

## **GOALS, BUDGET ASSUMPTIONS AND RELATED PRIORITIES**

### **2020-2021 Budget Development**

#### **GOAL 1. INCREASE STUDENT LEARNING AS MEASURED BY MULTIPLE AND VARIED ASSESSMENTS TO ASSURE ALL STUDENTS GRADUATE PREPARED FOR A DYNAMIC AND COMPLEX GLOBAL SOCIETY.**

**a. Preparing all students to excel in a dynamic and complex global society requires a sustained focus on and investment in curriculum, instruction, and assessment**

- i. District curriculum must be continually updated and revised, following a formal process and using a curriculum template, with a focus on emphasizing depth of understanding, application of knowledge through inquiry and problem-solving, higher order thinking, cross-disciplinary learning, informed and ethical use of technology, and authentic learning opportunities, both in and out of school.
- ii. Success as a student and citizen is fueled by intellectual curiosity, persistence, resiliency, a growth mindset, and the application of discipline-based knowledge; these expectations should be reflected through district curriculum, instruction, and assessments.
- iii. A coordinated system of assessment K-12, reflecting national and international performance expectations and using multiple platforms, provides the foundation for teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, to examine a range of evidence of student learning in order to revise curriculum and continuously improve instructional practice.
- iv. Successful 21<sup>st</sup> century learners and workers demonstrate critical and creative thinking skills and the ability to raise, analyze, and investigate meaningful questions and present solutions, both as individuals and as members of a productive group. These expectations must be embedded in curriculum, instruction, and assessment system-wide.
- v. Literacy in multiple languages and cultural competence are 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that promote individual success as a student, citizen, and leader. K-12 language programs and English Language Learner programs are key to success in these areas, and students who have successfully become proficient in a second language should be formally acknowledged.

**b. A highly qualified and effective staff is the foundation of our district's efforts to continuously improve student performance**

- i. Highly qualified and effective administrators, teachers, and staff, sufficient to meet all internal and external expectations, are the cornerstone of our district's efforts to continuously improve student performance.
- ii. Staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, and supplies must provide for full implementation of the curriculum, including co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities.
- iii. The student academic support team provides timely and responsive instruction and interventions to students K-12, and also provides professional learning to colleagues through formal and embedded opportunities.
- iv. A Curriculum Leadership Council (CLC) consisting of educational thought leaders and master practitioners provides a sustained expert focus on the development, implementation, assessment, and revision of curriculum and related student outcomes across the system.

**c. District resources must be purposefully distributed and dedicated to areas that drive student performance.**

- i. Maintaining class size guidelines and requisite staffing levels throughout all programs supports our students' growth and enables us to meet and exceed state and district student performance standards and the appropriately high expectations of the New Canaan community.
- ii. The team structure enables the faculty and staff at Saxe Middle School to differentiate instructional practice based on each student's individualized learning needs within a developmentally appropriate and supportive learning environment.
- iii. When appropriate, investing in professional learning prior to implementing a significant change in the teaching and learning experience (i.e. master scheduling change at the high and/or middle school) helps ensure the change is implemented with fidelity and on a path to success.
- iv. Developing a clear and comprehensive resource plan, including transportation needs, in support of the upcoming decisions regarding school start and end times.
- v. Researching best practices in school organization, including scheduling, schools start and end times, library learning commons, and extended learning opportunities, both locally and nationwide, empowers school leaders to make research-based decisions focused on meeting student, parent, staff, and community needs.
- vi. Continued investment in the integration and implementation of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) initiatives K-12, in alignment with the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), provides the foundation to ensure all students graduate with the technological knowledge and skills required to succeed in today's dynamic and complex global society.
- vii. Ongoing reviews and revisions to programs ensure that the district is responsive to and reflective of the needs, expectations, and interests of today's learners. Such reviews may identify a need for reallocation or addition of resources for staffing, training, materials and/or equipment.
- viii. Developing, revising, and implementing the K-12 health curriculum ensures the program is built in alignment with national health standards, state-statutes, best practices, and student needs while frequently communicating with the community regarding health, wellness, and the K-12 program.
- ix. Efforts focused on the early identification of and support for students in need of intervention (RTI) services provide a network of supports to help ensure all students continually progress in meeting and/or exceeding their learning goals each year. The successful results of these proactive efforts often lead to cost savings or avoidance of future costs associated with costlier special education services in or out of district.
- x. The New Canaan High School Alternative Program is continuing to develop and implement a parallel NCHS curriculum, along with a robust clinical component, to meet the educational and emotional needs of students struggling to find success in the traditional NCHS program.
- xi. Using a crosswalk between National Core Standards, district curriculum, and best practices, the Visual and Performing Arts department is engaged in a process of curriculum revision and staffing evaluation to continuously improve our delivery of program for students at all grade levels.

**GOAL 2. IMPROVE ACHIEVEMENT, SERVICE, AND RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH COMMUNICATION THAT IS RESPONSIVE, CLEAR, TIMELY, AND INCLUSIVE.**

- a. **Responsive, clear, timely and inclusive communication is the result of purposeful planning and thoughtful action**
  - i. Continue updating of the NCPS website ensures it remains responsive to the needs of all stakeholders and continues to enhance its effectiveness as a vehicle for timely, coordinated communications to the school, district, town, and world.
  - ii. Implementing best practices in school and district communications engages all students, families, and other stakeholders in the educational process.
  - iii. Implementing communication policies and procedures ensures compliance with recent legislation.
  - iv. Continue to advocate for the needs of New Canaan students locally, regionally and statewide through active participation in statewide committees and frequent communication with policy-makers ensures that we represent our needs to decision-makers.
- b. **Effective communication with families is essential to creating the conditions where all students can excel**
  - i. Providing information to families, especially those most in need, about available student support services helps ensure all students can avail themselves of these important supports.
  - ii. A Learning Management System (LMS) provides the platform for improved home-school communication focused on individual student performance, classroom expectations, and additional resources. The district will continue with the planned and strategic roll-out helps ensure the system is successfully implemented district-wide for the benefit of students, parents, and staff.

**GOAL 3. PROMOTE AND SUPPORT INNOVATIVE AND EXEMPLARY RESEARCH-BASED PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES IN ORDER TO CONTINUOUSLY ENHANCE TEACHING AND EXTEND LEARNING.**

- i. Consistent access to meaningful coaching, professional learning, and peer collaboration, at all levels, is critical to attracting, developing, and retaining highly qualified and effective administrators, teachers, and staff.
- ii. Expanding coordinator competence in coaching provides a network of expert leaders to help ensure all teachers receive timely feedback aligned with research-based best practices.
- iii. Maintaining the fidelity and effectiveness of the Teacher Evaluation and Professional Learning (TEPL) model by providing differentiated professional learning, reviewing and adjusting the evaluator/evaluatee ratios wherever necessary, and maintaining a system of collaborative document creation, storage, and retrieval, ensure it remains a powerful tool for teacher growth and support.
- iv. Continuing the ongoing review and adjustments of master schedules at each building in support of professional learning communities in order to provide a structure that regularly and collaboratively analyzes feedback and performance data to inform instructional and organizational planning and goal setting.
- v. An infrastructure of expert administrators and curriculum leaders contributes significantly to continued high levels of performance by students and staff. These positions lead the ongoing analysis of student performance data and the application of current research into classroom

practices. In addition, they update curriculum, assessment, and instructional practices, oversee placement and assessment administration, and lead embedded professional learning experiences for staff.

**GOAL 4. PROMOTE AN ENVIRONMENT THAT FOSTERS RESPECT, ETHICAL BEHAVIOR, AND RESPONSIBLE GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP.**

**a. Healthy, safe and secure learning, work and transportation environments are integral to the educational success and social-emotional development of students.**

- i. The district wide school climate initiative, aligned with the K-12 Social, Academic, and Personal Learning Framework, supports and strengthens positive school cultures at each building to ensure that every student feels physically, emotionally, and intellectually safe.
- ii. Student and staff safety, security and well-being are essential to maximize learning and performance. Continued investment in security initiatives through school and town budgets and available state security grants is critical for this ongoing work, as is ongoing training in best practices in school safety. ALICE training is a best-practices approach to school safety being adapted and implemented district-wide.
- iii. Maintaining the current structure of campus monitor positions is a critical component of our school safety initiative. An ongoing process helps the district to continuously identify and implement ways the existing structure can increase its effectiveness in order to provide further safety and security to our schools.
- iv. A strong, well-designed, and coordinated leadership structure is necessary to provide for the well-being and safety of students.
- v. A diverse catalog of co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities increases the likelihood that every student will become engaged in one or more school-related activities outside of the school day, thereby providing increased opportunities for students to become positively involved and invested in the school and New Canaan community.
- vi. The existing level and structure of student support services, composed of school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, Kids in Crisis counselor, and school resource officers (SRO), provides daily monitoring and supporting of student and family needs along with effective and responsive mental-health and crisis-response teams district-wide.
- vii. Providing students with opportunities for community service and recognizing students for service they perform outside of school underscores the importance of these activities and the role they play in the development of problem-solving skills, responsibility, and social connectedness.

**b. The maintenance and improvement of school facilities and technology is a sound financial practice that results in healthy, safe and productive learning and work environments.**

- i. Facilities and technology are a vital component of the district's mission, and must be regularly maintained and updated in support of student learning.
- ii. Consistently maintaining district facilities helps reduce the likelihood of costly and urgent needs unexpectedly surfacing in the future.
- iii. A timely response to enrollment projections and patterns is required to ensure all school facilities continue to meet enrollment and programmatic needs for all students.
- iv. The maintenance of school facilities includes interior and exterior upkeep by a team of knowledgeable staff. Facilities maintenance positions are regularly reviewed, and adjusted as

needed, to in-house expertise to meet many of the facilities issues, predictable and unpredictable, that arise throughout the year.

**GOAL 5: PROMOTE AND PRACTICE GOOD STEWARDSHIP FOR ALL DISTRICT RESOURCES IN A MANNER THAT SUPPORTS SAFE AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS AND OPTIMIZES STUDENT LEARNING.**

**a. Adhering to both unfunded and funded federal and state mandates is a continuous challenge; to do so effectively requires appropriate yet customized implementation of mandates and sufficient resources so as to meet legal mandates while consistently reflecting community principles and standards in all that we do. Recent mandates impacting our work include:**

- i. TEAM Program
- ii. Mandatory Medicare Enrollment for schools
- iii. Student Data Privacy Act
- iv. Human Resources background and reference check requirements
- v. Safety and security (staffing, training, technology and facilities; partnerships with local agencies)
- vi. Public law, guidelines and policies including FOIA, mediations, hearings, and legal actions
- vii. Teacher and administrator evaluation and professional learning
- viii. Updated state standards and performance expectations (Connecticut Core, national science/STEM, Social Studies framework, etc.)
- ix. New high stakes assessments - state and other high stakes assessments being updated (Smarter Balanced, revised AP & SAT, etc.)
- x. Anti-bullying/threatening behavior, school climate and attendance mandates
- xi. Secondary school reform – student success plans, graduation expectations, capstone, etc.
- xii. Special Education, 504, ELL, Response to Intervention (RTI)
- xiii. Training for certified and classified staff, including mandated reporter training, Epi-Pen, blood-borne pathogens, teen dating violence/domestic violence training, suicide prevention, Title IX, sexual harassment prevention, health care and management procedures
- xiv. State and federal data reports across an array of domains including district, school and student performance, student behavior, school climate, financial, human resources/personnel

**b. Educational excellence requires significant and sustained financial investment. A fiscally sound, prudent, and transparent approach will be followed in budget development, with a focus on maximizing the use of resources to ensure continued achievement and success.**

- i. Effective and efficient stewardship of resources honors community trust, responds to community needs, and is part of providing a sound return on investment; therefore, efficiencies should be identified and reported on an ongoing basis.
- ii. Creative and innovative approaches to maintaining and growing current programs/practices and developing new initiatives should be pursued with results reported to the Board and community regularly.
- iii. ICT personnel, services, and resources will be selected, structured, and deployed so as to meet the specific and specialized needs of an educational organization, including digital learning and

the administrative and communication needs of students, staff, and families.

- iv. Structures, policies, and practices will be reviewed continually to ensure that they address mandates and evolving needs relative to effectiveness, security, and confidentiality.
- c. Meeting the community’s high and increasing expectations for responsive services, excellence in educational outcomes, and fiscal prudence requires a forward looking and collaborative approach to goal setting, reporting, and funding.**
- i. To ensure that the district addresses long-term capital and insurance costs to meet the needs of all stakeholders, we will continue to work collaboratively with the Town Bodies and representatives.
  - ii. Clearly communicated, accurate, and timely financials are essential and will be provided to the Board regularly.
  - iii. Managing public information requests and hearing demands effectively and efficiently and provides support for those most impacted by the nature and number of requests.
  - iv. Identifying and implementing opportunities to reduce energy consumption through efficiencies, which may include capital spending, is both fiscally prudent and environmentally responsible. These opportunities include the expansion of solar, natural gas, propane, and cogeneration heat and power technologies.
  - v. By carefully managing the NCPS health insurance program, including fully funding the aggregate stop loss corridor in partnership with the town, the Board continues to meet its fiduciary responsibility to the community while ensuring that it can fulfill its commitments to all NCPS employees covered by the plan.