



To: Mr. Watts, Superintendent
Ms. Malone, Chairperson of the Board
Members of Newport Board of Education

November 14, 2024

1. Fall Unified Bocce Tournament

As part of our commitment to expanding unified sports participation, we are proud to share that ten of our student-athletes recently competed in a Bocce Tournament on November 1, 2024, at Town & Country Sports Club in Wilder, KY. The event ran from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., and it was a wonderful opportunity for our athletes to showcase their skills and sportsmanship. We are delighted to announce that our athletes earned two second-place medals and three third-place medals during the tournament! We were thrilled to see the support from the community, and we extend our gratitude to all who attended and cheered on our incredible athletes.

2. Transition Support and Resources for Students with Disabilities

On November 7th, I attended a Regional Interagency Transition Team (RITT) Meeting hosted by the Northern Kentucky Cooperative for Educational Services. This collaborative meeting, held monthly, brings together representatives from the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), school district personnel, and other agencies dedicated to supporting adults with disabilities in Northern Kentucky. The purpose of the meetings is to expand knowledge of available services and resources that our students can access as they transition into adulthood. As part of these ongoing efforts, the group is creating a comprehensive resource binder that will include information on all agencies, the support services they provide, and key contacts. This binder will serve as an essential tool for our educators, families, and students, offering clear pathways to support beyond high school. By actively engaging in this regional collaboration, Newport is ensuring that our students with disabilities have the knowledge and resources to achieve

greater independence and success in adulthood, which aligns with our commitment to lifelong achievement for every student.

3. Assistive Technology Program Initiative

Our district is introducing TouchChat, an Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) application, as part of our Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) to enhance language and communication skills for students with speech and communication challenges in our Pre-K and Kindergarten classrooms. TouchChat, designed for students with conditions such as Autism, Down Syndrome, apraxia, ALS, and others, is available on iOS devices and offers customizable vocabulary sets, synthesized voices, and multiple access methods, including touch, switch scanning, and head tracking. This adaptability allows each user to communicate effectively and supports personalized growth in their language skills. By integrating TouchChat into our classrooms, we are creating a language-rich environment that fosters inclusivity and supports communication for all students.

In this initiative, our speech therapists collaborate closely with classroom teachers to ensure that TouchChat is used effectively throughout the school day. Research on AAC interventions supports the use of tools like TouchChat to promote vocabulary acquisition, expressive language, and social skills, especially among young learners with developmental delays. For example, a Pre-K student named Alex, who has limited verbal abilities, can use TouchChat during snack time to independently express his choice of snack by tapping buttons labeled with images of different options. In story time, he can tap words like “happy,” “big,” or “run” from a vocabulary page created for the activity, allowing him to actively participate alongside his peers. With a projected 15 students participating, this program not only enhances the expressive and receptive language skills of students with identified needs but also enriches the classroom environment, promoting diverse and meaningful communication for all students.

4. Overview of Kentucky's Alternate Assessment Program and Alternative Diploma

In Kentucky, the Alternate Assessment Program is designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities who meet specific eligibility criteria. These students participate in assessments aligned with Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS) but are measured against alternate academic achievement standards. The program ensures that all students, regardless of their abilities, have access to meaningful evaluations of their progress and opportunities for academic success.

Alternate Assessment Details:

- **Eligibility:** Determined by the IEP team based on specific criteria, including significant cognitive disability and the inability to participate in the general assessment, even with accommodations.
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- **Content Areas:** The assessment covers reading, mathematics, science, and writing. It is aligned with modified standards that maintain high expectations while considering the needs and abilities of participating students.
- **Purpose:** Alternate assessments provide schools and families with valuable data on a student's progress toward achieving personalized academic and functional goals.
- **Newport Independent Schools** has 14 students participating in alternative assessments.
- **Alternative Assessment Testing Window 1** opens November 18, 2024, and closes prior to Christmas break.

Alternative Diploma:

Kentucky offers an Alternative High School Diploma for students participating in the Alternate Assessment Program. This diploma is specifically designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities who follow a course of study aligned with their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

Key Features of the Alternative Diploma:

- **Eligibility:** Students must participate in the Kentucky Alternate Assessment and complete the requirements outlined in their IEP.
- **Recognition:** The diploma is a legitimate credential that recognizes the student's accomplishments and reflects their mastery of the alternate standards.
- **Post-School Transition:** While the Alternative Diploma is not equivalent to a traditional high school diploma, it signifies readiness for post-secondary activities, such as supported employment, community involvement, or continuing education programs.
- **Newport Independent Schools** has 5 students pursuing an Alternative Diploma.

The Alternate Assessment Program and Alternative Diploma emphasize equitable access to education and ensure that students with significant cognitive disabilities can achieve success based on their abilities and goals. This approach aligns with federal mandates, including IDEA and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), to provide all students with a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

Exceptional Children Programming Rates:

- Special Education Services – 214 Students
- 504 Programming Rates – 18 Students

Related Service Enrollments:

- Speech & Language- 107
 - Occupational Therapy – 33
 - Physical Therapy –7
 - Mental Health Therapy- 43
 - Orientation and Mobility – 0
 - Teacher of Visually Impaired Services- 4
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Alternate Service Location Enrollments:

- Restore Program – 7
- Home/Private School Students – 0
- Newport School of Innovation- 4
- Campbell Regional School-12

District Mental Health Clinician Programming Rates:

- Newport Primary, Intermediate, and Regional Schools-Jackie Scruggs
18 Students
- Newport Intermediate, high School and NSOI-Hannah Lunde
24 Students

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa Swanson
