



New Canaan Public Schools  
39 Locust Avenue  
New Canaan, CT 06840

For Immediate Release:

## **E-Counseling: An integral part of New Canaan Public Schools' Distance Learning**



*Counselors have started offering Google Hangout Clubs to connect students with each other..*

New Canaan, CT (March 30, 2020). New Canaan Public Schools' integration of E-Counseling into its Distance Learning program continues its commitment to educate and develop the whole child. The NCPS Student Support Team, consisting of school counselors, psychologists, and social workers has adapted quickly to meet the needs of the K-12 community - even as students and faculty members work from home as a result of the virus outbreak.

"Normally, we think of counseling and mental health support as something that is provided in person," said Student Support Coordinator Dr. Susan Bliss. "But in this new virtual world, the NCPS Student Support Team is aware that students have increased needs, especially during this difficult time. And we went into overdrive to meet them."

The support professionals adapted NCPS's distance learning technology to reach students across the district. The team is offering everything from college counseling to "stress less" groups through videoconferencing. Students have adapted well, according to Dr. Bliss, and they look forward to "seeing" their counselors and support professionals.

Providing emotional support to students has always been a top priority for New Canaan Public Schools, and there are countless examples of how this is happening every day throughout the district. Counselors at Saxe Middle School have started offering Google Hangout Clubs to connect students with each other. "We know isolation can be an issue, and we wanted to get ahead of it," said Director of Pupil and Family Services Bill Tesbir. "These virtual clubs provide an ideal environment for communication and comradery." Students are being invited to join "Our Pets Club," "Remember Sports? Club," and the "Favorite Food Club" to help students stay in touch through Google Hangouts.

Faculty are also using innovative ways to stay connected. Last Friday, for example, East School hosted a TGIF with over 50 staff and faculty attending virtually. The group meeting included a baby shower and guitar and piano entertainment provided by East Music Specialist Barry Zhou.

Families are being reminded not to hesitate to reach out to the student support professionals across the district. Student support staff continues to be available to students and their families, even while e-learning is in place. A listing of counselors, psychologists, and social workers can be found on the school's websites, under School Information / Support Services. Links to those sites are included here: [East Elementary](#), [South Elementary](#), [West Elementary](#), [Saxe Middle School](#), and [New Canaan High School](#).

New Canaan Public Schools is also part of a community mobilization effort designed to anticipate, support and provide any mental health needs to members of families and students, should there be a need. This mental health task force, recently initiated by Youth and Family Services Coordinator Jackie D'Loughy, includes several New Canaan organizations and town leaders, including representatives from New Canaan Cares, Silver Hill Hospital, Kids in Crisis, the New Canaan Police Department, and the Town of New Canaan Human Services Department, along with Superintendent of Schools Dr. Bryan Luizzi, New Canaan's Emergency Management Director Mike Handler, New Canaan Public School psychologist Danielle Maslar, and Dr. Susan Bliss.

"It has been inspiring to watch professionals inside and outside of New Canaan Public Schools, who are all experts in their field, come together to support each other, our students and our families during this challenging time" said Dr. Bryan Luizzi. "In all that we do and every decision we make, the health and wellness of our school community will always be our true north and unwavering guide."

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Michael Horyczun  
Director of Communications, New Canaan Public Schools  
[mike.horyczun@ncps-k12.org](mailto:mike.horyczun@ncps-k12.org)  
office: (203) 594-4783, cell: (203) 970-2133.

#####