

New Milford Public Schools 50 East Street New Milford, CT 06776 860-355-8406 www.newmilfordps.org



#### New Milford High School 860-350-6647

Mr. Greg Shugrue, Principal Mrs. Liz Curtis, Asst. Principal Ms. Linda Scoralick, Asst. Principal Mr. Eric Williams, Asst. Principal



#### Schaghticoke Middle School 860-354-2204

Dr. Christopher Longo, Principal Mrs. Kerri Adakonis, Asst. Principal Mrs. Jennifer Delaney, Asst. Principal Mrs. Barbara Nanassy, Asst. Principal



#### Sarah Noble Intermediate School

860-210-4020
Mrs. Anne Bilko, Principal
Mrs. Jennifer Chmielewski, Asst. Principal
Mrs. Jennifer Hankla, Asst. Principal
Mrs. Jennifer Meyers, Asst. Principal



#### **Hill & Plain Elementary School**

860-354-5430 Mrs. Paula Kelleher, Principal Mrs. Jennifer Hankla, Asst. Principal



#### **Northville Elementary School**

860-355-3713 Mrs. Susan Murray, Principal Mrs. Barbara Nanassy, Asst. Principal

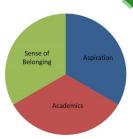
# Spotlight on New Milford Schools

Volume 8, Issue

January 2018

#### **Choosing the Future**

At the opening of schools this year, Superintendent Joshua Smith shared the district's core beliefs, which guide the work of the New Milford Public Schools, and talked about the ways the district understands and responds to our students. He said the learner is



defined in three broad areas: through student belonging, academics, and student aspiration. Student aspiration focuses on what happens after high school and how students are prepared for the future.

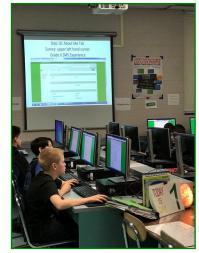


This preparation for the future starts with our youngest students through the emphasis on growth mindset, in which students are encouraged to view mistakes and challenges as an opportunity for development and future accomplishments. It continues on through the intermediate and middle school with the

addition of dream boards, where students produce a visual representa-

tion of their goals and dreams.

Once students reach the middle school level, future planning takes a more formal approach. SMS school counselors are visiting Grade 6 technology classes this month, working with students on an initial exploration of Naviance, a college and career readiness program that students will use until, and sometimes after, they graduate. The Career planning and assessment tools in Naviance help students to recognize their strengths, goals, skills, knowledge, values, constraints, and inter-



ests to help them make better academic decisions. This helps students gain a better understanding of the academic preparation required to pursue careers that are likely to be fulfilling for them.

Beginning in Grade 6, students receive a personalized log-in code for Naviance which offers several tools for students (and families) to begin thinking about their aspirations for the future:

StrengthsExplorer® is a strengths assessment that assesses 10 talent themes for individuals and identifies each student's three strongest emerging talents. Upon completion of StrengthsExplorer, students are provided with explanations of their top three themes and suggestions on how to discover what they need to do next to continue building on their strengths.

The Do What You Are® assessment uses personality types to suggest careers and clusters that might be a good match for a student. The results of the assessment provide students with a four-part personality type. Each of the four parts represents a personality trait that contributes to the student's overall personality type. The results page has detailed information about the student's personality type and potential careers and majors the student may want to consider.

The Learning Style Inventory assessment allows students to boost academic potential by recognizing their natural learning style, discover better learning strategies, and gain career development skills. The assessment provides students with a report that can be used to increase understanding of the student's needs at school.

The Career Interest Profiler is an online career interest assessment for students based on Holland's Interest Codes (realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional). When students complete the Career Interest Profiler, their results will display their top Holland Code matches.

The Career Cluster Finder is an online questionnaire that helps students discover career clusters that are most interesting to them. Once a student completes the Career Cluster Finder, top matching career clusters are made available for review. Students can re-take the questionnaire at any time.

Career Search allows students to search for careers by job title, keyword, and category; read about skills, requirements, and wages for nearly 1,000 careers; check up-to-date wage data at the national, state, and city levels; and identify colleges offering related majors

Grade 7 and 8 students continue their work in Naviance with the emphasis on making informed choices at the high school level. In the Fall, Grade 8 students hear presentations from Henry Abbott Technical High School and Nonnewaug High School which are designed

to inform students about their high school programs and to explain the application process.

In January, New Milford High School counselors visit SMS to present to all Grade 8 students regarding high school academic and athletic programs, in addition to club and extra-curricular opportunities. Following this presentation, SMS counselors meet with students to explain and assist in the specifics of the New Milford



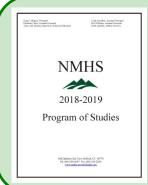
High School course selection process. This is a collaborative effort that involves teachers, school counselors, students and families in designing an academic program appropriate for each student. The high school hosts Incoming Freshman Night in January. Parents and students hear a general overview of freshman requirements and then visit department tables to receive additional information and ask questions.







Once students reach the high school level, school counselors use the tools in Naviance to work with students in exploring career interests, assist them in developing their selection of courses, and for post-secondary planning. Annual course selection is underway now. Current high school students are reviewing the Program of Studies and working with counselors to determine courses for next year, making sure they are fulfilling graduation requirements and reviewing elective courses they may be interested in taking.



The NMHS Program of Studies varies from year to year. Curriculum is rewritten to better meet student needs, graduation requirements may change, and new courses are added to keep up with the changing face of education and in response to student interest. The Board of Education approves any changes made throughout the year. In the first few months of this school year, the Board has approved changes to the curriculums of Honor's Freshman World History and AP World History and approved three new courses: Digital Photography, AP Computer Science Principles, and Computer Literacy. These courses will all appear in the Program of Studies for students to consider.

By the time students become upperclassmen, they are fully focused on career and/or college planning. Counselors host a College and Post High School Options Fair each Spring at NMHS. Annual Financial Aid and College Planning nights are offered for parents and students. Career and college reps visit the Career Center in the Fall and students sign up to meet them according to interest. Parents of juniors are invited to attend a half hour session with the school counselor to discuss graduation requirements and post-secondary planning. When students are ready, they use Naviance to compile their academic or career resume including: honors and awards, extracurricular activities, community activities, and job experiences. If it fits their post-secondary plans, students can use Naviance to fill out college applications and apply for scholarships.

NMHS counselor Mrs. Danette Lambiase sums up the process when she says, "Our goal is to provide students with all the tools they need to accomplish their future aspirations."

#### **SNIS Halls Are Alive With Poetry**

Poetry is in the air, and on the walls, and in the classrooms at SNIS as students focus on the genre as part of their work in Reading and Writing Workshops. The free form of this literary unit makes it a perfect vehicle to incorporate student academic choice.



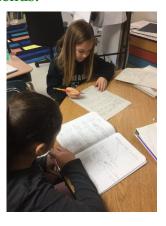
Paula Denton, the author of *Learning Through Academic Choice*, describes Academic Choice as a way to structure lessons and activities. "When teachers use Academic Choice, they decide on the goal of the lesson or activity, then give students a list of options for what to learn and/or how to go about their learning in order to reach the defined goal. Used well, the strategy breathes energy and a sense of purpose into children's learning. When students have choices in their learning, they become highly engaged and productive. They're excited about learning and sharing their knowledge."



SNIS Grade 4 teacher Mrs. Tara Gee says, "In this unit one of the most important aspects to keep the students engaged in poetry, as well as expose them to many varieties of poetry, was to give them the freedom to work with poems that speak to them. I wanted them to appreciate poetry and really build a love for it! We visited the library and checked out many anthologies that surrounded topics that they picked out and we compiled poems written by poets that they enjoyed in the past. We used these books and packets throughout the entire unit, and I found

students would go back to poets and certain poems that they connected with. This helped them find the 'wisdom' in poetry. As a poetry celebration students are writing poems down (some that they have found and some they have written themselves) and giving them to peers to keep in their pockets - sharing the gift of poetry with

friends."







Fellow Grade 4 teacher Mrs. Cindy Bonnell agrees that choice is key to student interest. "By allowing student choice in our fourth grade poetry unit, students are more willing to



play around with language and truly enjoy the full writing process. One example of choice is that the class voted on the anthology theme of sports for our unit. We generated ideas including being an observer, mining our memories (about famous sports players, famous teams) and about our sports: fishing, running, dance, soccer, softball, gymnastics, hockey etc. As part of the discussion we learned about choosing perspective and point of view."

SNIS Assistant Principal Jennifer Chmielewski says this has been a fun unit for both students and teachers. "Teachers have provided a wide variety of choice and, as a result, students have been actively engaged. They are motivated to apply close reading strategies, share their observations with peers, and have been celebrating their work through the writing process. It has been a wonderful opportunity for students to think outside the box and take risks with their learning, important steps to academic growth."

#### **Student Choice Extends Learning**

Walk into Mrs. Ciparelli's Grade 1 class at HPS any morning school is in session and you will see students scattered throughout the room engaged in various types of learning. Mrs. Ciparelli says this is part of her Choice Board morning activity. Choice Board is based off the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning. UDL principles include providing multiple options for student engagement, optimizing individual choice and autonomy, and recruiting student interest while they demonstrate learned content.

Mrs. Ciparelli says, "In my classroom students have the opportunity to use the Choice Board in the morning when they come in, and during the school day if they complete work early. The Choice Board is divided into two categories, *I'm still learning...*, which are generally formative assessments to guide my instruction, and *I'm ready to show what I've learned...*, which are generally summative assessments."

Class favorites are usually the choices that involve working with a buddy, creating something on Google Docs or hands-on STEM activities. As you can see in the pictures, students are nicely engaged in their own choices.









#### **SNIS Students Form Buddy Partnerships**

In 2015 the district closed John Pettibone Elementary School due to declining enrollment and realigned grade levels within the remaining schools. Grade 6 students and staff moved to the middle school and grade 3 students and staff moved to Sarah Noble Intermediate School. As part of the process, staff wanted the students and their colleagues to feel at home in their new environs; one way used by SNIS staff was the "buddy system".

SNIS grade 3 teacher Heather O'Loughlin says, "Some fifth grade classes buddied up with third grade classes as a way of helping us get to know Sarah Noble when third grade moved there. My class buddied with Mrs. Leclair's class. It went so well the first year, we buddied up last year and again this year. Our classes meet every other schedule day 2. The students share their recent work with each other and teach each other new learning. They work on problem solving spatial puzzles/riddles/mind challenges, etc.



and they have created projects made solely from repurposed materials. Towards the end of the year, we will go outside to play games that incorporate several skills. All of these activities require students to use social skills to plan, problem solve, create, provide feedback, and work together. Our students look forward to days where we meet with our buddies."



Teachers, and classroom buddies, Lori Cerra and Lisa Montemurro agree. Mrs. Cerra, a Grade 3 teacher, says, "We get together with our buddies every couple of weeks for various activities. Sometimes we use our buddies as an audience to share finished projects. For example, last year fifth grade students shared their published nonfiction writing projects



with third graders. During spring conferences, third graders pretended their buddy was their parent and practiced their student-led conference. I love seeing my former third grade students as fifth grade role models."

Grade 5 teacher Mrs. Lisa Montemurro says, "My fifth graders truly enjoy being good role models and big sisters/brothers to Lori's third graders. In turn, our third grade buddies feel a connection to older students as well as another teacher in the school, especially since this is their first year at Sarah Noble. Spending time with our buddies offers a sense of community for both the third and fifth grade students."

Some of the fun "buddy partnership" activities the combined classes have done include a Nature Scavenger Hunt, solving logic puzzles, and the Marshmallow Construction Challenge activities that promote team building, problem solving skills and developing friendships. Mrs. Montemurro speaks for all involved when she says, "My fifth grade students are very proud and eager to share their in-process/published writing

pieces, google slide presentations or simply share a favorite book with their buddies. The third graders are great listeners, provide positive feedback and offer a safe audience for all."

#### **SMS Holds Annual School Geography Bee**

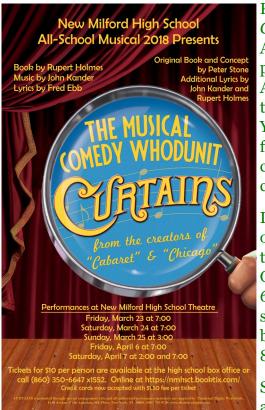
SMS held its annual school Geography Bee on January 25, with guest moderator Dr. Len Tomasello presiding. Brett Kornhaas, of Team 8 Blue, won the competition with a perfect score! He was one of 20 finalists selected from over 1,000 students who competed in their Social Studies classes, semi-final round, and then finals. Brett is awaiting results on his winner's test to determine if he qualifies for the state round. Congratulations to Brett and all the participants.





To read more about the competition, sponsored by National Geographic, and try a GeoBee Challenge test, <u>click here</u>.

#### All School Musical Tickets On Sale Now



Performances of this year's <u>NMHS All School Musical</u>, *Curtains*, will take place in March and April. A comedic murder mystery, the original Broadway production garnered 8 nominations at the 2007 Tony Awards including Best Musical. This year for the first time, tickets can be purchased online by credit card. You can even pick out your seats! An additional \$1.50

fee per ticket will be charged for credit card purchases.

If you'd prefer to order your tickets through the Box Office, call 860-350-6647 ext. 1552 or



stop by the high school Monday through Thursday between the hours of 2:30 – 4:00 p.m. or 6:30 -8:30 p.m. and on Fridays from 2:30 - 4:00 p.m.

Senior citizen passes are available that provide FREE

admission to the musical, athletic contests, and other school events. Please call our Central Office at 860-355-8406 ext. 210 for more information.





On January 15, in the spirit of community fellowship, members of the New Milford High School chorale group performed at the New Milford United celebration of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.; a fitting way indeed to recognize the day.

#### **BOE Adopts 2018-19 Education Budget**

New Milford Public Schools Superintendent Joshua Smith and administrative team members presented the proposed 2018-19 education budget to the New Milford Board of Education for consideration on the evenings of January 16, 17, 23 and 24 in public session. The 2018-19 Superintendent's Proposed Budget, as proposed, was \$64,437,522 which is an increase of \$1,626,936 or 2.59% over the current year's budget. **The Board of Education's Adopted budget, as approved on January 24, 2017, was finalized at \$64,278,670, which represents an increase of \$1,468,084 or 2.34% over the current year's budget.** 



#### Mission/Vision

The mission of the New Milford Public Schools, a collaborative partnership of students, educators, family and community, is to prepare each and every student to compete and excel in an ever-changing world, embrace challenges with vigor, respect and appreciate the worth of every human being, and contribute to society by providing effective instruction and dynamic curriculum, offering a wide range of valuable experiences, and inspiring students to pursue their dreams and aspirations.

#### **District Theories of Action**

- IF we develop a commitment to student learning and achievement over a compliance to directives, THEN students will learn in a more flexible and adaptive environment
- If we develop a student centered culture of achievement, belonging and trust THEN all students will be better prepared for lifelong success.
- If we develop administrative instructional capacity and teacher leadership opportunities, THEN a culture of professional learners will foster more collaborative efforts to support student learning.
- IF we create learning experiences that support student aspirations for life beyond school THEN students will graduate with the knowledge and skills to meet the demands of the 21st century.

#### Strategic Objectives

Build capacity of Teachers through curriculum writing and professional development.

Develop Administrators as instructional leaders and improve their connection to teaching and learning.

Develop, manage and maintain the technology, infrastructure, and resources needed to maintain a safe and effective learning environment.

Provide opportunities and instructional paths that allow students to pursue areas of interest and prepare them for options after high school.

Superintendent Joshua Smith says, "This budget was developed with a clear understanding of the fiscal situation facing the town and the impact the reductions in state funding will have to the community. While this proposal does not look to expand programs or add any non-mandated initiatives, it does support and maintain the instructional programs and needed staffing levels to continue the district's focus on instructional improvement. The increase also restores some of the \$750,000 in cuts made in June 2017; however the vast majority of those reductions remain permanent."

The budget proposal meets the contractual obligations of the district, capitalizes on declining enrollment where possible, and works to balance some increased risk with responsible cost projections. The major cost increases are driven mainly by costs outside of programs and instruction. In order to achieve the proposed budget increase, the district prioritized and deferred many needs and projects. Mr. Smith says, "To achieve cost efficiencies, we have absorbed some increased risk in certain cost projections, and are working to further maximize staffing and resources already in the district in order to maintain the current level of service without adding staff."

In light of decreasing enrollment, seven classroom teaching positions were eliminated at the K-5 level. Class sizes will increase slightly for some grades. One state mandated bilingual teaching position will be added at Schaghticoke Middle School to address the needs of second language learners.

#### **DISTRICT QUALITY RESULTS**

- 203% increase in AP enrollment over the past 7 years
- High percentage of students participate in athletics, performing arts, clubs, and activities
- Continued growth in mathematics achievement
- 93.4% Graduation Rate with four years of continued improvement
- Improved programs and curriculum including social emotional health
- SAT Performance continues to outperform State and DRG averages in both ELA and Math. Over the past two years Math scores have increased 11 points and ELA 40 points
- College Readiness Score continues to rise and close the gap within our DRG

Presentations to the Board highlighted how the district will use budgeted funds in the three broad areas through which the learner is defined: *student belonging*, *academics*, and student *aspiration*. K-5 principals Mrs. Anne Bilko, Mrs. Paula Kelleher and Mrs. Susan Murray talked about how they work to build resilience in students through an emphasis on growth mindset while creating a culture of respect and kindness in their schools. They summarized academic highlights, specifically in reading and math, and the use of interventions where needed. All schools provide emotional supports through counselors and social workers and promote a sense of belonging through intramurals and other school activities.

SMS principal Chris Longo spoke proudly of the many initiatives the middle school offers in the areas of *student belonging*. These include team building field trips, bullying prevention programs, and the Principal's Student Advisory Council, just to name a few. Data teams provide input in the *academic* area, which is further supported through curriculum revision and professional development. Student *aspiration* is encouraged through self-interest studies and career explorations using Naviance, a software tool students will use through their high school career.

The theme continues at New Milford High School where the three areas of the learner are imbedded in the school's WAVE acronym: <u>W</u>ork to become lifelong learners and peer collaborators who meet challenging goals by applying 21st century skills; <u>A</u>chieve through hard work, honest reflection, and self-advocacy using critical thinking and problem solving; <u>Value civic responsibility and the diversity within our community and global society; <u>E</u>mpower students and teachers to become curious, creative, innovative, and insightful. Principal Greg Shugrue said, "This budget will provide funds needed to continue to maintain and improve instructional opportunities for students; address students' social, emotional and mental health needs, and fund college and career readiness opportunities."</u>

Over the course of several nights, the Board also heard detailed presentations regarding the \Department of Instruction, Maintenance, Special Education/Pupil Personnel, Technology, General Administration and Capital. These presentations are posted in their entirety on the <a href="district website">district website</a>, as are links to full videos of all the hearings.

### Department Highlights

#### **Department of Instruction**

- Curriculum Development and Implementation
- · Staffing and financial impact of legislative mandates
- Curriculum and instructional improvements in Literacy and Mathematics

#### Maintenance

• Emphasis on reoccurring maintenance and keeping mechanical systems up to date

#### **Special Education**

· Review of costs and historical frequency related to supporting students with special needs

#### Technology

• The scope of technology use and required supports

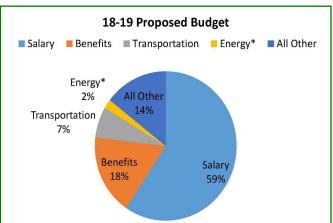
The increase in benefit costs comprises \$694,189 which is 47% of the \$1,468,084 budget increase. The benefits total includes a \$250,000 increase to medical costs resulting from the budget relief provided by the Town Council prior to last year's referendum. The total increase is lower than what it could have been due to all of the collective bargaining units' participation in a high deductible health plan and the plan changes made through collective bargaining agreements last Fall. A reduction of seven positions means that of the \$1,468,084 budget, contractual salary obligations account for \$56,123 or just 0.09% of the requested 2.34% increase. In contrast, the increase in medical and other benefit costs account for 1.08% of the 2.34% increase.

#### **Budget Challenges**

- · Accounting for 2017-18 budget relief
  - \$250,000 in medical cost relief helped reduce the tax burden for 17-18 but created a 0.4% increase to the 2018-19 budget
- Even as employees move to High Deductible Health Plans, insurance costs continue to rise. The increase constitutes 50.39% of the total budget increase and is rising at more than 13 times the rate of salary increases.
- Aggressively mitigating uncontrollable cost increases while accounting for increased risks
- Need to establish and fund repair and replacement cycles that do not depend on emergency accounts
  - Use of capital reserve to offset operating capital costs

In summary, Superintendent Smith said, "This is a fiscally responsible budget which recognizes the financial pressures being placed on the town of New Milford. It seeks to provide the schools with the resources and staffing necessary to improve academic achievement and support the needs of the whole student. It affirms our commitment to focus on systemic progress with a vision for continuity and excellence in every classroom. It also reflects the district's efforts to continue aligning curriculum with state standards, to prepare students for college and career readiness, and to continue providing a safe and healthy learning environment."

On January 24, 2018 the BOE deliberated at length before adopting the final 2018-2019 budget. The Superintendent's proposal was decreased by \$158,852 in the areas of workers' compensation, property liability, strategic planning and student field trips.



Board of Education Chairperson David Lawson says "This budget reflects our goals of Student Belonging, Academics and Aspiration. It maintains programs for students, while making reductions to address the fiscal responsibilities we as a town are faced with."

The BOE Approved Budget now goes before the Town Council and Board of Finance for review and approval before being voted on at referendum.

BUDGET SUMMARY						
Budget object	2017-2018 Budget	2018-2019 Budget	Year to year Change	Percent Change by Object	Percent of Total 2018-2019 Budget	Percent of Total Increase
Salaries	\$38,091,700	\$38,147,823	\$56,123	0.15%	59.2%	0.09%
Benefits	\$10,445,551	\$11,139,740	\$694,189	6.65%	17.0%	1.08%
Professional Services	\$3,867,186	\$4,097,954	\$230,768	5.97%	6.25%	0.36%
Property Services	\$913,083	\$979,162	\$66,079	7.24%	1.50%	0.10%
Other Services	\$7,589,382	\$7,782,414	\$193,032	2.54%	11.9%	0.30%
Supplies	\$2,665,330	\$2,799,701	\$134,371	5.04%	4.27%	0.21%
Capital	\$514,505	\$524,544	\$10,039	1.90%	0.80%	0.02%
Dues and Fees	\$88,427	\$90,260	\$1,833	2.07%	0.14%	0.00%
Total Expenses	\$64,175,164	\$65,521,598	\$1,386,434	2.16%		2.16%
Total Revenue	-\$1,364,578	-\$1,242,928	\$81,650	-5.98%		0.18%
Supt Proposed Total	\$62,810,586	\$64,278,670	\$1,468,084	2.34%	100%	zs <b>2.34%</b>



#### **New Milford Public Schools**

50 East Street New Milford, CT 06776 860-355-8406

**Mr. Joshua Smith** Superintendent

**Ms. Alisha DiCorpo** Assistant Superintendent

Ms. Ellamae Baldelli Human Resources Director

**Mr. Kevin Munrett** Facilities Director

**Mr. Anthony Giovannone** Fiscal Services & Operations Director

Mrs. Laura Olson Pupil Personnel & Special Services Director

**Ms. Roberta Pratt** Technology Director

**Mrs. Sandra Sullivan** Food Services Director

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**Mrs. Tammy McInerney** Vice Chairperson

**Mrs. Angela C. Chastain** Secretary

Mrs. Eileen P. Monaghan Assistant Secretary

Mr. Bill Dahl

Mr. Joseph Failla

Mrs. Wendy Faulenbach

Mr. Brian McCauley

Mr. J.T. Schemm

#### **SNOW DAYS!**

With winter upon us, our elementary students, like the HPS students pictured below, bundle up and enjoy the snow at recess.



Sometimes the snow is not so picturesque and school is canceled for the day. The quickest way to hear about changes to the school schedule is to watch your email, text alerts, and follow us on twitter (@nmps\_supt). Make sure to keep your contact information up to date with your child's school. So far the district has had four snow



days this school year. That brings our current last day of school to June 19. An updated calendar is added to the website after each snow day and can be found <u>here</u>.

For you non-snow lovers, remember Spring arrives Tuesday, March 20, 2018.



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