

# Superintendent's Newsletter



Dr. Lorrie Rodrigue  
Interim Superintendent

Dear Staff and Newtown Community Members,

I would like to take a moment and thank so many parents, community members, and colleagues who have worked collaboratively with me to begin the year and continue to make improvements, especially in the midst of enormous change. As Interim Superintendent, my goal has been to listen, make sense of specific issues, and take action as

needed. This is what good communities do and how they solve problems as a result.

However, our focus must be on teaching and learning, and I want to celebrate the positive educational experiences taking place in schools throughout the district. From reading/writing workshops, solving word problems in math, and learning about the Constitution and democracy – students have begun another year of investigation, peer collaboration, and critical thinking. A new Project Adventure facility at the High School will allow students to learn leadership and problem solving through physical movement, balance, and climbing experiences.

Students continue to learn about language and culture, beginning at the elementary school and through their high school academic journey. Our district's NICE program offers Newtown students the opportunity to celebrate a variety of cultural experiences as well, including the hosting of International Week in all schools from November 13-17<sup>th</sup>, a festival of music and food highlighting international cultures from around the globe.

The fall is exciting, and students have settled into academics, sports, and extracurricular activities with friends and staff. Currently, Girls' Volleyball is competing for SWC title, Girls' Soccer finished runner up in SWC, Swim and Dive, finished 3rd overall in SWC, and Boys' Cross-Country won the SWC championship. I have been thoroughly impressed with the motivation I have seen and the smiles on the faces of so many students. As the year progresses, we want to support our students and celebrate their ongoing successes as learners.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lorrie Rodrigue

## Board Members

**Keith Alexander, Chair**  
**Michelle Ku, Vice Chair**  
**Debbie Leidlein, Secretary**  
**John Vouros, Member**  
**Rebekah Harriman-Stites, Member**  
**Andrew Clure, Member**  
**Daniel Cruson, Member**

## Board Meetings

**November 7, 2017**  
**November 21, 2017**  
**December 5, 2017**  
**December 19, 2017**  
**January 2, 2018**  
**January 16, 2018**



Come visit us at  
Fairfield Hills Campus  
or on the web at  
[www.newtown.k12.ct.us](http://www.newtown.k12.ct.us)





# what's happening



## Head O'Meadow



Scholastic Delivers Books

The HOM PTA and Dad's Club are in full swing having sponsored an Ice Cream Social, a Trunk or Treat, and our upcoming book fair. To the delight of students and parents, Scholastic delivered shelves of books so that HOM families could shop during Parent/Teacher conference week. HOM is proud to be chosen as a National PTA School of Excellence for a second time due to our continued collaboration between home and school.

## Newtown Middle School

Greetings from Newtown Middle School! We hope you had the chance to visit our Annual Scarecrow Exhibit. Please visit our website to see some of the photos of our talented students artwork. With another year off to an amazing start we were able to raise \$1,953 which will be donated to the winners charity of choice.



Winner of Scarecrow Exhibit

We have had two new sports teams begin at Newtown Middle School this fall; Unified Soccer and Cross Country, and we have had large numbers of students participate. We look forward to building on our success. Congratulations to all of our athletes! Also, we will be hosting our annual Veterans Day Celebration in November. This is an opportunity for us to recognize and thank our local heroes. Thank you to all of our Veterans. We are deeply indebted to your service. Happy Fall!!!

## Middle Gate

During the month of October, Middle Gate hosted members of the Botsford Fire Department who discussed the importance of fire prevention and safety. Later Mr. Peace made a visit and held two assemblies. During his time Mr. Peace educated and entertained children through news events and song. He shared messages about being inclusive and kind, and making the right decisions even in



Mr. Peace

tough circumstances. Mr. Peace also reminded the children that they are all miracles, how "two seconds could lift a person up or push them down," and we can "choose how we see each other and ourselves." The Middle Gate staff is participating in professional development on the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and use of strategy groups within the workshop model. The staff has recently launched a book study on its school-wide read *A Mindset for Learning: Teaching the Traits of Joyful, Independent Growth*.

## Hawley

Hawley staff is using one faculty meeting per month to share professional development, successful strategies and experiences with each other. These topics are generated and facilitated by staff. This type of PD is current and timely while being extremely engaging.



Fire Safety Day

Newtown Fire Department visited Hawley for a fun and informative day focusing on fire safety. Students met with fire fighters, learned safety procedures and protocols, saw fire trucks and the equipment used, and 4th graders experienced a smoke-filled room. Hawley students greatly enjoyed and benefited from our latest PTA Book Fair. Library Media Specialist, Sara Wasley, opened each visit with a lesson on book selection (Just Right Books) while parent volunteers helped students shop for and buy books. Always a successful event!

## High School

Thanks to the NOVO Grant, Newtown High School received funding allowing us to integrate Project Adventure into the Physical Education courses. This permits students to work with one another to problem solve and promotes higher order thinking skills through the curriculum of the course. Project Adventure provides the teaching of social and emotional development





through engaged, experiential learning activities. In taking part in these types of activities, students become more active, alert, and responsible. Our course will further enhance our students' growth by creating an expanding cycle of experiences that are relevant, challenging, fun, and can be transferred and applied to real life situations. The use of our Adventure program promotes the teaching and applications of social and emotional skills that are critical to life success and overall well-being. Every student who enters into NHS will have the opportunity to take part in some portion of the Project Adventure.



Climbing Wall



Ropes Course

## Reed Intermediate



Discussion of Internet Safety

Reed Intermediate students welcomed their moms, or other important female figure in their life, to Muffins with Moms during two events in September and October. It was great to see so many smiling moms, grandmas, aunties and more enjoying their coffee and a muffin with our students! In October, Reed Intermediate students welcomed Mr. Scott Driscoll who led a school-wide assembly on the topic of internet safety. Mr. Driscoll's message is important for our students to hear as many of them are just beginning to explore a variety of social media outlets. Students were intently listening throughout the (almost) hour long session and had many pertinent questions for follow-up. A week later Mr. Driscoll

gave an evening presentation to parents throughout the district in order to educate them as to what their children can access and how to protect them on various social media platforms.

## Sandy Hook



Kathy Gombos, Principal  
Sandy Hook School

WE DID IT!!! Sandy Hook School's 1st Annual Walk-A-Thon exceeded our goal with a total of \$10,196 in donations and 78% participation! Congratulations and THANK YOU to all our students, families and staff members who contributed and helped us achieve this amazing goal!! Doing an event for the first time is always a bit challenging, and we want to say a BIG thank you to Allyson Story and Julie Laughlin for all of their hard work in putting the Walk-A-Thon together.

Newtown Nurses and Staff walked for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation in October at the Danbury Fair Mall. This walk represented the hope for a world without Type 1 diabetes. THANK YOU to the nurses and staff for participating in this event!





Jean Evans Davila  
Asst Superintendent

## *Newtown Staff Attends Science Conference*

In early-October, Assistant Superintendent Jean Evans Davila invited a group of leaders and teachers of science to attend the National

Science Teachers Association (NSTA) Conference in Baltimore, Maryland. The objective in sending the group was to build capacity to make the instructional shifts required by the new and more rigorous science standards. Those who agreed to attend included Dr. Kathy Gombos, Sandy Hook Principal; Kris Feda, District K-8 Science Coordinator and Sandy Hook Math Science Specialist; Amy Hiruo, Hawley Math Science Specialist; Jill Bracksieck, Middle Gate Math Science Specialist; Chrissie Pierce, Head O’ Meadow Math Science Specialist; Jess Fonovic, Reed Intermediate School Math Science Specialist; Todd Stentiford, Reed Intermediate School Math/Science Teacher; Val LeBlanc, Newtown Middle School Science Coordinator; Jeffrey Schupp, Newtown Middle School Science Teacher; and Chris Canfield, Newtown High School Science Department Chairperson.

The NSTA Conference offered a rich variety of sessions to learn more about the Next Generation Science Standards( NGSS) and how to align curriculum, instructional practices, and resources with the standards. Todd Stentiford referred to the event as “an inspirational few days. . . [with] more to see and learn than we had time in the day to take it all in.”

The majority of the group that attended the conference also serves on our K-12 NGSS Leadership Team, helping to guide the District’s 4-Year NGSS Transition Plan. Chris Canfield noted that this experience led to “great strides in better understanding NGSS and how to implement it at the High School and in the District.” During the event, Kris Feda wrote on behalf of her colleagues that they were “taking away so many ideas and having time to reflect on the progress we are making with our transition.”

Jill Bracksieck valued the team’s discussions with national science education leaders and authors, as well as “the opportunity to share our learning and our passion for Science with our Newtown colleagues.” Val LeBlanc

reported that it was “Day 1 and [they were] already walking away with great ideas, resources, and network contacts.”

The November meeting of the K-12 NGSS Leadership Team will provide time for members to report on the knowledge gained from the conference and how it is being shared and implemented in their schools.



## *In Honor of Veterans Day, Newtown Public Schools Will Pay Tribute to Our Veterans on November 10th*

