

Board of Education

The Board of Education serves as the Board of Directors for the Newtown school system. It sets policy, works with the Superintendent of Schools to establish annual short and long term goals, approves the annual budget, adopts textbooks and curricula, and hires administrative staff.

Membership on the Board of Education remained constant with the continued services of Elaine McClure, Chair, Lisa Schwartz, Vice Chair, Andrew Buzzi, Secretary, and David Nanavaty, Paul Mangiafico and Thomas Gissen.

The Board held two regular meetings each month during the school year and one regular meeting each month during the summer. Additional special meetings were held throughout the year as needed for such purposes as contract negotiations, presentation of school improvement plans, evaluation of the superintendent of schools, student discipline, development of the annual budget, and other matters which arose.

At the onset of the 2004-2005 school year long-time Newtown High School principal William Manfredonia announced his retirement effective November 30, 2004. He was replaced by E. Patricia Llodra who served as the interim principal for the remainder of the school year. Ms. Llodra, a resident of Newtown, came to us as the newly retired long-term principal of Northwestern High. A comprehensive search was conducted for a high school principal in the early spring, but due to withdrawals of finalist candidates, the search was re-opened in the late spring. The second search resulted in the hiring of Ms. Arlene Gottesman as the new principal of Newtown High School, effective July 1, 2005. Ms. Gottesman came to us after seven years as the principal of Jonathan Law High School in Milford, Connecticut.

In addition, Mrs. Lorrie Rodrigue who had served as an assistant principal of Newtown High School for five years resigned in order to become the principal of Shepaug Valley High School in Regional School District #12 (Bridgewater, Roxbury and Washington). She was replaced by Mr. Jason Hiruo who had been serving as the Dean of Students at Newtown High School last year. Mr. Hiruo is a Newtown resident and graduate of Newtown High School who, prior to serving as Dean of Students, was an English teacher at the high school.

The Board spent a great deal of time focusing on the development and improvement of district policies to improve the quality of the educational experience for all students. Policies addressed included Substance Abuse Prevention, Discipline, Suicide Prevention, Graduation Requirements, Grade Point Average, and Class Rank.

An unfortunate oil spill at Reed Intermediate School in December 2004 resulted in a budget freeze in the second half of the school year. Several staff development, curriculum, and building projects needed to be delayed in order to provide some of the funding to remediate the problems associated with the oil spill.

The Board worked closely with Town officials in the review of the proposed 2005-2006 school budget. The Board's requested budget was reduced by \$400,000 but was passed on the first referendum in April enabling the district to hire teachers for the 2005-2006 school year in a timely manner.

While comparative budget figures indicate Newtown is one of the most cost-effective districts in the state in terms of net current pupil expenditures, our test results continue to be strong. Our SAT scores and CAPT results indicate that students compare very favorably to our educational reference group. Our graduates are being accepted into competitive institutions of higher education.

Our schools develop school improvement plans which are the focus of the schools activities for the year. These plans contain specific goals and objectives and reflect the Board's commitment to continuous improvement for the district. These plans are available at each school and can be found on the district web site home page (www.newtown.k12.ct.us).

In the following report the superintendent of schools provides many specific details about curriculum, buildings and grounds, technology, and planning. We hope you find this report useful.

Elaine McClure
Chairperson

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

ANNUAL REPORT

2005

While this report focuses on the 2004-2005 school year, it is important that the year not be viewed as a single entity but rather as an integrated effort of planning, implementation, evaluation and revision. Our school system prides itself on maintaining constancy of purpose and seeking continuous improvement. The student performance results over the past few years reflect the benefits of the long-range planning, diligent implementation of these plans, and a commitment to staying the course.

As the various sections of this report will show, excellent strides were made in the areas of curriculum instruction, assessment, and evaluation under the leadership of Alice Jackson, Assistant Superintendent. Likewise, the technology department made great efforts to ensure the computer systems were upgraded and properly maintained under the leadership of Carmella Amodeo, Director of Technology.

The district was successful in procuring several state and federal grants to provide for improved student programs. The business department under the leadership of Ronald Bienkowski worked closely with the administration and the Board of Education to ensure that all funds were well spent properly and that the school year ended within the allocated budget for the 2004-2005 school year.

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

The goals for Curriculum and Instruction for the 2004-05 school year were: (1) Implement a student database system to track student growth; (2) Complete the development of objectives by grade in the content areas of Language Arts, Information Literacy, and Technology; (3) Revise mathematics and science curriculum frameworks to align with new State Standards, prepare for state testing in 2006, and improve coordination of topics taught; (4) Develop consistency of scoring using rubrics, use information from assessments and data to improve instruction; and (5) cultivate leadership within the district.

The student database system will support district and school goals to improve student learning by generating information for analysis in user-friendly formats to promote continuous improvement. An effective database system will enable teachers and administrators (1) to understand student needs within classrooms so that they can provide flexible grouping for differentiated instruction, (2) to analyze student data to identify where intervention for individual students or groups of students is needed, (3) to find common needs of teachers as they relate to standards, and (4) to analyze trends so that we can modify program and intervene to prevent failure. Development of the database system to track student growth was put on hold due to the budget cuts. This database system would have allowed the district to track student growth over multiple years, identify students who need remedial assistance, and discover areas that need curriculum revision and or professional development for teachers. Individual schools have continued to use Excel or Filemaker Pro spreadsheets to record student and class performances. Several of the schools have undertaken the time intensive process of assembling the student data into information for the receiving teacher for the start of the school year. All administrators participated in training in the new Ctreports database that was provided by the State Department of Education for Connecticut Mastery Test and Connecticut Academic Performance Test scores.

Student performance in the district will improve when there is consistency of instruction from class to class at each grade and when the instruction from grade to grade is aligned in a way that builds on what has been taught, increasing expectations at each level. In Language Arts, objectives by grade have been completed for grades 4 through 9. This year the K-3 objectives were revised, reviewed by teachers and administrators, and adopted by the Board of Education. The district did not have objectives by grade for Information Literacy or for Technology. The technology standards and objectives were developed, reviewed by teachers and administrators, revised, and adopted by the Board of Education. The Information Literacy objectives were delayed by the budget freeze and will require further work before they are reviewed and adopted.

The State Department of Education has made major revisions to the Mathematics and Science Frameworks that form the basis for state testing. Aligning with these documents was a curriculum priority because they form the basis for the Connecticut Mastery Test and Connecticut Academic Performance Test. These projects were delayed due to the budget freeze and are still in progress. The revised mathematics

curriculum standards with objectives by grade are in draft form for grades K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8. Grade 6 will revise the standards in the fall, followed by the overall teacher, curriculum committee, and administrative review process before being adopted by the Board of Education. The science curriculum revision was also delayed by the budget freeze. The plan for the revision process including the identification of topics and standards to be taught at each level was developed for kindergarten through eight grades. Curriculum development and materials selection will have to take place during the 2005-06 school year.

One way to improve instruction is to develop a common understanding of what excellent performance looks like. The district is involved in a long-term project of developing analytical rubrics for writing for each grade and common assessments in language arts and mathematics. Rubric development in writing was completed for grade four. The rubric development for kindergarten and first grade was postponed due to the budget freeze. School staffs worked together to analyze the results of assessments to guide what was being taught each marking period.

Effective curriculum and instruction requires the support of leaders who have a common vision of excellence, the ability to coordinate collaborative groups effectively, and an understanding of how to solve complex problems. The district has identified forty teachers from all grades and subject areas to provide special training. These teachers participate in training about how to work with various types of groups, meeting structure, and how to solve complex, multi-dimensional problems. Three workshop sessions were provided for the curriculum leaders before the budget freeze cut off further activity. The administrators and teacher leaders used the book *The Adaptive School: A Source book for Developing Collaborative Groups* as a resource for solving multi-dimensional problems and developing a common vision.

Curriculum revisions as well as curriculum development projects took place at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Many of these documents are in draft form at this time, allowing the opportunity for the Curriculum Committees and the full staff to offer suggestions for revision. Others were held for development during the 2005-06 school year due to the budget freeze.

1. The focus in **Language Arts** was to continue the development of a framework of objectives by grade for each of the Reading and Writing Standards that are coordinated with the new Connecticut Curriculum Frameworks. Objectives by grade were revised and approved by the Board of Education for kindergarten through third grade. The ninth grade English curriculum was adopted in the fall of 2004. The tenth-grade English curriculum is in draft.
2. In **Mathematics**, a new curriculum for kindergarten through third grade including the use of a new text, *Growing With Math*, was implemented in all schools. In addition, objectives by grade were developed for grades 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8. All other curriculum work was pushed into the 2005-06 school year due to the budget freeze.
3. The **Science** Curriculum Committee developed a three-year plan for topic and standards changes in science. This plan will align the Newtown science curriculum with state and national standards and provide for consistent, hands-on science instruction in grades K-8. Some science kits will be piloted in the 05-06 school year.
4. The **Social Studies** curriculum project of developing consistent standards with objectives by grade was cut due to the budget freeze
5. **Library/Media** Specialists working collaboratively with classroom teachers began the revision of the Information Literacy standards, objectives, and curriculum. Although this project was near completion, it was not completed due to the budget freeze.
6. **Computer Technology** curriculum development continued with the revision and adoption by the Board of Education of Technology standards with objectives by grade K-12.
7. **Technology Education** teachers at the high school revised the curriculum guide for Auto Mechanics I and II.
8. In **World Languages** the Italian III curriculum guide draft was developed.

The Newtown school district is committed to curriculum development that advances teaching and learning throughout the schools. This process of continuous improvement is most effectively developed through collaboration of teaching staff and through continuous modification by making minor changes as they are needed. Major revisions are taken to the Board of Education for adoption. All Board-Adopted Curriculum documents can be found on the District Website at newtown.k12.ct.us.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Overall, Newtown students continue to perform at a satisfactory level based upon the reference points available to make a determination. The most comprehensive data available to the district for analysis comes from the Connecticut Mastery Test given in the fall to grades 4, 6, and 8 and the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) given in the spring to grade 10. Data is also reported on the Scholastic Achievement Test for the graduating class.

Connecticut Mastery Test results for grades 4, 6, and 8 are based on goal standards set by the State. Comparison of Newtown scores made against the State average and the State-established Educational Reference Group (ERG) show that our 2004 Mastery Test results continue to be strong. In all grades and tests, Newtown students scored significantly above the State average. When compared to the ERG, Newtown students scored above the ERG mean in all but two subtests. At fourth grade, students performed six points above the ERG mean in Math, six points above the mean in reading, and four points above the mean in writing. At sixth grade, students performed six points above the ERG mean in math, three points above the mean in reading, and one point below the mean in writing. At eighth grade, students performed three points above the ERG mean in math, one point above the ERG mean in reading, and two points below the ERG mean in writing. Student performance is particularly striking in math with 34.2 % of students at the Advanced level in grade 8; 39.4% at grade 6; and 36.3% at grade 4.

The Connecticut Academic Performance Test administered to tenth grade students in spring 2005 reveals the following: (1) With 100% of students taking the test, 100% of regular students and 84% of special education students met NCLB standards in math and 97% of regular students and 55% of special education students met the NCLB standard in reading. (2) 70% of 10th graders met the state goal of excellence in Math; 62.7% met the state goal in science; 66.7 % met the goal in reading; and 73.8% met the goal in writing. (3) The combined percentage of the students who need intervention and those with invalid scores is below 4%.

Results of the Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT) for the class of 2005 a slight rise in performance. The participation level of the class of 2005 (93.4%) remains stable. The math mean score of 543 represents a five-point increase over 2005 and the verbal mean of 530 is essentially the same. The percentage of students scoring above 600 increased from 23 to 27% on the verbal test and 27 to 35% on the math test. These scores are significantly above the state mean of 517 for both of the subtests.

TECHNOLOGY

The Technology Department serves both the school district and the town offices. This included in the 2004-05 year approximately 1700-computer workstations and 51 servers for the schools and 120 computer workstations and 9 servers on the town side. The department also supports additional equipment provided for presentations and to meet the needs of handicapped students. In its continuing effort to meet these needs in a timely fashion, a new help desk/ inventory program called TrackIt was implemented. The TrackIt help desk will provide for, not only the tracking of tech help requests, but for the creation of a solutions database. This will serve as a useful source to the technicians in the department and also the tech liaisons in each of the buildings. The inventory portion of the TrackIt solution will provide not only a detailed hardware but also a software inventory. The hardware details will allow for better tracking of needed hardware updates such as memory. The software detail will allow for compliance with software licensing and consistency in versioning.

In June of 2005, the district was connected to the Connecticut Educational Network (CEN). The CEN is a legislatively funded project, intended to interconnect every K-12 school district, higher education institution, and library in Connecticut via a secure fiber network to enable interaction and sharing of resources. Connecticut Department of Information Technology (DOIT) completed the installation of a fiber run to the Newtown Middle School. The middle school serves as the district fiber network hub

connecting out to the Newtown High School, Reed Intermediate School, and Hawley Elementary School. The State of Connecticut DOIT now provides filtered Internet access to these schools.

This year, the district was faced with the decision about which platform would be standard for the district elementary schools. Apple's move to the OSX operating system meant that the district was faced with a need to replace a majority of the Apple computers in place. This need was further emphasized by the fact that Internet Explorer was no longer being developed for the older 9.2.2 operating system currently implemented and that many of the Library resource databases used by the district would not be accessible with the older browser. Since moving to the OSX operating system would necessitate the upgrade of not only hardware but software licenses as well, the discussion was opened regarding platform choice. Consideration was given to: Instructional use and student impact, Personal use and comfort, Availability of software and peripherals, Professional development needs, Costs and funding, Support maintenance issues and Community support. The decision was made in favor of the Windows platform.

The first phase of moving the elementary schools to a Windows platform included the replacement of the Apple computers at Sandy Hook Elementary School with 146 Dell desktops and 23 Dell laptops. Not only did this replace the existing Apple computers but it also increased student access by adding a second computer lab. Sandy Hook, being the largest of the district elementary schools, lagged behind the other schools in student-to-computer ratio. This addition brings them to a 4.72 ratio closer in line with the other three schools.

Apple computers in the High School LMC and in a computer lab were also replaced with Dell PCs. In addition to these replacements, a Windows 2003 server with ample storage space, 8 additional workstations in the LMC and a new yearbook lab of six Dells were set up. This was only a partial replacement of the Apple computers in use at the high school. The remaining Apple computers will be addressed with next years budget.

There is an exception to the replacement of Apple computers. The Music Department conducted research, which showed that colleges and industry are standardized on the Apple platform. In line with this, the music lab at the high school as well as the lab at the middle school was outfitted with Apple eMac computers.

The use of Palm Pilots to collect data continues to be explored. To ease the collection of physical fitness data by the district physical education teaching staff, each teacher was provided a Palm and a district designed FileMaker Pro database. The results of this pilot will prove useful as the district looks for efficient ways to collect and compile data.

GRANTS

Our administrative and teaching staff has worked diligently to seek funds from resources outside the Newtown tax base. As a result, in addition to the two larger federal grants (Title I \$149,774 and IDEA - special ed. \$765,595) that Newtown receives annually, the following grants were received in 2004-2005.

1. The State of Connecticut awarded \$91,095 for the Title II, Part A Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting Grant, which funds staff development and teacher salaries.
2. The State of Connecticut also awarded a Title II, Part D Enhancing Education through Technology Grant of \$3,759 to further the use of technology.
3. The Title IV Safe & Drug Free Schools Grant of \$14,912 continues to fund a portion of the salary for the district health coordinator.
4. The Title V Innovative Education Strategies Grant of \$13,229 is used to pay for tutors at the high school.
5. The State also awarded the Carl D. Perkins Grant of \$35,173, which funded the purchase of nineteen computers, a scanner, four card readers, four printers, two digital cameras and two digital video cameras for the high school, conferences for staff development, transportation and travel expenses, tuition for a student for the regional medical internship program and career and instructional materials.
6. The IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) provides, in addition to the large special education grant, a Preschool Grant of \$29,014, which funds speech therapists.
7. For a second year, the National Italian American Foundation provided \$2,000 for textbooks and materials for the high school's Italian classes.
8. Sandy Hook School received a \$500 grant from Phi Delta Kappa, which was used to purchase books for the reading program.

LOOKING AHEAD

Newtown is a desirable place in which to live, especially for families with school age children. There has been a tremendous amount of new housing construction, particularly large houses, in our town over the past several years. Although the rate of new construction is diminishing to some degree, there continues to be new housing starts which invariably leads to increases in our student population. This has been particularly evident at Newtown High School.

Whereas the high school student population was 1,012 in the 1994-95 school year, it is approximately 1,700 for the start of the 2005-06 school year. The enrollment, therefore, is in excess of the building's 1,600 student capacity.

A High School Space Needs Study Committee was created in the spring of 2004 and has engaged an architect to assess the expansion capability on the current high school site. The high school's space needs include not only additional classrooms, but also expansion of the cafeteria, gymnasiums, media center, and other areas in order to accommodate the continued growth of the school, which is expected to reach 1,900 students in the next five to ten years.

Overall, the district's student population which was 3,821 in the 1994-05 school year, begins the 2005-06 school year in excess of 5,600 students. The continued surge in student enrollment will be a concern in future budgets. We will continue to be diligent in seeking aid from state, federal and private foundation grants and to explore ways to be even more efficient with our resources. We hope to be able to continue to provide an excellent educational opportunity for each Newtown student in a cost-effective manner as we have done in the past.

We remain committed to continuously improving our educational programs and intend to keep the town proud of its school system.

CURRENT EXPENDITURES AND PER PUPIL COST

	<u>2003-2004</u>	<u>2004-2005</u>
Current Expenditures		
Regular Education	\$43,930,599	\$46,104,944
Special Education	<u>\$ 8,557,784</u>	<u>\$ 8,839,728</u>
Total Current Expenditures	\$51,488,383	\$54,944,672
Revenue	<u>\$ 5,860,175</u>	<u>\$ 6,001,450</u>
Net Expenditures	\$45,628,208	\$48,943,222
Enrollment (Includes students sent out)	5,431	5,517
* Gross Cost Per Pupil	\$9,480.46	\$9,959.16
* Net Cost Per Pupil to Town	\$8,401.44	\$8,871.35

*Please note that each school year the Newtown school system publishes comparative financial data for Newtown and other school systems. The statistics used in that report are provided by the State and are based on their category of expenditure called Net Current Expenditure Per Pupil. Because that statistic does not include transportation cost and expenditures which are offset by tuition revenue, it differs from the figures in this report.

ENROLLMENT STATISTICS FOR 2004-2005

<u>Grade</u>	<u>October 1, 2003</u>	<u>October, 1, 2004</u>
PROBE	23	41
Kindergarten	381	385
Grade 1	426	402
Grade 2	408	438
Grade 3	466	400
Grade 4	<u>407</u>	<u>469</u>
Elementary Totals	2,111	2,135
Grade 5	445	417
Grade 6	<u>430</u>	<u>457</u>
Intermediate School Totals	875	874
Grade 7	424	437
Grade 8	<u>430</u>	<u>427</u>
Middle School Totals	854	864
Grade 9	425	419
Grade 10	390	426
Grade 11	389	406
Grade 12	<u>355</u>	<u>371</u>
High School Totals	1,559	1,622
Totals	5,399	5,495
Special Ed. Out of Town	32	25
GRAND TOTAL	5,431	5,520

Newtown Public Schools

Newtown, Connecticut

<u>FY 2005 BUILDING AND SITE IMPROVEMENTS-</u>	<u>Expended</u>
<u>Hawley School</u>	
Replace floors in 1948 hallway	\$ 11,563
Renovate two bathrooms in 1948 building	\$ 26,000
Replacement of interior doors	\$ 12,480
Install hold backs on six doors in 1921 building	\$ 2,100
Replace flooring in multipurpose room	\$ 9,893
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	\$ 62,035
<u>Sandy Hook School</u>	
Completion of flooring replacements	\$ 20,429
Floor mat replacement	\$ 444
Partition for PE storage area	\$ 1,800
Mounting of clay tiles in courtyard	\$ 1,400
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	\$ 24,073
<u>Middle Gate School</u>	
Exterior lighting work	\$ 5,000
Floor replacement in five classrooms	\$ 14,143
Refinish gym floor	\$ 6,175
Faculty room improvements	\$ 7,000
Canopy repair work and painting	\$ 12,000
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	\$ 44,318
<u>Head O'Meadow School</u>	
Install vinyl siding to wood overhang	\$ 52,461
Computer room relocation	\$ 10,400
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	\$ 62,861
<u>Middle School</u>	
ADA compliance - chair lift and corrections	\$ 16,415
Repair exterior steps - D wing	\$ 17,871
Replace flooring in 12 rooms (D wing)	\$ 14,708
Recoat gym A & B floor	\$ 5,376
Replace exterior and interior doors (partial)	\$ 20,904
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	\$ 75,274
<u>High School</u>	
Classroom expansion contingency	\$ 20,204
Resurface running track	\$ 38,000
Replace doors, frames and locks (partial)	\$ 23,971
Recoat gym floor	\$ 3,800
Seal parking lot	\$ 4,300
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	\$ 90,275
<u>Systemwide</u>	
Central Office relocation to Kendro building	\$ 23,736
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<u>TOTAL BUILDING AND SITE IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS</u>	\$382,573