



The Newport Board of Education held a regular meeting on Wednesday, March 27, 2024, at 6:30 PM. The meeting was held at 30 W. 8th Street, Newport.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Ramona Malone asked for a roll call. The following were present: Ramona Malone, Sylvia Covington, Aaron Sutherland, Tim Curl, and Ed Davis.

Ms. Malone asked everyone to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance and to pause for a Moment of Reflection.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Newport Independent School District will partner with families and the community to nurture, educate, and instill core values in all students to ensure they reach their fullest potential.

PRESENTATIONS/RECOGNITIONS

This month's student and teacher of the month are:

NPS – Rose Smith, Teacher – and Pablo Cruz, Student

NIS – Shawn Roberts, Staff Member, and Emma Barnes-Waibel, Student

NHS – Monique Wood, Teacher, and Amariana Cook, Student

The board took a 10-minute break to greet this evening's guests.

COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Josh Tunning addressed the board regarding the beautification projects that Re-Newport has been helping with around the schools. Trees and shrubs have been added to the primary school grounds and they are working with Ms. Michael and Mr. Maines to plant trees around the intermediate school grounds as well as adding picnic tables and benches for staff and students. He thanked the principals and Mr. Watts for partnering with the community in these projects. Ms. Malone also gave a shout out to Mr. Sutherland for rolling up his sleeves and helping with this work.

MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 27, 2024 SPECIAL MEETING, MARCH 13, 2024 SPECIAL MEETING, AND MARCH 20, 2024 SPECIAL MEETING

On MOTION BY CURL AND SECONDED BY COVINGTON, the minutes were approved as presented.

1541 – MOTION CARRIED 4-0

TREASURER'S REPORT

Paul Maddox attended the meeting to deliver a comprehensive overview of the 2023 annual financial audit, a thorough examination of the district's financial statements conducted each year. This process aims to ensure the accuracy of financial records, providing a true reflection of the district's fiscal performance while minimizing the risk of fraud. A forensic audit would be initiated if any suspicion of actual fraud arises, as it falls beyond the scope of a standard financial audit.

The district received a favorable assessment on its financial statements, internal controls, and compliance, reflecting a clean opinion. While commendations were extended, management directed attention to the school activity funds, acknowledging areas for improvement. The presentation included a comparative analysis of liabilities, revenue, and expenditures spanning the past three years.

Ms. Hoover expressed hopefulness for future audits, noting that all three schools have welcomed new bookkeepers. With thorough training in Redbook procedures, she anticipates fewer issues with the school activity fund accounts in the upcoming year. She encouraged the new staff members to reach out with any questions. Mr. Maddox added that it's not uncommon for comments to highlight school activity fund matters, emphasizing the importance of ongoing diligence in financial management.

The board thanked Mr. Maddox for attending the meeting.

On MOTION BY SUTHERLAND AND SECONDED BY COVINGTON the financial report was accepted and will be filed for audit and the bills were approved for payment.

1542 – MOTION CARRIED 4-0

Ms. Hoover also provided the following for the board's review.

- Credit card statement
- Administrator expense report
- Budget report on grants
- Monthly financial report

STUDENT LEARNING AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Superintendent's update:

Mr. Watts asked Mr. Atkins and Ms. Michael to address the board regarding additional staff they are requesting for next year.

Mr. Atkins emphasized the critical importance of meeting both the academic and social-emotional needs of every student, underscoring the necessity for additional instructional staff in our kindergarten classrooms. Given our persistently low kindergarten readiness scores and the escalating number of kindergarten students, it is imperative to boost our staff to furnish essential support and tailored instruction to all learners.

Mr. Atkins examined the academic requirements, outlining our objective to quickly address the achievement gap through differentiated instruction and targeted interventions. In the fall of 2022, 81% of our kindergarten students began the academic year unprepared. This data underscores the pressing need for our school and district to allocate the requisite resources to rectify this disparity.

To effectively address the diverse behavioral and social-emotional needs of our students, NPS recognizes the crucial role of the behavior intervention instructional assistant position. This pivotal role ensures timely responses to classroom disruptions, facilitates student de-escalation, offers essential behavior supports, and fosters an environment conducive to uninterrupted learning. Without this position, the administrative team would be compelled to dedicate a substantial portion of their daily schedule to managing student behaviors, thus limiting their availability for vital activities such as classroom walkthroughs, providing teacher feedback, and supporting professional learning communities

Mr. Curl asked what kind of test is administered to determine kindergarten readiness? Mr. Atkins explained that the Brigance Early Childhood Kindergarten Screener provides a quick and accurate assessment of a child's development in academic & language development, physical development, self-help and social-emotional development.

The district continues to receive students all year if they live in the district. Out of district students can be turned away based on numbers.

Ms. Michael addressed the board regarding her request for an additional 4th and 5th grade teacher.

Classroom Spaces: Current physical classroom space cannot hold 30 students in the classroom. According to our current impact survey, the data shows that teachers feel the classrooms are too crowded with 20-24 students in the classroom.

Caps Sizes: The current size of classrooms in both the 4th and 5th grades either is close to exceeding or exceeds the optimal student-teacher ratio recommended for effective instruction. Larger class sizes impede the ability of teachers to provide individualized attention and support to each student, hindering academic progress.

Classroom Management: The lack of effective classroom management can create an environment where learning becomes compromised and disruptions are common. Without proper structure and boundaries, students may struggle to stay focused, leading to diminished academic performance and increased behavioral issues. Teachers play a crucial role in establishing and maintaining a positive learning environment, fostering engagement, respect, and productivity among students. Classroom management can become a large challenge with classrooms that are over-cap sizes. We must ensure we are hiring highly qualified teachers to fill these vacancies, coaching for classroom management, and implementing PBIS to fidelity.

Academic Needs: Students in the 4th and 5th grades exhibit a wide range of academic abilities and learning styles. Addressing these diverse needs effectively requires smaller class sizes and additional teaching support to differentiate instruction and provide targeted interventions where necessary.

After the presentations, Ms. Malone asked Mr. Watts if the financial impact of approving additional staff had been considered for budget reasons. He assured her this had been discussed with finance and the costs could be added in the budget without issue.

Mr. Watts discussed the workplace literacy program agreement that is on the agenda for approval. When the district hires an instructional assistant (also called paraeducator) who does not hold at least an associate's degree, they must take a *paraeducator assessment*. The adult education department administers the tests for the district. If the instructional assistant does not pass the exam the first time, the new hire will complete a 12–20-hour course thru the adult education department before retaking the assessment. Once the instructional assistant passes the exam the adult education department receives credit from KDE for their assistance.

Mr. Watts asked Rusty Adams to explain the purpose for the contract with Altafiber for internet service to the bus lot. The bus lot currently uses a wireless Cradlepoint hotspot for internet access and has an individual phone line. The Cradlepoint bill currently runs around \$300 a month. Due to state and federal E-rate regulations, we have not been allowed to install business class internet, as it would be in conflict with the E-rate process used by the state to provide internet to all K-12 public districts.

Recent changes to E-Rate rules have made it possible to apply for what is known as Category 1 services for the bus lot. If approved, we are eligible to have our bus lot connected to our main district network at a 90% discount due to our free and reduced lunch percentages. This would provide a 1GB connection to the bus lot from the district hub, giving us better access, higher speeds, and the ability to remotely view the security cameras there, which we cannot currently do. In addition, we could move them to the district phone system, further lowering costs. Almost all larger or rural districts use Category 1 every year to interconnect their schools. We have been fortunate in that we own the fiber between our schools and it has been in place for over 25 years. Estimated final costs to the district are around \$100 a month.

Mr. Watts then updated the board on current education bills. The session ends on April 15, 2024.

SB 4 – relating to sick leave for members of the Teachers' Retirement System and declaring an emergency.

SB2 – allows districts to staff schools with armed “guardians” who are not subject to the same training requirements as school resource officers. An amendment to the bill would allow schools to use licensed pastoral counselors on trauma-informed care teams.

SB58 – related to tax rates allowing any three registered voters to form a petition committee; reinstate the requirements for a petition committee to be formed and an affidavit to be filed with the county clerk; reinstate the requirement that the county clerk publish a notice about the tax rate challenge in the newspaper; include a requirement that the petition signees put their birth year on the petition; delete conforming changes.

SB265 - to modify the Option 7 alternative teacher certification pathway; remove some initial candidate requirements; allow provisional certification upon qualifying and enrolling in an approved institution; establish the conditions for receiving a professional certificate.

HB387 - require the Education Professional Standards Board to issue substitute teacher certificates based on education attained; specify the type of employment each certificate allows.

HB611 - to require a director of pupil personnel to file with the county attorney a complaint against a parent or guardian who has allowed a child in kindergarten to grade five to be absent without excuse for 15 or more days.

HB6 – Operating budget and SEEK funding over the next two years.

Ms. Payne presented the curriculum department update. She spoke to the board about a new CEO Rank Change program for early literacy – LETRS – Essential for Teachers of Reading and Spelling. LETRS is a 2-year program where a teacher is assigned a mentor as they work through the eight components. The mentor meets with the mentee group four times a year after the initial orientation meeting. The program currently cost \$5,000 if paid in full up front. Requirements include completing all sessions, attend required LETRS virtual professional live training, document session activities for Bridge to Practice, provide end of unit assessment certificate of mastery, attend virtual cooperative learning group sessions, uploading all documentation, and completing and presenting a capstone project.

While the board supports educating our teachers in early literacy training, they would like to table this business item until they have a chance to discuss all tuition reimbursement programs at an upcoming work session.

Ms. Stewart presented the DPP and students services reports. Enrollment stands at 1,454. Attendance at NHS is averaging 93.23 which exceeds to school's goal, NIS is averaging 96.32 which exceeds the district goal, and NPS is 95.59 which also exceeds the district goal.

The board is being asked to approve the amended calendar for this school year. After approval, it will be submitted to KDE for their approval.

Mr. Maines presented the facility, transportation, and safe school's update. He thanked Josh Tunning for his ongoing support to help beautify the school grounds around the district. He highlighted the following from his report:

- Evaluation appeals panels – appoint a certified staff member and an alternate to the panel in case a certified employee would file an appeal regarding their summative evaluation.
- Capital funds request under new business to purchase additional cameras at the intermediate school per the KY Center for School Safety.

Contract for approval with EverDriven - provides alternative transportation for certain students to and from school as requested by the district. This service will be used as a temporary service in cases where other district vehicles are not available to provide required services. Qualifications for driver includes: passing a criminal background check, drug testing, have a clean driving record, and training in a SafeRide education course. Vehicles must pass a 50-point safety inspection plus an inspection from a certified third-party mechanic.

Many school districts in KY and across the nation use this service for transporting students. district has been using Yellow Cab in emergencies but feel EverDriven is a much safer alternative to transport our students.

Ms. Swanson presented her update from the special education department. There were no questions. Ms. Swanson mentioned middle and high school students will be participating in a Unified Bocce Tournament on April 26 at Simon Kenton High School. Each special education student is paired with a regular education student; Newport will have four student pairs

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

On MOTION BY SUTHERLAND AND SECONDED BY CURL, #12 Tuition reimbursement for KY Early Literacy CEO Program was removed was the consent agenda.

1543 – MOTION CARRIED 5-0

1. Personnel report
2. FY 2023 Annual Financial Audit
3. KETS Offer of Assistance in the amount of \$10,670
4. Capital Funds request
5. Change order #1 – NPS Roof
6. NPS proposal to hire additional staff for 24/25 SY –
 - Kindergarten teacher
 - Kindergarten instructional assistant, and
 - Behavior intervention instructional assistant
7. NIS proposal to hire additional staff for the 24/25 SY
 - 4th grade teacher
 - 5th grade teacher
8. Agreement with EverDriven for alternative transportation
9. 2023-2024 amended calendar
10. 2024-2025 school calendar
11. Contract with Altafiber for WAN service to bus lot
- ~~12. Tuition reimbursement for KY Early Literacy CEO Program for Rank Change (LETRS)~~
13. Adult Education – Workplace Literacy Program Agreement for newly hired paraeducators
14. Per board policy 03.18, Evaluation, appoint Dennis Maines as the certified employee on the evaluation appeals panel and Jennifer Stewart as the alternate certified employee on the appeals panel.

On MOTION BY SUTHERLAND AND SECONDED BY COVINGTON items 1-11, 13, and 14 were approved as presented.

1544 – MOTION CARRIED 5-0

BOARD COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Reminders:

- Excellence in Education Dinner April 23, 2024
- Mentoring Plus Seeds of Hope Gala – April 19, 2024 – Newport Syndicate
- Covington Education Foundation 2024 Hall of Honors Celebration – June 6, 2024

Mr. Sutherland would like to look at a tree policy or procedure for consideration before removing trees on district property. Ms. Malone said KSBA has been contacted and no one in the state has a “tree” policy or procedure that follows a KRS. The board can create a procedure for tree removal if they chose to do so.

Mr. Sutherland welcomed Ed Davis to the board and asked everyone to introduce themselves to him after the meeting.

Ms. Malone commented on beautifying the school grounds and asked if this could be incorporated into a learning opportunity for students.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, On MOTION BY SUTHERLAND AND SECONDED BY CURL the meeting adjourned. Time 8:40 PM

1545 – MOTION CARRIED 5-0

Chairman

Secretary