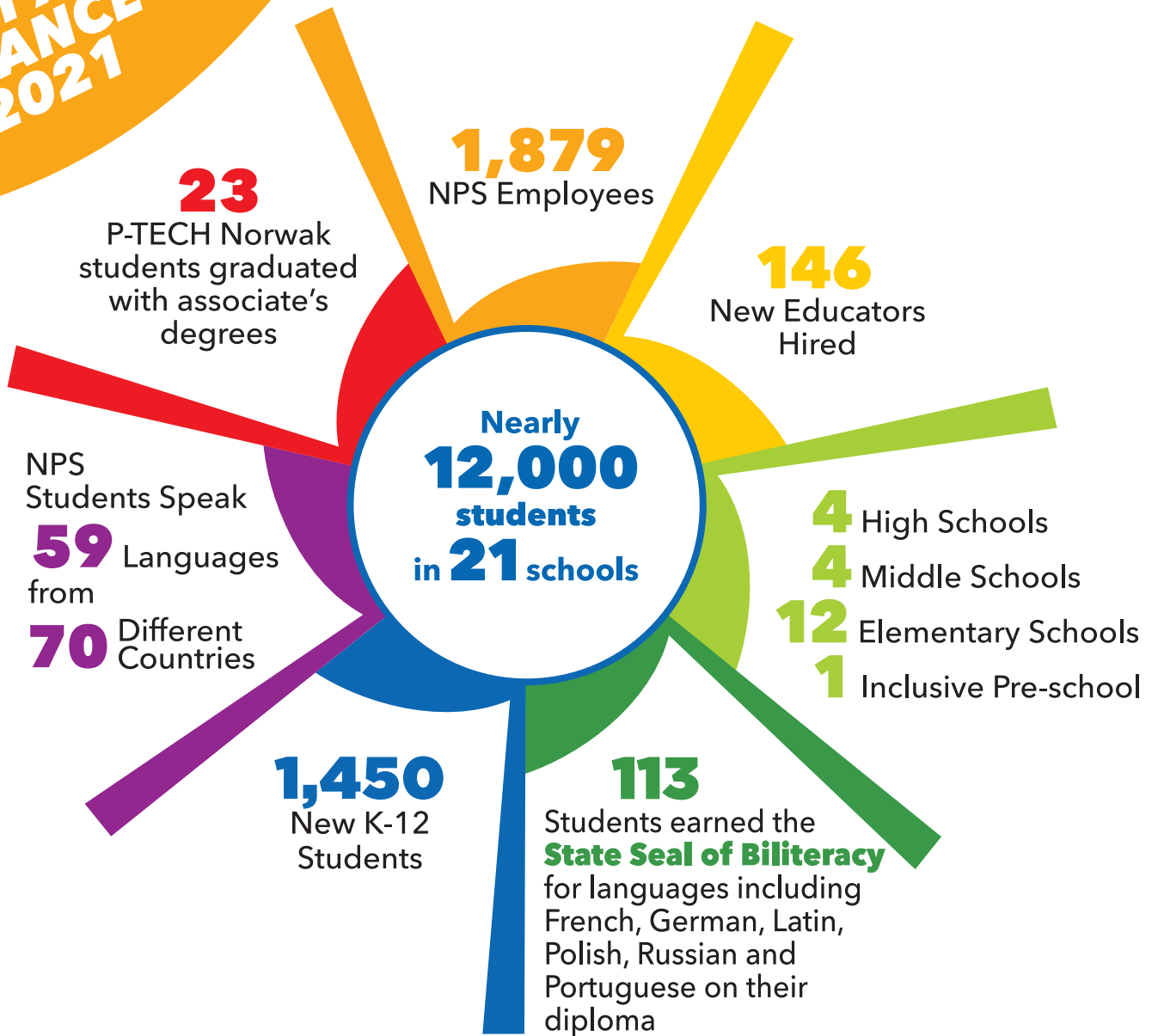




state of the schools 2021
annual report to the community

AT A GLANCE 2021



HIGHLIGHTS

Expanding learning through competitions and challenges

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS

Students across the district participate in local, state and national academic competitions either in person or virtually. Events include Read Across America Day, the district-wide STEM Expo, National History Day, Invention Convention, National Geographic Geo Bee and Odyssey of the Mind. NPS students have earned awards from the Connecticut Regional Scholastic Art program, Martin Luther King Jr. essay challenge, Future Business Leaders of America Conference, CT Teen Vision Show, and Samsung Solve for Tomorrow Contest.

COMPETITIVE SPORTS

Norwalk students excel at an assortment of competitive sports including baseball, golf, lacrosse, tennis, volleyball, softball, basketball, ice hockey, wrestling, football, soccer, swimming and more. Our athletes participate in state and national meets and games, earning top rankings in challenging competitions. This year, the Norwalk High Baseball team earned the title of 2021 State Champions.

AWARD-WINNING ARTS

A leading district in the state for access to the arts, Norwalk Public Schools has a long, distinguished tradition of music programs including an award-winning marching band, orchestra, musicals and nationally recognized performances.





A message from the Superintendent

Throughout a year full of uncertainty, our students and staff rose above each challenge, showing more perseverance, grit, creativity and determination than ever before. As a district, we recognized early on the critical importance of social emotional health, integrating life skills into every day curriculum. We worked to ensure that all families had access to food for themselves and their household, and that they received the support they needed to be able to learn successfully.

While this State of the Schools report is a look back at last year, now more than ever, we are focused on the future.

Working with the Connecticut Center for School Change, we developed a new strategic plan with input from students, teachers, staff, parents and community members. We reviewed equity and disproportionality, special education, as well as the overall structure of our organization to better understand what we need to do to become Future Ready for all NPS students. We also updated our comprehensive facilities study to identify school building renovation and construction needs.

Detailed in the pages ahead, we developed a new mission, vision, values and strategic priorities that will drive our focus moving forward.

I am excited for the work ahead of us! Together we will strengthen our schools, provide a fair and equitable education for students and prepare them for future readiness and excellence.

Sincerely,

Dr. Alexandra Estrella

2021 Board of Education

We are grateful to all of our Board of Education members, who volunteer their time and commitment as elected officials in service to our schools. We look forward to welcoming new members for the upcoming year, as others transition off the Board.



Godfrey Azima



Mike Barbis



Diana Carpio



Erica DePalma



Sherelle Harris



Colin Hosten



Heidi Keyes



Suzanne Koroshetz



Sarah LeMieux

To contact the full Board of Education, email board@norwalkps.org



**2021-2026
STRATEGIC PLAN**



Future Ready for ALL

Over the past year, NPS has focused on the future needs and priorities of our district. In January, a strategic plan task force convened and conducted an intensive needs assessment. Input from students, teachers, staff, parents and community members helped form the new strategic plan.



OUR STRATEGIC PLAN PROCESS INCLUDED

- 10 Strategic Planning Task Force Meetings
- 3 Community Events
- 25+ Focus Groups
- 300+ Focus Group Participants
 - Students, Families, Community Members, Educators, Civic Leaders, Religious Leaders, Community Leaders
- 900 Faculty and Staff Survey Respondents
- 16 Community Briefings
- 4 Organizational Reviews Incorporated Into Findings
 - Capacity & Coherence
 - Disproportionality
 - Special Education
 - Facilities

URBAN COLLABORATIVE CONDUCTS A SPECIAL EDUCATION REVIEW

NPS contracted with the Urban Collaborative to conduct a comprehensive analysis of NPS special education practices and procedures. Throughout the process, the Urban Collaborative team completed interviews, focus groups, observations and surveys.

5 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

FUTURE READINESS

Prepare all students so they are ready for further education, career and workplace opportunities, and globally engaged leadership.

EQUITY

Ensure equitable opportunities, facilities, experiences and outcomes for all students.

EXCELLENCE

Achieve excellence in all aspects of our organization through effective systems, modern learning environments and continuous improvement processes.

ENGAGEMENT

Ensure all children, families, team members and the community are informed, are involved and feel welcome in our schools.

HIGH-QUALITY INSTRUCTION & SUPPORT

Foster relevant and intellectually stimulating learning with targeted supports that produce social, emotional and academic growth.



INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

APPLICABLE STRATEGIC PRIORITY

On-Track to Future Readiness, measured longitudinally (same kids over time) and disaggregated by starting point, race, class and national origin.

Includes key measures of:

1. Academic and career readiness at key grade transitions
2. Successful enrollment in post secondary education and training
3. Workforce entry success

Includes metrics:

1. Percent on-track to future readiness, disaggregated by student group
2. Percent of students with a quality academic and career plan (a Student Success Plan), disaggregated by student group

FUTURE READINESS

EQUITY

EXCELLENCE

ENGAGEMENT

HIGH-QUALITY INSTRUCTION & SUPPORT

Participation rate* (needs to be developed and piloted)

EQUITY

ENGAGEMENT

Extent of disproportionality in academic access and discipline

EQUITY

School climate survey findings

EQUITY

ENGAGEMENT

THE FRAMEWORK FOCUSES ON 10 CORE VALUES

STUDENT POTENTIAL

We provide access, opportunities and support so that all students can meet their promise and potential.

EQUITY

We ensure that each and every student in every neighborhood has access, opportunity, support and encouragement to excel in all current and future endeavors.

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

We embrace and nurture a diverse and inclusive community with individuals representing a variety of backgrounds, experiences and perspectives.

OUR PEOPLE

We support all our faculty and staff through investing in learning, developing a trusting professional culture and celebration success.

CREATIVITY & INNOVATION

We seek out new solutions in creative and flexible ways to prepare ALL students for an ever-changing future.

EXCELLENCE

We strive for the highest level of achievement for our schools, students, staff and community.

RELATIONSHIPS

We foster constructive and meaningful connections among students, between students and educators, and with the larger school community.

INTEGRITY

We are honest, transparent, fiscally responsible and committed to doing our best for ALL our students, families and community.

COORDINATED SERVICES

We work collaboratively with families and community partners to coordinate learning opportunities, experiences and wraparound support for ALL students.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

We pursue improvement through reflection and disciplined use of data and evidence in all we do.

MISSION

Norwalk Public Schools provides an excellent and equitable education so ALL students graduate future ready as civically responsible, globally engaged and positive contributors to an ever-changing and diverse world.

VISION

Norwalk Public Schools is building a more equitable and just world where each and every Norwalk student is prepared for all aspects of life.

NORWALK
Public Schools
VALUES

NPS SUPPORTS FAMILY ENGAGEMENT WITH NEW FAMILY CENTER

Each year, almost 2,000 new students enter Norwalk Public Schools to start or continue their academic journey towards graduation, and ultimately, college and career. To support families throughout their child's academic years, Norwalk Public Schools and the Board of Education are creating the NPS Family Center, **recognizing that families are essential partners in a student's success.** The Center will also bring to life the District's and City's commitment to equity, inclusion and access for all. **Watch for the Family Center opening in the weeks to come!**

NPS EXAMINES EQUITY IN EDUCATION THROUGH COMPREHENSIVE INITIATIVE

In 2020-21, Norwalk Public Schools launched a comprehensive initiative designed to examine and address educational equity in Norwalk. The district partnered with Temple University Associate Professor of Urban Education and Policy Dr. Edward Fergus on work that included implicit bias and diversity training.

The initiative focused on four phases of work: an examination of disproportionate representation that looked at where children of color are under-represented or over-

represented in programs and situations; a community survey and focus groups; presentations to the Norwalk community on findings and recommendations; and equity literacy development of district leadership.

Over the course of the project, members of the Norwalk Board of Education also participated in sessions to explore themes around "Building a District Equity Lens." Recommendations from the work were used to plan a year-long program of professional development for NPS employees.



5 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

PRIORITY 1

AREAS OF FOCUS

- Future Readiness
- Education & Career Pathways

FUTURE READINESS

Prepare all students so they are ready for further education, career and workplace opportunities, and globally engaged leadership.

ACTIONS



Define Future Readiness.

Collaborate with students, employers and postsecondary education providers to understand the skills and competencies necessary for success after graduation, and to articulate pathways for successful educational and career outcomes.



Provide Aligned Advising. Ensure students receive college and career advising, leading students to make informed academic and career decisions.



Ensure Access to Early Postsecondary Opportunities.

Build on Norwalk's leadership in career pathways to strengthen student awareness, access and employer involvement.



Strengthen Student Success Plans.

Strengthen individualized student success plans so they address every student's needs and interests, help students stay connected in school, and support students in achieving post secondary educational and career goals.

PRIORITY 2

AREAS OF FOCUS

- Intervention Supports
- Communication for Access and Opportunity
- Policy

EQUITY

Ensure equitable opportunities, facilities, experiences and outcomes for ALL students.

ACTIONS



Develop System of Student Supports.

Develop and continually refine a district-wide tiered system of support that includes defining academic and behavioral tiers available and processes for utilization.



Design and Implement Professional Learning.

Develop and implement a professional learning system focused on expanding cross-cultural competency to replace bias-based beliefs.



Improve Communication with Families.

Enhance communication systems by expanding virtual communication and the use of translation services, and by establishing a central source for information on enrollment in magnet, gifted, honors and AP courses, and the special education evaluation process.



Ensure Parent Participation in School Governance.

Improve the process of parent participation in school leadership opportunities and ensure parent participation is representative of racial/ethnic student enrollment.



Create and Expand Choice. Expand themes, pathways and programs to provide increased opportunities for students.



Define and Broaden Global Citizenship. Create learning experiences that foster the knowledge, skills and self-awareness necessary for students to assume globally engaged leadership during and beyond their school years.

THEORY OF ACTION

If we clarify and focus on the skills and competencies most essential for success in college, career and globally engaged leadership, and if we can create the pathways and opportunities to grow those skills and competencies, then we can expand the number of students who graduate future ready.



Develop an Equity Policy. Develop an equity policy and statement that reflects a commitment to diversity, inclusion and equity.

THEORY OF ACTION

If we identify and address the root causes of inequity and disproportionality, we can create a district where each and every child experiences success.

PRIORITY 3

AREAS OF FOCUS

- Learning Environments
- Systems
- Performance Management

EXCELLENCE

Achieve excellence in all aspects of our organization through effective systems, modern learning environments and continuous improvement processes.

ACTIONS



Modernize and Maintain Facilities.

Enhance buildings and school facilities to create conditions conducive to instructional innovation and learning for all.



Create Future Ready Tracking System.

Build an early childhood-to-career data system that protects privacy, ensures transparency, and provides the information our educators, students and families need to keep our learners on track.



Enhance and Align Organizational Systems.

Develop and improve the effectiveness and alignment of district and school systems to improve services, communication and outcomes.



Implement a School Improvement System.

Implement a school improvement system based upon cycles of planning, measuring outcomes, analyzing results and adapting strategies.

PRIORITY 4

AREAS OF FOCUS

- Communication
- Coordinated Services
- Community Partnership

ENGAGEMENT

Ensure all children, families, team members and the community are informed, are involved and feel welcome in our schools.

ACTIONS



Enhance Communications.

Ensure effective, consistent and culturally responsive communications with students, families and community stakeholders.



Innovate and Refine Family Engagement.

Develop creative, intensive and research-based ways of engaging families from all backgrounds.



Launch Family Center. Engage families through their child's academic years with a central hub that provides access to information and district services, offers programs and activities to support families, and facilitates connections to community resources.



Promote a Collaborative Workplace.

Build a supportive professional culture and ensure that our systems both keep employees fully informed and provide opportunities for them to provide meaningful feedback.

PRIORITY 5

AREAS OF FOCUS

- Curriculum
- Educator Growth

HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION

Foster relevant and intellectually stimulating learning with targeted supports that produce social, emotional and academic growth.

ACTIONS



Ensure Relevant Curricula for ALL Students.

Audit and ensure a K-12 curricula consistent with the skills and competencies necessary for students to graduate future ready.



Integrate Social and Emotional Learning.

Embed the social and emotional skills and supports necessary for wellness and success in school, the workplace, relationships and citizenship.



Develop System of Student Supports.

Develop and continually refine a district-wide tiered system of support that ensures student academic growth and success for each and every Norwalk child.



Strengthen Instruction.

Enhance student engagement and deepen learning by strengthening Tier 1 instruction and customizing learning experiences according to interests and goals.



Enhance Performance Management System. Develop an employee evaluation system that supports personnel professional development through a process of effective feedback.



Build a Research and Evaluation Department. Develop the organizational capacity to link, analyze and report critical data on student plans, progress and supports across systems and through student transitions.

THEORY OF ACTION

If we develop a continuous improvement process anchored in clear priorities, use of data, and improvement routines, we can create a professional culture of excellence and get better at getting better; and if we align the structure of the organization to our priorities while fostering strong systems and standard operating procedures, we can ensure alignment and coherence, and reduce variation across the district.



Partner for a Stronger Tomorrow. Work with philanthropic and community organizations to build a stronger school system and a better future for all students.



Leverage Student Voice. Enhance the learning experience by creating systems that ensure diverse and authentic perspectives from students across the district.

THEORY OF ACTION

If we partner with students, families and the community and communicate effectively, we can create a district that is more welcoming, inclusive and effective.

& SUPPORT



Enhance Instructional Assessment System. Refine and broaden the assessment system to understand student learning and achievement, support school improvement cycles and produce timely information that can drive instruction.




Invest in Educator Capacity. Design a professional learning system that promotes educator collaboration and is focused on the competencies and perspectives most essential to ensuring all students graduate future ready.

THEORY OF ACTION

If we create consistently effective teaching and learning with targeted interventions and support, we can support each and every child in developing the competencies, skills and dispositions necessary for further education, career opportunities and life.

A LOOK BACK



THE 2020-21 SCHOOL YEAR DURING COVID

Distancing & Maintaining a Clean Learning Environment

Leading up to the 2020-21 school year, much preparation went into creating safe spaces for students and staff. The custodial and maintenance staff worked tirelessly to move thousands of pieces of furniture out of schools and into storage pods to allow for social distancing in classrooms, gymnasiums and cafeterias. The staff also installed plexi glass in key areas and installed UV HEPA filters in every classroom.

To help promote social distancing in hallways, classrooms and common areas, and encourage hand sanitation, custodians installed over 6,000 Covid related signs throughout schools buildings.

NPS Educators

Our teachers continued to face obstacles with pride, commitment and strength. Throughout the national health crisis, teachers have truly gone above and beyond the call of duty. Whether our

students were in-person, remote or hybrid, NPS teachers made it their goal to ensure that each student had the tools and social emotional supports needed to succeed academically.

NPS Nurses Play Critical Role in Student and Staff Safety

NPS nurses were at the frontline for staff and students, reinforcing Covid protocols and mitigating measures, working with students to maintain a healthy environment, utilizing isolation rooms when necessary, and distributing personal protective equipment. Every NPS nurse was a critical part of the contact tracing team, working to get the job done to keep everyone safe and our students learning.

NPS hosted clinics that distributed almost 700 vaccines to students and families.

Our nurses also volunteered at vaccine clinics for Norwalk employees and the community.

Return to In-Person Learning

On September 8, 2020 NPS was one of the few public school districts in the state that opened for in-person learning across all elementary schools. Middle and high school students had the opportunity to learn via a hybrid schedule or remotely. Norwalk's plan for a safe return to school, and our commitment to providing in-person instruction, have been held up as a model for others throughout the state.

The 2021-22 school year returns for full in-person learning across all grades.



Ensuring Meals for Norwalk Families

Thanks to a partnership with the City of Norwalk, Chartwells and NPS food service workers, free meals were served for Norwalk children ages two through 18 throughout the city.

In 2020-21, 90 food service employees provided students with 45,000 meals a week, having served over 1.6 million meals since the school year opened.

NPS Central Kitchen produced over 3,500 meals per day for elementary schools and community sites. Meals were served daily at 31 sites across the city, having increased from 19 sites the previous year. At the secondary level, students were served breakfast and lunch via satellite cafes located throughout the building. Food service workers safely distributed food while offering students a collegial feel and menu choices. Even when school was out for recess, holidays and the summer, food service workers were there to ensure that Norwalk kids received breakfast and lunch during the week.

Making Technology Available to ALL Students

In 2020-21, the NPS Technology Department and coaches provided staff with the tools they needed to enhance instruction and improve achievement during the pandemic.



Throughout hybrid instruction, learning pods at various locations throughout the city were made available to middle school students.

Three NPS middle schools were selected to participate in Verizon Innovative Learning, bringing internet access, devices and tech coaches to students this year.



Thanks to a partnership with the City of Norwalk, ALL NPS students were provided with their own laptop or mobile devices to equal the educational playing field.

TRANSPORTATION

We are proud to have partnered with Durham School Services bus company to further support alternative fuels and energy via a new propane fleet.

Our dedicated bus drivers transported over 5,600 students on a daily basis during Covid

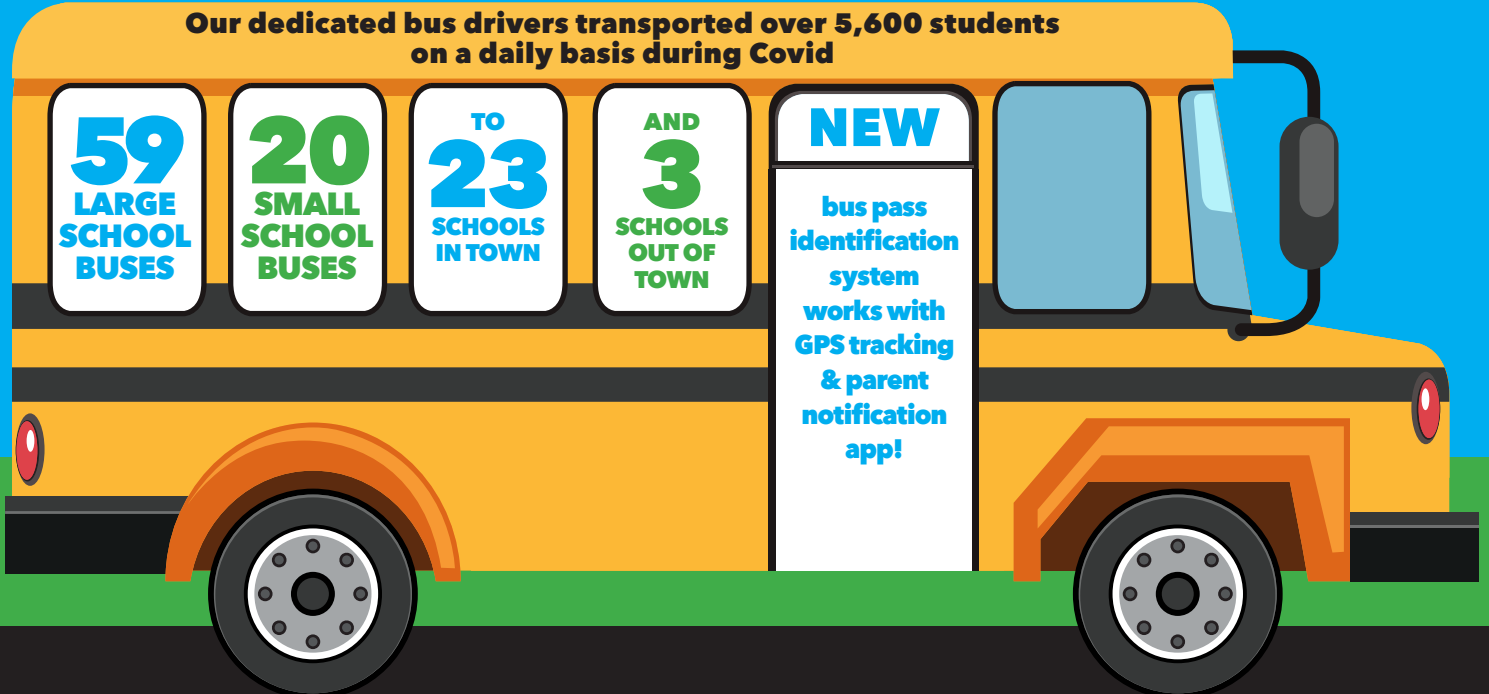
59
LARGE
SCHOOL
BUSES

20
SMALL
SCHOOL
BUSES

TO
23
SCHOOLS
IN TOWN

AND
3
SCHOOLS
OUT OF
TOWN

NEW
bus pass
identification
system
works with
GPS tracking
& parent
notification
app!



Serving All Of Our Students Throughout the Pandemic

NPS designed the 20-21 reopening plan to ensure transitions between risk levels were seamless and consistent, with daily schedules, teacher and course assignments, instructional expectations and the integration of technology remained constant, even if changes to the school model were required because of Covid. All students were also provided with daily social emotional learning opportunities.

Specialized Instruction

The Specialized Learning and Student Services Department worked with staff and families throughout the 20-21 school year to ensure that students ages 3-22 with special needs had access to the best services and learning environments possible. In addition to hybrid and remote options, students who qualified for specialized instruction had the opportunity to participate in fulltime in-person instruction.

Gifted and Talented

Last year, our redesigned program embraced a broader definition of giftedness with a focus on talent development. Enrichment activities encouraged students to think creatively to solve real-world problems, and for the first time, NPS had a National Invention Convention champion.

Multilingual Learners

Multilingual learners (MLL) continued to have access to the general education curriculum as well as to supplemental language support services, provided by certified teachers. We served MLL students with special needs by providing both MLL and special education services, either in person or remotely, as required by the student's learning plan.

Meeting High School Students Where They Are

In the spring, NPS launched its successful Twilight Academy to support high school students who need alternative schedules due to family and work commitments during the pandemic.

Summer Learning


NPS Summer Academy programs were held with a brand-new look and feel including local partnerships, field trips, hands-on experiences, credit recovery options and multilingual learner programs to offer a complete summer learning experience. NPS partnered with the Maritime Aquarium for a unique summer school program for K-3 students, paid for by state grant.



Tax Payer Dollar\$ in Action

LOCALLY FUNDED 2021-22 SCHOOL YEAR EXPENDITURES

	DOLLARS	%
CLASSROOM & SCHOOL SERVICE <i>student support, educators, instructional support staff, busing, counseling services</i>	\$177,893,596	85%
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT <i>instructional support, curriculum instruction, equity and bias training</i>	\$6,027,476	3%
BUSINESS SERVICES <i>information technology, human resources, legal services, accounting, payroll</i>	\$12,447,538	6%
OPERATIONS <i>maintaining safe, functional environments for student learning</i>	\$10,455,070	5%
GENERAL ADMINISTRATON <i>administrative roles in central office and across the district</i>	\$1,644,705	1%
TOTAL LOCAL BUDGET	\$208,468,385	100%



- **GRANTS:** \$30 million in ongoing grant funding estimated for the 2021-22 school year.
- **COVID RELIEF FUNDS:** NPS has been awarded approximately \$43 million in Covid relief funding. Addressing the impact of learning loss from the Covid disruption is Norwalk's most important priority.
- **PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT:** NPS works with multiple foundations who invest in specific initiatives throughout the district. Approximately 600 families were provided with internet access and all 9-12 graders received a brand-new laptop through funding from the Dalio Foundation.

Building a Better Tomorrow

NPS understands the need to address the infrastructure of our schools. To create a robust plan, a comprehensive facilities study led by Newman Architects/DLR Group took place this year. The group worked to complete a comprehensive overview of the physical assessment of each one of our buildings and the learning environments within.

A number of facilities projects are underway across the district. The Jefferson Elementary School renovate-as-new project will be completed in late August 2022. Cranbury Elementary School is approaching the final design phase for new construction beginning in 2022. The Norwalk High School multi-year new construction project is currently in the design phase. Naramake Elementary School's construction project to add a new cafeteria, kitchen, multi-media center, and removal of a portable classroom will be completed.



OPTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

OPEN TO NORWALK STUDENTS

Brookside Montessori Primary Program

Based on self-directed activity, the Montessori style of education focuses on hands-on learning and collaborative play.

Norwalk Early Childhood Center

An innovative program for both typical students and students with special needs, NECC supports development through academic, cognitive, emotional, language, physical and creative activities.

Tracey Magnet School

The only school in the state to earn the title of National School of Character in 2019 by Character.org, Tracey students leave their "PRINT" on all that they achieve: Problem solving, Respect, Integrity, Being Neighborly and Taking Responsibility.

Columbus Magnet School

This intra-district K-8 magnet program is based on the progressive Bank Street and H.O.T. (Higher Order Thinking) models. Students strive for academic excellence through hands-on, integrated units of study and arts infusion.

Silvermine Dual Language Magnet School

A full immersion dual language school, teachers plan and coordinate instructional programs in a team teaching environment at each grade level: one instructs in English, and the other in Spanish.

Wolfpit Elementary School

An arts-centered focus provides students with the opportunity to have an integrated arts education, while engaging in rigorous learning practices. This theme offers those students with an interest in visual and performing arts the skills they need to continue on the arts trajectory in middle school and beyond.

Nathan Hale Middle School

In addition to standard academic "houses," Nathan Hale Middle School's integrated arts program includes theater as well as an immersive arts-based approach to core curriculum.

Ponus Ridge STEAM Academy

This rigorous curriculum utilizes STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) lessons and strategies to engage students.

P-TECH Norwalk

Students can earn an Associate degree in software engineering, web development or mobile programming, at no cost, by taking courses at Norwalk Community College during high school. A partnership with IBM gives students access to mentorships, worksite visits, paid internships and potential permanent positions.

NPS high school programs offer a wide variety of opportunities from hands-on industry experience to earning a college degree and health certifications, and engaging with counterparts globally. PreK through middle school students can take advantage of magnet programs focused on language, character, college and career readiness, and visual and performing arts. NPS also prides itself on neighborhood schools, which build community and offer their own unique programs and educational opportunities.

Marine Science Academy at McMahon

Students learn to apply techniques and technology in this diverse field. Hands-on field experiences are available through local apprenticeships.

Digital Media & Communications Academy at Norwalk High

Working with industry partners, DMCA provides a hands-on approach, enabling students to master industry standard computer programs. Students also have the opportunity to earn college credits through Quinnipiac University for specific courses.

McMahon Healthcare Academy

Through Norwalk Community College and Norwalk Hospital, students earn certifications as emergency medical technicians, phlebotomy assistants and patient care technicians.

International Baccalaureate Program & Diploma at McMahon

This comprehensive and rigorous two-year, pre-university course of study is highly regarded by colleges and universities. Those graduating with IB diplomas have a 22 percent higher college acceptance rate.

Center for Global Studies

An inter-district magnet school located at BHMS, students study Chinese, Japanese and Middle Eastern languages and culture, with a focus on global mindedness. Students participate in two-week study tours to destinations across the globe.

Great Neighborhood Schools!

**Brookside Elementary School
Cranbury Elementary School
Jefferson Elementary School
Kendall College & Career Academy
Fox Run Elementary School
Marvin Elementary School
Naramake Elementary School
Rowayton Elementary School
Roton Middle School
West Rocks Middle School
Brien McMahon High School
Norwalk High School**