*, No. 97-282 (U.S. Supreme Court, June 26, 1998)  
*Gebbs v. Lago Vista Indiana School District*, No. 99-1866, (U.S. Supreme Court, June 26, 1998)  
*Davis v. Monro County Board of Education*, No. 97-843, (U.S. Supreme Court, May 24, 1999.)  
The Vietnam Era Veterans’ Readjustment Act of 1974, as amended, 38U.S.C. §4212  
Title II of the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008  
The Americans with Disabilities Act as amended by the ADA Amendments Act of 2008  
Public Law 111-256  
*Meacham v. Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory* 128 S.Ct. 2395, 76 U.S.L.W. 4488 (2008)

**P0523(e)**

**Mission – Goals – Objectives**

**Equity and Diversity (continued)**

*Federal Express Corporation v. Holowecki* 128 S.Ct. 1147, 76 U.S.L.W. 4110 (2008)

*Kentucky Retirement Systems v. EEOC* 128 S.Ct. 2361, 76 U.S.L.W. 4503 (2008)

*Sprint/United Management Co. v. Mendelsohn* 128 S.Ct. 1140, 76 U.S.L.W. 4107 (2008)

Policy adopted:

## **Instruction**

### **Emergencies and Disaster Preparedness**

#### **Pandemic/Epidemic Emergencies**

The Board recognizes that a pandemic/epidemic outbreak is a serious threat that stands to affect students, staff, and the community as a whole. With this consideration in mind, the Board establishes this policy in the event the town/municipality and/or school district is threatened by a reasonably likely pandemic/epidemic outbreak. At all times the health, safety and welfare of the students shall be of foremost concern along with the health, safety and welfare of the District employees and mindful of the overall health and welfare of the community.

#### **Planning and Coordination**

The Superintendent shall designate the head School Nurse or other appropriate staff members who in conjunction with the School Medical Advisor, shall serve as a liaison between the school district and local and state health officials. This designee and the School Medical Advisor are jointly responsible for connecting with health officials to identify local hazards, determine what crisis plans exist in the school district and community, and to establish procedures to account for student well-being and safety during such a crisis. The designee shall work with local health officials and shall keep the Superintendent advised when the risk of a pandemic or an epidemic of a serious illness has materially increased.

The Principals and/or school nurse or other designee shall develop a curriculum component to health classes that is designed to teach students about preventing or limiting the spread of communicable diseases.

With fiscal concerns in mind, the District shall purchase and store supplies necessary for an epidemic/pandemic outbreak, including but not limited to disinfectant products, face masks, water, examination gloves, and other supplies as recommended by the school nurse and/or School Medical Advisor.

The Superintendent shall develop procedures and plans for the transportation of students in the event of an evacuation. Such procedures shall include provisions for students who cannot be transported to home at the time of the evacuation.

#### **Response**

In the event anyone within the school is discovered or suspected to have a communicable disease that may result in an epidemic/pandemic, that person shall be immediately ~~quarantined~~ isolated pending further medical examination, as recommended by state and national protocols. Local and state health officials shall be notified immediately.

In conjunction with local and state health officials, the Superintendent shall ascertain whether an evacuation, lockdown, or shelter-in-place needs to be established. As soon as such a decision has been made, the school district shall attempt to notify the parents of all students.

In the event of an evacuation, the Superintendent is charged with determining when the school shall reopen. In the event of a lockdown or shelter-in-place, the Superintendent shall notify all proper authorities and relief agencies to seek their assistance for the duration of the lockdown or shelter-in-place.

### **Infection Control**

Any student or staff member found to be infected with a communicable disease that bears risk of pandemic/epidemic will not be allowed to attend school until medical clearance is provided by that individual's primary care physician or other medical personnel indicating that that person does not bear the risk of transmitting the communicable disease.

Students with excessive absences due to a communicable disease shall be given a reprieve from other Board policies relative to excessive student absences. Efforts will be made by the staff to determine what, if any, school work the student can complete while absent.

Staff members who are forced to miss excessive days of work shall first use any leave entitled to them through the Family and Medical Leave Act and/or accrued sick leave. If a staff member has still not received medical clearance to resume his/her work duties, absences in excess of a staff member's allotted leave be managed through existing contract provisions and will not affect the employee's right to continued employment.

### **Continuance of Education**

The Superintendent shall develop a plan of alternate means of educating students in the event of prolonged school closings and/or extended absences. Such a plan may include, but are not limited to, providing students with assignments via mail or by email, local access cable television, or the school district's website.

The Superintendent, in consultation with the Board of Education, may amend the traditional class schedule and schedule of days. Such a plan may include extending the school day, having school days held on Saturdays if Connecticut statute changes, the use of previously scheduled vacation days, and/or extend the school year beyond the previously established end of school year, within applicable statutory requirements.

(cf. 5141.22 - Communicable/Infectious Diseases)

(cf. 5141.6 - Crisis Management Plan)

(cf. 6114 - Emergencies and Disaster Preparedness)

(cf. 6114.6 - Emergency Closings)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes



10-154a Professional communications between teacher or nurse and student.

10-207 Duties of medical advisors.

10-209 Records not to be public.

10-210 Notice of disease to be given parent or guardian.

10-221 Boards of education to prescribe rules.

19a-221 Quarantine of certain persons.

52-557b Immunity from liability for emergency medical assistance, first aid or medication by injection. School personnel not required to administer or render.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. 1232g, 45 C.F.R. 99.

Policy adopted:

*A sample policy which details a school district's plan to provide distance learning options in the event schools must be closed and classes cancelled due to an emergency health situation. This policy provides for equitable access to instruction for all students. Provisions are included for appropriate special education and related services for students with disabilities. Situations and resources vary by district. Therefore, this policy must be modified to fit the local situation.*

## **Instruction**

### **Distance Education**

#### **Distance Learning Plan Due to Health-Based and Safety School Closure**

This policy outlines Newtown Public School District's plan to provide distance learning options in the event that the school District must be closed due to an emergency health situation or a potential closing due to other safety reasons. This action plan allows District Schools to operate remotely while continuing to provide meaningful instruction to students through the use of a variety of instructional resources.

The Board of Education (Board) seeks to ensure fluid operation during a time when classes must be cancelled due to a health emergency or other situations related to staff and student safety as well as provide equitable access for all students. A distance learning day is a remote school day where students and staff have an opportunity to explore and engage in meaningful learning experiences that are: (a) aligned to the curriculum, (b) connected to standards, and (c) relevant to the current instructional sequence. While nothing replaces the genuine human interactions that happen authentically in the classroom between students and teachers, distance learning will support continuity of instruction in the event of a health-related closure.

Distance learning school days will run as detailed in the section below entitled "Scheduling." The schedule will allow teaching staff adequate time to present the learning experience to support students as they (a) access information, (b) prioritize their day, and (c) communicate with their teacher(s). Teachers will be available during the hours listed below.

#### **Goals of the Distance Learning Program**

The Board, by its adoption of this policy, establishes the following goals for the distance learning program:

1. To ensure the continuity of instruction if and when a pandemic emergency health or other safety situation negatively impacts the District's ability to maintain daily operations.
2. To continue to provide students with an authentic, meaningful, and comprehensive school experience aligned with current instruction and curriculum goals.

~~To mitigate or completely eliminate possible exposure to and spread of pandemic influenza among students, parents, guardians, employees, and community members.~~

3. To ensure compliance with all federal and state statutes and regulations and Board policies and administrative regulations, as may be amended by state and federal authorities.
4. To facilitate ongoing academic and social/emotional supports for all students so they can be successful in a remote learning environment.

## Instruction

### Distance Education

#### Distance Learning Plan Due to Health-Based and Safety School Closure (continued)

#### Key Components of the Distance Learning Program

The Board, by its adoption of this policy, establishes the following key components for the distance learning program:

1. **Equitable Access:** To provide equitable instruction, the District will ensure that all students and staff have access to instructional materials, electronic devices, and Wi-Fi.
  - a. ~~In grades PK-5, the District will provide all students with a special packet that includes all needed lessons/instructional materials. While students in PK-5 will not be required to log in to a device, they will have the option of accessing on-line supplemental lessons and games/activities. Data about access to the Internet and the availability of digital devices for student and staff use at home is to be collected by the District. In the event that a student does not have access to a computer or Wi-Fi at home, the District will provide a device and/or a hotspot for student and staff use. Each District/school webpage shall contain a link which will connect students to online resources.~~  
  
 In grades 6-12, the District will ensure that all students have access to a device during the day. Data about access to the Internet and the availability of digital devices for student use at home is to be collected by the District. In the event that a student does not have access to a computer or Wi-Fi at home, the District will provide a device and/or a hotspot for student use.
  - b. Information provided on District and/or school websites shall be available in a number of language choices.

**Note:** *It is recognized that some districts have provided computers/Chromebooks to students in various grade configurations. Therefore, items "a" and "b" above should be modified to reflect the availability of electronic devices provided by the district to students in support of a distance learning program.*

## 2. Communication

- a. Upon a directive from the Governor and/or Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) notification Communication regarding school closure and a move to distance learning will be sent to parents/guardians utilizing the District's emergency notification/communication system. Detailed instructions will also be posted on the school and District websites.
- b. ~~On the first day of closure~~ When possible, the school buildings shall/may remain open for a portion of the day to allow staff and students to gather personal items and collect necessary learning materials. ~~Instruction will not occur and there will not be supervision.~~

## Instruction

### Distance Education

#### Distance Learning Plan Due to Health and Safety School Closure

#### Key Components of the Distance Learning Program (continued)

~~e. On the second day of closure, all schools will be closed until further notice to students, parents/guardians, staff, and the public. No entry will be allowed. Distance learning will commence. In the event an immediate directive from a State official is provided, the District will provide additional guidance, as necessary, at that time.~~

#### 3. Attendance

~~The Board recognizes that during a prolonged school closure it will be problematic to compile statistics as to whether individual students are “in attendance.” The District will treat a student’s attendance record for the year in conformity with any “Attendance Guidance” provided by the Commissioner of Education and the Connecticut State Department of Education.~~

*Alternate:* The Board directs the Superintendent or his/her designee to develop a plan to verify and track student attendance as related to the provided distance learning activities. Parents/guardians must report the days their child(ren) are unable to participate in the provided distance learning activities due to illness or other specified reason. A means of reporting absences must be made available to parents/guardians.

#### 4. Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying

During distance learning days, the District will adhere to all aspects policies and procedures related to equity and diversity, harassment, and bullying. ~~of our Harassment Intimidation and Bullying policies and procedures.~~

#### 5. Time Schedules

~~Teachers will be available via email during the posted hours of school operation. (This section needs to be modified to reflect the local district’s grade configurations and time schedules. This is presented as a sample only.)~~ The distance learning school days will operate as follows: During distance learning, teachers will respond to emails in a timely manner during the regular hours of school operation. Distance learning hours and school schedules (K-12) will be communicated to parents and posted on our District website.

- ~~a. Elementary School(s) (Grades K-5): 8:55 a.m. to 3:25 p.m. Teachers may not be available between 11:30 and 1:00 for planning and/or lunch.~~
- ~~b. Preschool: 9:00 to 11:30 for AM Preschool; 12:30 to 3:00 for PM Preschool; 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. for Full Day Preschool. Teachers may not be available from 11:30 to 12:30 for planning and/or lunch.~~
- ~~c. Middle School(s) (Grades 6-8): 8:00 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. Teachers may not be available during their scheduled planning and/or lunch periods.~~

## Instruction

### Distance Education

#### Distance Learning Plan Due to Health and Safety School Closure

#### Key Components of the Distance Learning Program (continued)

- ~~d. High School(s) (Grades 9-12): 7:40 a.m. to 2:25 p.m. The school's webpage is to be consulted for the appropriate schedule. Teachers may not be available during their scheduled planning and/or lunch periods. Thirty (30) minutes daily will be set aside for physical activity.~~

*Note: The time schedules above may need to be altered to reflect bargaining unit agreements between the Board and staff and any memorandums of understanding entered into as a result of the emergency situation.*

#### 6. School Nutrition Benefits

Any student who receives free and reduced school lunch shall be afforded the opportunity to pick up a nutritional school lunch prepared by the food service provider/department. The schedule for availability and locations of pickup shall be posted on the District and school websites and communicated through the District's emergency notification system.

#### 7. Resources to Support Instruction *(Modify to reflect local district practices)*

The District shall utilize varied resources to support student learning. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. The posting on the school's website a webpage devoted to relevant online resources and digital subscriptions.
- b. Teacher utilization of Google Apps for Education, District e-mail, and other online platforms for instruction.
- ~~c. Add additional local district resources here.~~

#### 8. Instruction: Student Responsibilities *(Modify to reflect the local district's plan and expectations)*

- a. At the PK-5 level, students will be provided with a ~~packet~~ of meaningful learning activities in the core content areas and specials, when appropriate, through digital resources to be used at home. Print resources may also be used when necessary. ~~In addition, students will have access to [optional] digital resources to be used at home.~~

## **Instruction**

### **Distance Education**

#### **Distance Learning Plan Due to Health and Safety School Closure**

##### **Key Components of the Distance Learning Program (continued)**

- b. At the Grade 6-12 level students are expected to log into their teacher's Google Classroom or other platform to identify the expected work for the day and may be asked to collaborate virtually with other classmates on assignments. Students without a school approved excuse will be held responsible for all work not completed by the assigned deadline. Deadlines will be assigned at the discretion of the classroom teacher and assignments will be returned either graded or with feedback in a timely manner.

#### **9. Special Education**

- a. The District will provide distance learning options to address the provision of appropriate special education and related services for identified students with disabilities. Programs and services shall be provided to students ages three through 21, in concert with the requirements of federal and state law; such requirements which may be amended by governmental action, with modifications that may be unavoidable due to the health crisis. It is recognized that the District may not be able to provide all services in the same manner as they are typically provided.
- b. Students will continue to receive provisions of their IEP requirements and will be provided with a free and appropriate program (FAPE) encompassing special education and related services to the greatest extent possible under the circumstances. What is appropriate and reasonable will include the individual child's circumstances as well as the circumstances related to the ~~pandemic/epidemic emergency~~ health and safety emergencies.
- c. Appropriately certified professional staff members will continue to implement these programs through distance learning opportunities. All special education programming will be consistent with the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) to the extent appropriate.
- d. All disabled students with an in-class resource center program documented in the IEP will be provided with modifications to meet their needs based on the distance learning options afforded to their general education counterparts.
- e. All students with pull out replacement center programs documented in the IEP will be provided with appropriate materials and instruction by their special education teachers to meet their needs based on the distance learning options appropriate to their IEPs and learning abilities.
- f. All students with self-contained programs documented in the IEP will be provided with appropriate materials and instruction by their special education teachers to meet their needs based on the distance learning options appropriate to their IEPs and learning abilities.

## Instruction

### Distance Education

#### Distance Learning Plan Due to Health and Safety School Closure

#### Key Components of the Distance Learning Program (continued)

- g. The Board acknowledges that classroom and one-to-one instructional aides will not be available to support a student during a health-related closure.
- h. Related Services (Counseling, Speech-Language, Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy): Counseling, Speech, Physical and Occupational Therapy activities will be provided to students by therapist(s) via emailed activities that have been individualized based on IEP goals. Additional activities will be scheduled and provided based on individualized needs.
- i. Speech language services and counseling services may be delivered to special education students through the use of electronic communication or a virtual or online platform, as appropriate.
- j. Out of District Programs: In the event that District schools are closed and private out-of-district schools remain open, students who are transported by a private company should attend school unless otherwise indicated by the out-of-district placement. In the event that the student is transported to the out-of-district placement by district transportation and the buses remain non-operational due to the closing, the parents will be asked to drive their child to the school and will be reimbursed for transportation according to Board policy for days the child is in attendance during this health-related closure.  
  
In the event that District schools are open and private out-of-district schools are closed, the District will collaborate with the out-of-district placement to offer appropriate meaningful learning activities for completion at home.
- k. Referrals and Evaluations: Traditional timelines will be adhered to via the Supervisor of Special Services and meetings will be held remotely. The District will make every effort to ensure that evaluations are completed within the statutory timelines. Timelines may be impacted due to extended school closures. *(Days that schools are closed are not counted as "school days" for the initial evaluation timeline. The timeline pauses during the school closure.)* Child Study Team members will contact parents if evaluations fall outside of the legally mandated timeframes.
- l. Annual Reviews and Reevaluations: These shall take place once District schools reopen. Parent/Guardians and adult students may agree in writing that a reevaluation is not necessary. IEPs that lapse during the school closure shall remain in effect until a new IEP is developed. When school personnel and parents/guardians agree that a PPT meeting is necessary during the time of school closure, it shall be held via alternate means such as video conferencing or conference call.

## **Instruction**

### **Distance Education**

#### **Distance Learning Plan Due to Health and Safety School Closure**

#### **Key Components of the Distance Learning Program (continued)**

- m. Due Process Hearings/Activities: The District will comply with and operate within any extension provided by the Commissioner of Education for all state statutory and regulatory time requirements related to special education due process activities.
- n. Communication: The District's special education staff shall provide information through a variety of methods, including family phone calls, emails, and video conferences. Also, at least one member of a child's team (special education teacher, speech therapist, psychologist) is to be in contact with the respective parent/guardian at least weekly (unless less frequent contacts have been requested).

#### **10. Staff Responsibilities**

The Board expects the teaching staff to be available through email and online between the posted times; to read and respond to emails during noted hours; and to adhere to all district policies as may be modified due to the nature and length of the pandemic; and to report any instances of students at risk, threats made, or any other meaningful information to District Administrators.

Paraprofessionals will receive instructions from the appropriate Supervisor of Special Services and/or their building Principals. Professional development modules via online programs will be made available in order to provide aides with ongoing educational opportunities.

District administrators will work from home to assist in the daily operation of all aspects of distance learning. In the event that the District is placed under general quarantine, administrative responsibilities will be determined by the Superintendent of Schools. Virtual planning meetings may be necessary.

#### **11. Monitoring Student Engagement**

The Board considers student engagement extremely important. It is important to ensure that all students are engaged and are connected to the resources they need. District and school administrators shall have regular connections with students and families. District and school staff shall check-in and confirm whether families have access to information and services; are safe and supported; and are prepared to support their child's learning through the District's continued learning efforts.



## **Instruction**

### **Distance Education**

#### **Distance Learning Plan Due to Health and Safety School Closure**

##### **Key Components of the Distance Learning Program (continued)**

In order to monitor student engagement in continued learning, the Board expects the following actions to take place:

- a. Teachers and support staff are to connect with all students to maintain their relationships, assist with issues related to assignments, and encourage full participation in the continued learning opportunities. Connections should be documented and tracked as appropriate.
- b. Student support staff shall identify students who were chronically absent prior to the school closure/cancellation of classes or otherwise identified as needing additional support to determine if such supports can continue virtually. The option to refer a student exhibiting inadequate engagement to the District's team responsible for school attendance should be considered as necessary.
- c. School administrators and support staff are to reach out to students who are not signing into online learning or engaging in other continued learning opportunities. Families are to be contacted by school staff to ensure safety and well-being and connect students to the continued learning opportunities and technology they may require.

## **12. Grades**

~~The grading and reporting systems to be used shall be developed by the administration and faculty and is subject to the approval of the Superintendent and/or Board of Education. Due to the circumstances presented during a time of lengthy school closure and cancellation of classes, a "pass/fail" system should receive strong consideration with an option to include "pass with distinction."~~

**Alternate language: The Board of Education shall approve the grading and reporting systems as developed by the administration and faculty and upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools.**

(cf. 0523 – Equity and Diversity)

(cf. 3520.13 – Student Data Protection & Privacy/Cloud-Based Issues)

(cf. 5131.81 – Use of Electronic Devices)

(cf. 5131.911 – Bullying)

(cf. 5131.913 – Cyberbullying)

(cf. 5141.4 – Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect)

(cf. 6114.8 – Pandemic/Epidemic Emergencies)

(cf. 6114.81 – Emergency Suspension of Policy During Pandemic)

## Instruction

### Distance Education

#### Distance Learning Plan Due to Health and Safety School Closure

- (cf. 6141.321 – Acceptable Computer Use)
- (cf. 6141.323 – Filtering Access to Electronic Networks)
- (cf. 6141.324 – Posting of Student Work/Photographs)
- (cf. 6141.327 –Electronic Resources)
- (cf. 6141.3291 – One-to-One Tablet Program)
- (cf. 6141.326 – Online Social Networking)
- (cf. 6141.328 – Bring Your Own Device)
- (cf. 6141.329 – Electronic Reading (e-reader) Devices)
- (cf. 6146.1 – Assessment Systems)
- (cf. 6156.2 – Off-Site Computer Use)
- (cf. 6172.6 – Virtual/Online Course; Distance Education)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-221 Boards of education to prescribe rules.

18 U.S.C. §§2510-2522, Electronic Communication Privacy Act.

P.L. No. 110-385, Protecting Children in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act.

Policy adopted:

cps 6/20