

NEWTON

Public Schools



FY26 ANNUAL REPORT

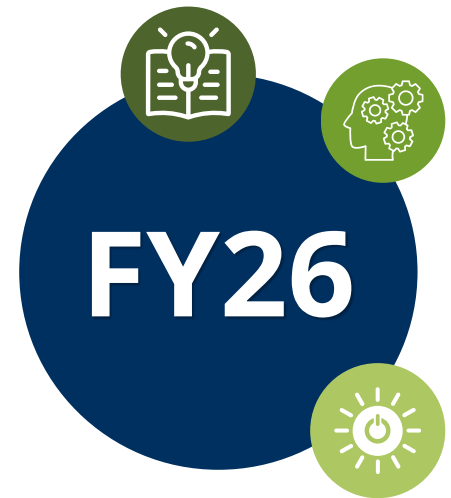
Anna Nolin, Ed.D.
Superintendent & Head Teacher



NEWTON
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Where every student can thrive

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A Year of Progress and Proof



Each year, our annual report serves as a moment of reflection, accountability, and recommitment. This year, it also serves another essential purpose: to respond directly and transparently to a community conversation about trust, value, and the cost of public education.

I am acutely aware that many in our community are asking hard and fair questions: Are Newton Public Schools delivering results that justify the investment we make? Are we improving student outcomes in ways that are measurable, meaningful, and equitable? This report is designed to answer those questions clearly and honestly.

“This annual report is not a list of activities. It is a public accounting of how well Newton Public Schools is delivering on its promise to students and families.”

Public education is one of the most significant shared investments a community makes. In Newton, that investment must be accompanied by clarity of purpose, disciplined execution, and transparent evidence of impact. Over the past year, we have worked intentionally to move away from disconnected initiatives and toward a coherent, system-wide strategy for improvement—one that focuses on student learning, well-being, and postsecondary readiness, while strengthening the conditions that allow educators and schools to succeed.

That strategy is the Thrive 2030 Strategic Plan, which now serves as both our roadmap and our accountability framework. Thrive 2030 is not a collection of aspirations; it is a five-year, outcomes-driven plan that aligns teaching and learning, student supports, community engagement, financial stewardship, facilities, and human resources around a shared vision. Just as importantly, it establishes clear indicators, so the community can see where we are making progress and where more work remains.

This year, we made meaningful strides aligned to that plan, including:

- Strengthening instructional coherence and student supports through clearer curriculum alignment, expanded Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), and increased access to enriching academic pathways—ensuring that students are known, challenged, and supported across all schools.
- Improving transparency and engagement with families and the broader community, including more consistent communication practices, expanded family engagement structures, and deeper partnerships with city agencies, businesses, and alumni.
- Demonstrating measurable student outcomes across academics, the arts, athletics, service learning, and postsecondary pathways—reflecting multiple definitions of success for Newton graduates.
- Aligning resources more deliberately to strategic priorities, including long-range facilities planning, technology modernization, and budget decisions that prioritize classroom impact and student well-being.
- Investing in our educators and leaders, recognizing that student success depends on a skilled, supported, and stable workforce.

A Year of Proof and Progress, continued.

This annual report is organized intentionally around these priorities. It begins with outcomes—how students are doing—before explaining the systems, practices, and investments that make those outcomes possible. Throughout, you will see data, context, and narrative working together to tell a clear story of progress, responsibility, and direction.

Newton Public Schools is a district rich in opportunity which brings success for many children; but we are focused, aligned, and committed to continuous improvement so that all children, regardless of their background or location of their home, can thrive—and find their individual passions and talents leading them to a healthy, well-rounded future life. We want all students to get what they need when they need it and be prepared for the futures they choose.

We are also committed to expanding and sustaining the trust of our community by being clear about our goals, disciplined in our actions, and transparent about our results.

I invite you to read this report as a window into the work underway, the progress achieved, and the promise we continue to pursue together: that every student in Newton has access to an excellent, inclusive, and future-ready education—and that our community can see the value of that investment clearly and confidently.

With appreciation and resolve,
Dr. Anna P. Nolin



Superintendent of Schools, Head Teacher
Newton Public Schools

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a list of activities.**

**It is a public accounting
of how well Newton
Public Schools is
delivering on its promise
to students and families.”**

Portrait of a Newton Learner

Core Competencies

Adaptability:

Demonstrate the ability to adjust their learning strategies, behaviors, and thinking to effectively navigate changing situations, new challenges, or different learning environments within the classroom.

Critical Thinking:

Questioning deeply, analyzing rigorously, and collaborating effectively to solve complex problems with clarity and reason.

Communication:

Seeks to understand other perspectives, articulates thoughts and ideas, and communicates across multiple contexts.

Empathy:

Embracing diverse perspectives with flexible thinking, compassion, and cultural awareness to adapt, connect, and create meaningful growth.

Learner's Mindset:

Demonstrates the ability to stay curious, persevere through challenges, take risks, reflect on mistakes, and use feedback to grow. It involves asking thoughtful questions, taking risks, seeking opportunities to learn, supporting others, and approaching tasks with a focus on growth and understanding rather than outcomes.

Thrive 2030: The four strategic focus areas

The Newton Public Schools Thrive 2030 Strategic Plan is the district's five-year roadmap for ensuring that every student is known, supported, challenged, and prepared to thrive in school and beyond. At the center of Thrive 2030 is Newton's commitment to educating the whole child.

The plan is guided by the district's Portrait of a Learner competencies, including adaptability, empathy, and a learner's mindset, and it organizes the district's work into four major focus areas. It gives the community a clear sense of where the district is headed and how budget decisions connect to that direction. The plan is grounded in a simple idea: our values guide the budget, and the strategic plan turns those values into action.

Portrait of a Learner



Thrive 2030: Our four strategic focus areas

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1. Learning and Well-Being

Newton Public Schools is working to ensure that every classroom is academically strong, emotionally safe, inclusive, and responsive to student needs. This includes aligned curriculum, common assessments, strong teaching, and effective support for students through a districtwide Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). The goal is for all students to experience belonging, make academic progress, and receive the right support at the right time.

2. Community Engagement

The district is strengthening communication with families and building deeper partnerships across the city. This includes clearer communication standards, inclusive family outreach, support through the Welcome Center and Family Academy, and stronger connections with alumni, local organizations, and community partners. The goal is for families and residents to feel informed, welcomed, and invested in Newton Public Schools.

3. Financial Resources, Facilities, and Technology

This focus area is about making sure the district's resources match its priorities. That means aligning budgets to the strategic plan, modernizing technology, improving school facilities and accessibility, strengthening long-range financial planning, and pursuing grants and partnerships to support innovation. In other words, the budget is not just about maintaining operations; it is about investing in the conditions that help students learn and thrive.

4. Human Resources

Great schools depend on great people. Thrive 2030 includes a strong focus on recruiting, developing, and retaining excellent staff. The district prioritizes leadership development, professional growth, staff well-being, and equitable hiring and retention practices so that Newton students are served by a highly skilled and diverse workforce.

Taken together, these focus areas help explain the "why" behind the budget. The budget funds the people, programs, systems, and supports that move the district's strategic priorities forward. Thrive 2030 is the district's effort to move from year-to-year decision-making toward a more coherent, transparent, and long-term approach—one that keeps student success, equity, and community trust at the center.

Leadership & Governance

Newton School Committee

- Alicia Piedalue, Ward 7 - Chair
- Jason Bhardwaj, Ward 3 - Vice Chair
- Arrianna Proia, Ward 1
- Linda Swain, Ward 2
- Tamika Olszewski, Ward 4
- Ben Schlesinger, Ward 5
- Jonathan Greene, Ward 6
- Victor Lee, Ward 8
- Marc Laredo, Mayor



Learn more about the Newton School Committee by visiting the [committee page](#) on the district website.
(Direct link to school committee page: www.newton.k12.ma.us/school-committee.)

District Senior Administration

Dr. Anna Nolin	<i>Superintendent & Head Teacher</i>
Dr. Ayesha Farag	<i>Assistant Superintendent, Elementary Education</i>
Dr. Gina Flanagan	<i>Assistant Superintendent, Teaching & Learning</i>
Lisa Gilbert-Smith	<i>Director, METCO Program</i>
Dr. Katy Hogue	<i>Chief, Data and Research</i>
Liam Hurley	<i>Assistant Superintendent/Chief Financial Officer</i>
Allison Levit	<i>Director, English Language Learners Program</i>
Kathy Lopes	<i>Director, Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion</i>
Christina Maryland, MBA	<i>Director, Communications & Family Engagement</i>
Jill Murray Grady	<i>General Counsel</i>
Casey Ngo-Miller	<i>Assistant Superintendent, Student Services</i>
Steven Rattendi	<i>Director, Information Technology & Library Services</i>
Dr. Eugene Roundtree	<i>Assistant Superintendent, Secondary Education & Special Programs</i>
Dr. Joany Santa	<i>Director, Human Resources</i>

Management & Governance

Governance: The School Committee's Role

Governance is about high-level oversight and long-term vision. The School Committee acts as a "Board of Directors" representing the interests of the Newton community-at-large.

- **Setting Vision and Goals:** Defining what the district should achieve.
- **Policy Development:** Creating the "laws" of the district. This includes everything from attendance policies to equity frameworks.
- **Budget Approval:** Allocating financial resources based on district priorities.
- **Hiring and Evaluating the Superintendent:** This is the Committee's most critical task. They hire one person to run the district and hold them accountable for results.
- **Advocacy:** Acting as a bridge between the school system and the public/local government.

Management: The Superintendent's Role

Management is the day-to-day operation of the schools. The Superintendent is the "CEO" who executes the board's vision using professional expertise.

- **Implementation:** Taking a policy (like a new grading scale) and making it work in the classrooms.
- **Personnel Decisions:** Hiring principals, teachers, and staff.
- **Instructional Leadership:** Deciding which textbooks to use, how to train teachers, and how to structure the school day.
- **Daily Operations:** Managing bus routes, cafeteria services, and building maintenance.
- **Administrative Oversight:** Handling student discipline cases or specific parent complaints.



School Leadership

Preschool & Elementary Principals

<i>Newton Early Childhood Program</i>	Kathleen Browning	617-559-6050
<i>Angier Elementary</i>	Orla Higgins Averill	617-559-9300
<i>Bowen Elementary</i>	Diana Guzzi	617-559-9330
<i>Burr Elementary</i>	Simone Kotraba	617-559-9360
<i>Cabot Elementary</i>	Eric Sprung	617-559-9400
<i>Countryside Elementary</i>	Elizabeth Herlihy	617-559-9450
<i>Franklin Elementary</i>	Mark Chitty	617-559-9500
<i>Horace Mann Elementary</i>	Mark Nardelli	617-559-9510
<i>Lincoln-Eliot Elementary</i>	Maura Morse	617-559-9540
<i>Mason Rice Elementary</i>	Jacob Bultema	617-559-9570
<i>Memorial Spaulding Elementary</i>	Jamie Yadoff	617-559-9600
<i>Peirce Elementary</i>	Andrea Vargas	617-559-9630
<i>Underwood Elementary</i>	Suzie Talukdar	617-559-9660
<i>Ward Elementary</i>	Rebecca Brogadir	617-559-6450
<i>Williams Elementary</i>	Anthony Byers	617-559-6480
<i>Zervas Elementary</i>	Katherine O'Leary	617-559-6750

Middle & High School Principals

<i>Bigelow Middle School</i>	Daniel Green	617-559-6800
<i>Brown Middle School</i>	Kimberly Lysaght	617-559-6900
<i>F.A. Day Middle School</i>	Jacqueline Mann	617-559-9100
<i>Oak Hill Middle School</i>	John Harutunian	617-559-9200
<i>Newton North High School</i>	Henry Turner	617-559-6400
<i>Newton South High School</i>	Tamara Stras	617-559-6500





Newton Public Schools by the Numbers

Our District



3,200
Staff Members



11,800 *
Students



42 Buses
96 Daily Bus Routes



300+ Student
Teams and
Clubs

Our Schools



1
Preschool



15
Elementary
Schools



4
Middle Schools



3
High
Schools



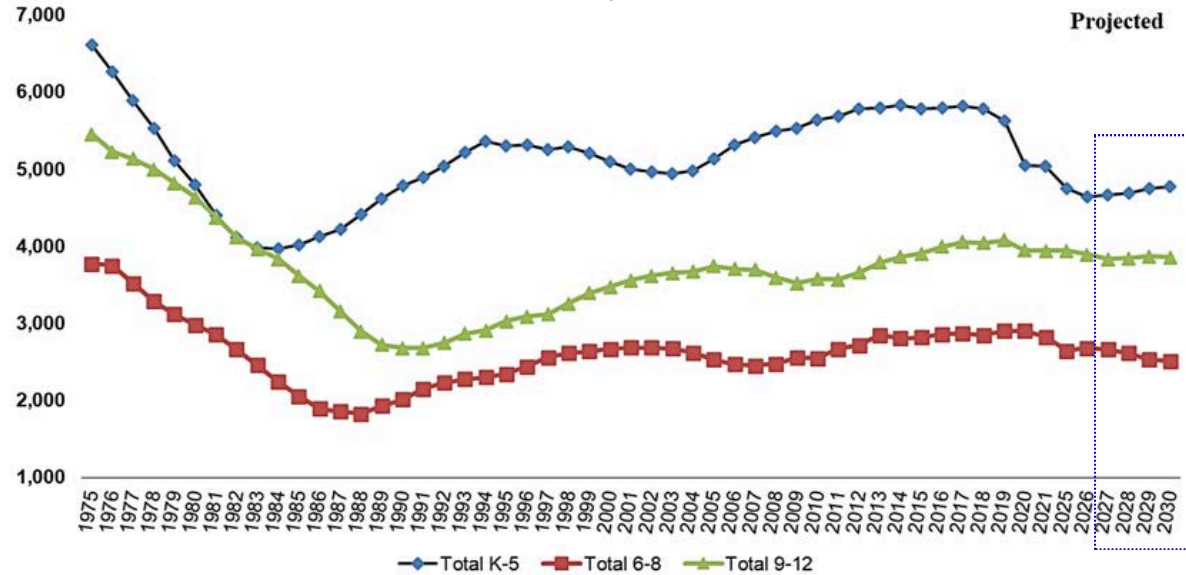
1
Post-
Secondary

**Total includes preschool & out-placed students.*

Newton by the Numbers

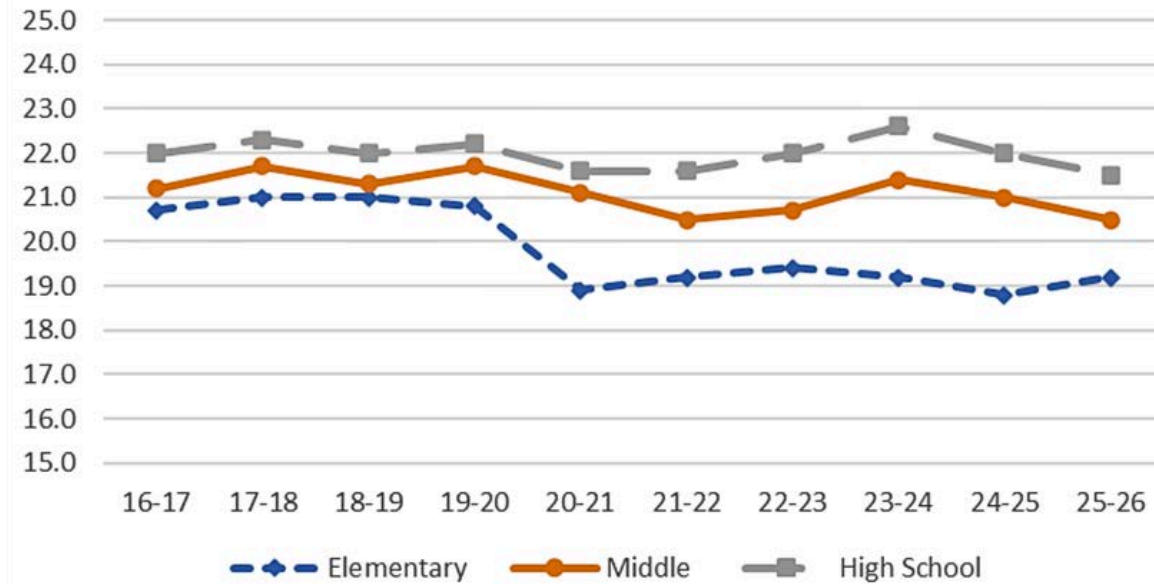
Enrollment by Grade Span

Actual Enrollment: 1975-76 to 2025-26 and Projected Enrollment: 2026-27 to 2030-31



This graph displays actual enrollment by grade span (elementary, middle, and high school) from fall 1975 to fall 2025, and projected enrollment from fall 2026 to fall 2030. There have been fluctuations in total enrollment by grade span over this time period; projected enrollment at the elementary level is anticipated to increase slightly over the next five years; at the middle school level, enrollment is projected to be relatively stable; and at the high school level, enrollment is projected to decrease slightly.

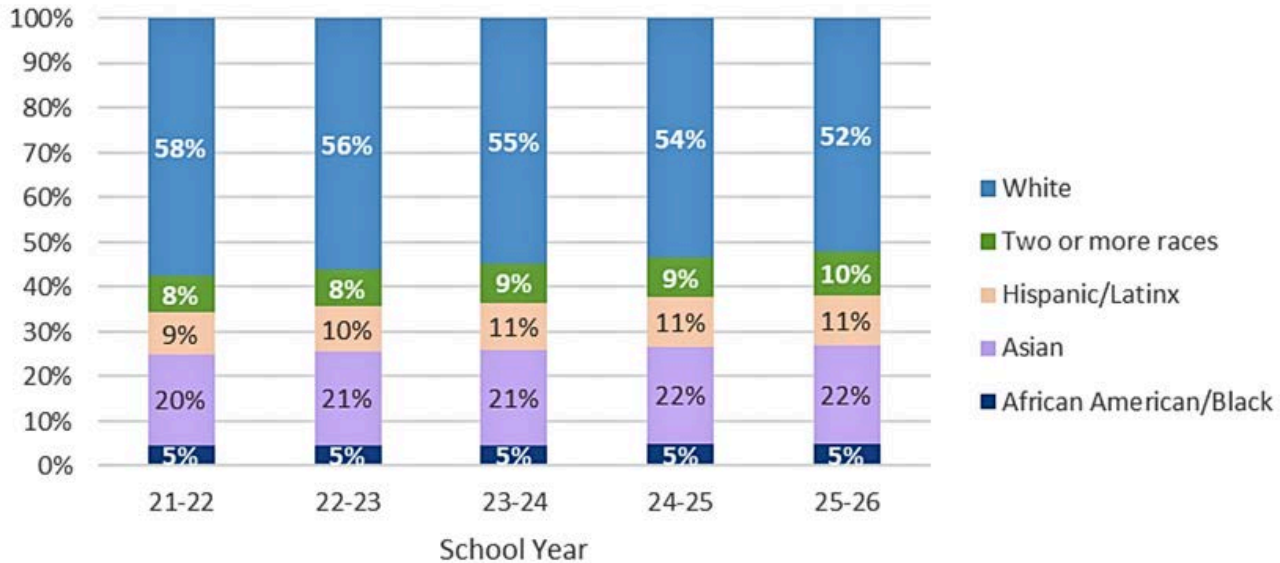
Average Class Size by Level



This graph displays average class size by level (elementary, middle, and high school) from the 2016-17 school year through the current year (2025-26). There have been small fluctuations in average class size over this time period; this year, the average class size at middle and high school decreased from last year, while the average class size at elementary school increased from last year. Elementary schools have had the smallest average class sizes over this time period, followed by middle, and then high school.

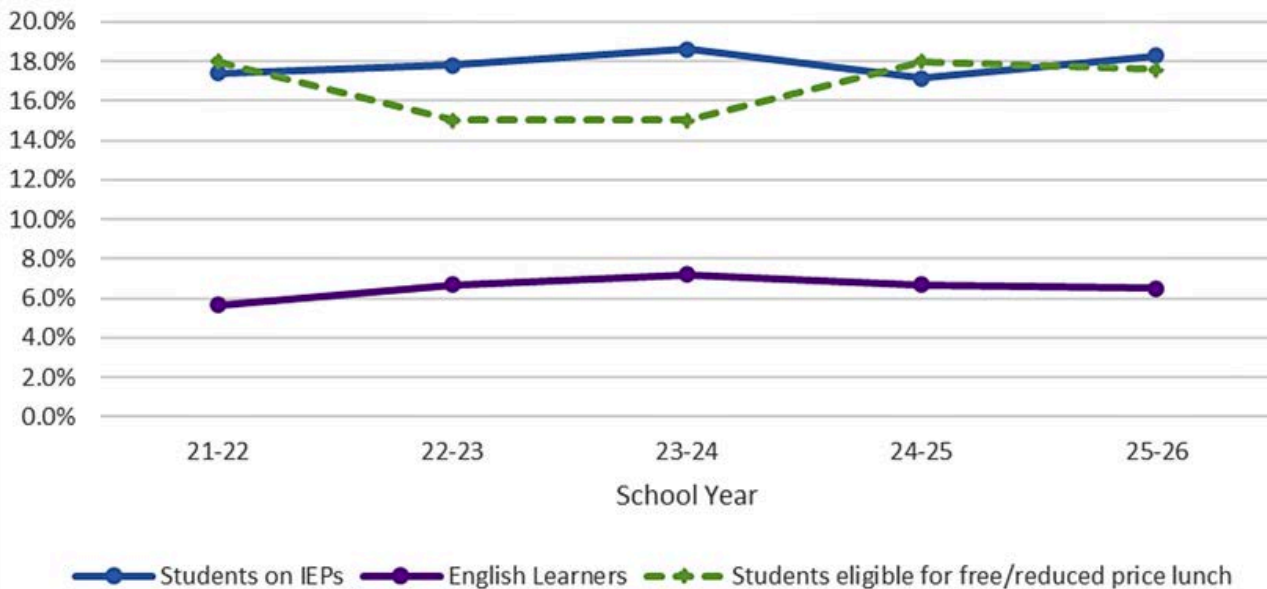
Newton by the Numbers

Student Demographics



This graph displays student enrollment in NPS over the past five years by race/ethnicity. The largest percentage of enrolled students over this time period identify as White, although that percentage has been decreasing, while the percentage of students identifying as Two or more races, Hispanic/Latinx, and Asian has increased slightly. The percentage of students identifying as African American/Black has remained stable over this time period.

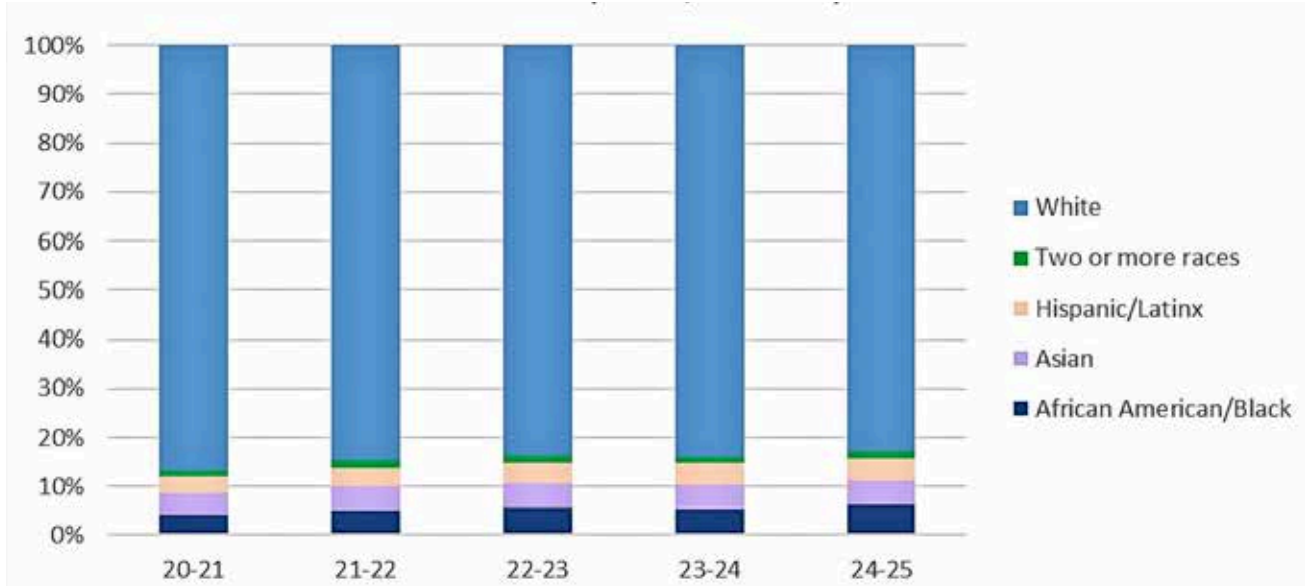
Selected Student Populations



This graph displays the percentage of students on IEPs, the percentage of students who are English Learners, and the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch over the past five years. The percentage of students on IEPs and English Learners has remained relatively stable (around 18% for students on IEPs and around 7% for English Learners). The percentage of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch has fluctuated between 15-18%.

Newton by the Numbers

Staff Demographics



This graph displays the percentage of staff in NPS over the past five years by race/ethnicity. The majority of staff in NPS identify as White, although that percentage has declined over the past five years from 87% in 2020-21 to 83% in 2024-25, while the percentage of staff identifying as African American/Black or Hispanic/Latinx has increased slightly (from 4% to 6% and 3% to 4%, respectively).

82

The number of languages spoken by students in NPS during the 2025-26 school year.



Language Diversity Across the District

Peer District Comparisons

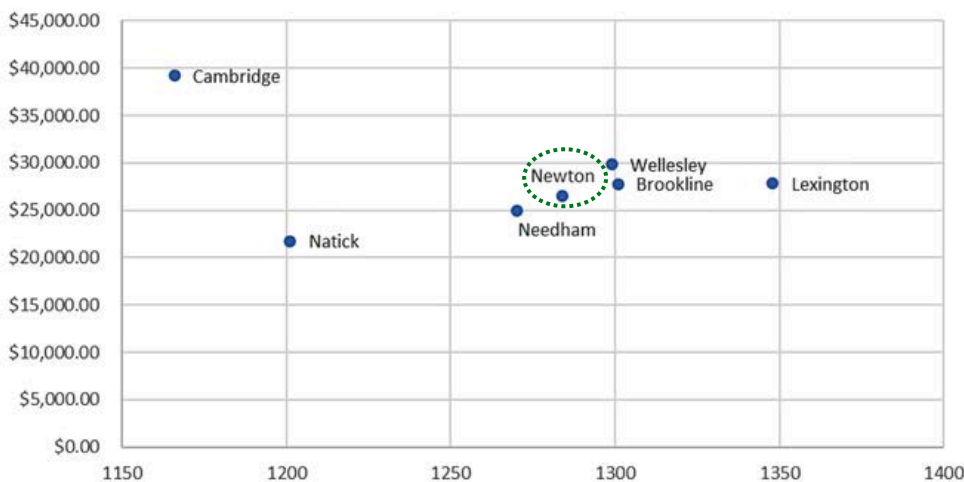
2025-2026 (except where noted)							
Selected Indicators	Brookline	Cambridge	Lexington	Natick	Needham	Newton	Wellesley
Total Enrollment	6,948	6,960	6,524	5,223	5,427	11,461	3,922
Students on IEPs	18.0%	22.5%	15.0%	19.2%	19.2%	18.3%	17.4%
English Learners	11.4%	10.2%	6.0%	5.4%	2.5%	6.5%	3.1%
Low income	14.5%	35.0%	10.4%	13.5%	7.1%	13.7%	8.1%
Average SAT Reading/Writing (2024-25)	649	591	665	605	634	637	647
Average SAT Math (2024-25)	652	575	683	596	636	647	652
4 Year Graduation Rate (2025)	96.6%	92.7%	98.5%	96.9%	97.7%	96.6%	95.5%
Dropout Rate (2024-2025)	0.8%	0.6%	0.1%	0.8%	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%
Per pupil spending (2024)	\$27,765.05	\$39,212.47	\$27,831.89	\$21,772.31	\$24,928.34	\$26,567.23	\$29,869.34
Student: teacher ratio	11.0:1	9.6:1	10.3:1	11.9:1	11.8:1	10.6:1	10.5:1
Average Class Size (2024-25)	16.7	16	18.3	18.1	17.5	16.7	16.2

Source: DESE School and District Profiles. Student data include preschool students.

The following table displays selected indicators for Newton and a set of comparison districts for the 2025-2026 school year (with exceptions for the date of particular indicators as noted in the table). These comparison districts were selected based on serving a similar population of students as Newton and/or proximity to Newton as a potential housing choice competitor for families.

2024 per-pupil spending vs. outcomes (SAT scores)

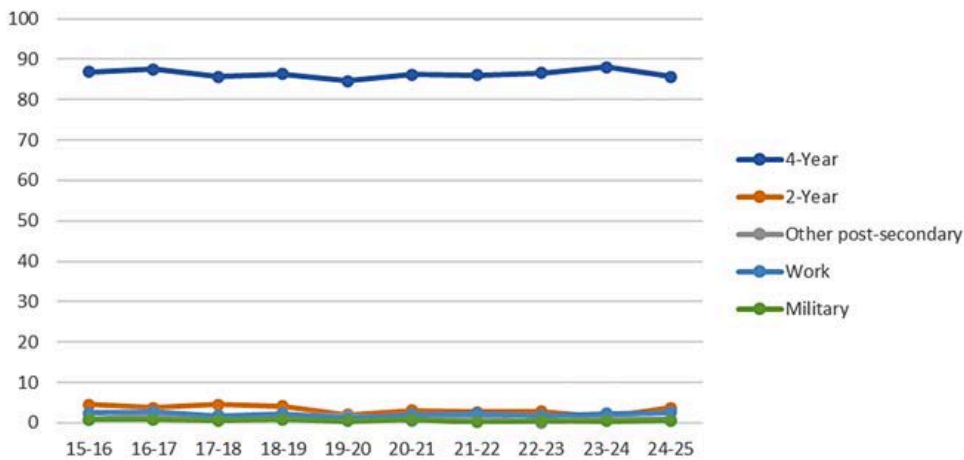
Average SAT Score by Per Pupil Spending



This graph displays the average total SAT score (reading/writing and math combined) for Newton and comparison districts by the average per pupil spending for each district. It shows Newton in the middle of the group of comparison districts for average SAT score and per pupil spending.

Cambridge has the highest average per pupil spending and the lowest average combined SAT score, while Lexington has the second highest per pupil spending and the highest average combined SAT score.

Post-Secondary Readiness & Completion Outcomes



This graph shows the percentage of graduating students in Newton who plan to attend a 4-year college, a 2-year college, some other post-secondary institution, starting working, or join the military from 2015-16 (graduates in spring 2016) through 2024-25 (graduates in spring 2025).

Over the past 10 years, Newton graduates have had relatively similar plans, with the vast majority (close to 90%) planning to attend a 4-year college.

Military Service

Some NPS students apply to military academies or enlist in the military after graduation. Since 2023, four Newton North graduates have been accepted to service academies (West Point, US Naval Academy, US Air Force Academy, US Merchant Marine Academy). One Newton South student was admitted to West Point in 2025. Six students from the class of 2024-25 communicated that they planned to join the military.

Career & Technical Pathways

The Career and Technical Education (CTE) program continues to serve as a vital pipeline for workforce readiness, providing students with a tiered certification pathway. In their second year (Major 2), the entire cohort of 65 students achieved 100% proficiency in foundational safety and emergency response, earning OSHA, CPR, and First Aid certifications.

As students progress to their third year (Major 3), the focus shifts to high-value, industry-recognized credentials. Annual achievements include:

- Automotive Technology: Students collectively secured approximately 10 ASE certifications.
- Culinary Arts: Seniors earned eight specialized credentials, including ServSafe Manager and Allergen certifications.
- Early Education & Care: Graduates completed StrongStart Essentials, qualifying them for immediate EEC Infant/Toddler/Preschool licensure.
- Drafting: An average of five students annually challenged the LEED certification exam, demonstrating a commitment to sustainable design standards.

The CTE program maintains robust industry partnerships that bridge the gap between classroom instruction and professional practice. These collaborations provide students with mentorship, technical resources, and real-world exposure across seven key sectors:

- Automotive Technology: Wellesley Volvo, MassBay Community College, Muzi, Regan's Service, and Lappen's Garage.
- Construction & Carpentry: Bymeister Design, Asher Nichols & Craftsmen, Torcasio Construction, and Auburndale Builders.
- Culinary Arts: Cabot, BC Dining, Tatte Bakery, Johnson & Wales University, Mida, and Newton Marriott.
- Design & Drafting: DiMella Shaffer, Caveney Architectural Collaborative, and Product Insight Inc.
- Early Education & Care (EEC): Plowshares.
- Graphic Communications: Clegg Photography, Tufts Medical Print Shop, AlphaGraphics, and Signal Graphics.
- TV & Media Production: NewTV23, Emerson College, and WCVB Channel 5.

So, How are Newton Kids Doing?



How are Newton Kids Doing?

What Our Data and Student Experiences Tell Us

At the heart of Newton Public Schools' work is a simple question: How are our students doing—academically and social-emotionally?

This section highlights what we see in student learning and experiences across the district, using a combination of data, student work, and participation trends to provide a clear glance of the work happening throughout the district. From literacy and math growth to access to advanced coursework, from the arts and athletics to STEM, writing, and civic engagement, these outcomes reflect the impact of aligned curriculum, strong instruction, and intentional supports. Together, they show how Newton students are developing the skills, knowledge, and confidence they need to succeed in school and beyond.

Academic Success

Literacy and math growth

Our Star Literacy and Math Assessments are a powerful tool to measure literacy and math growth over time. While our educators utilize this information to examine mastery of grade-level standards and plan instructional adjustments, the use of the Star universal screeners are also impactful for district trend analysis. There are several broad trends that can be shared across a district-level analysis of the Star Literacy and Math assessments, which captured the performance of 7,490 students from Kindergarten through grade 9 in January of 2026.

Theme 1: Overall High Achievement across Literacy and Math

When examining literacy achievement overall, Star Reading results show that **74.5%** of the 6,719 students assessed are proficient, with **29% exceeding** and **45% meeting** benchmark expectations. Star Math results indicate that **73% of students are meeting or exceeding** benchmark expectations. A notable difference emerges in the percentage of students exceeding benchmarks: 29% in Star Reading compared to 41% in Star Math. This variation highlights differences in the distribution of advanced performance across content areas. Overall, this districtwide snapshot reflects generally high levels of achievement across Newton Public Schools, while also providing important context for understanding performance patterns within and across subject areas.

Star Reading

Overall Proficiency on Winter Assessments



Star Math

Overall Proficiency on Winter Assessments



This distribution reflects both strength and possibility. With more than seven in ten students already meeting or exceeding benchmark expectations, Newton Public Schools is positioned to reach- and sustain - an 85% proficiency rate across content areas. The next phase of the work is about tightening coherence and increasing precision so that the approximately 25% of students who are not meeting benchmarks accelerate into proficiency, while students already meeting standards are consistently extended into advanced performance.

Reaching at least 85% proficiency will require unwavering focus on high-quality Tier 1 instruction, sharper small-group differentiation, intentional enrichment pathways, and disciplined progress monitoring. The data signals early indicators that our core systems are solidifying; now the charge is to build on that strength with urgency and collective clarity. We believe accelerated growth for all students is not only possible- it is within reach if we sustain high expectations, execute with instructional precision, and remain relentless in our commitment to scaling the practices that are already proving successful across our system.

Theme #2: Emerging Bright Spots of Growth

When examining student growth, the Star assessments include a measure called the Student Growth Percentile (SGP). An SGP compares a student's academic progress to that of peers nationwide who have similar prior score(s) on Star assessments. Growth between the 40th and 60th percentile is considered typical, below the 40th percentile reflects low growth, and above the 60th percentile reflects high growth. Research and implementation guidance further suggest that growth at or above the 60th percentile is needed to meaningfully close existing achievement gaps over time.

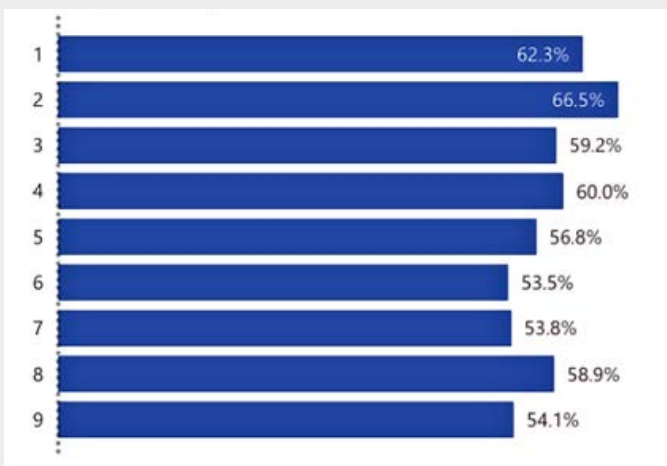
Across grades 1–9, both literacy and mathematics demonstrate average Student Growth Percentiles above the national average of 50 in the January administration. Several elementary grades in literacy are showing particularly impressive acceleration, with Grade 2 (66.5) and Grade 1 (62.3) leading the way, and Grades 3 and 4 sustaining average growth near or above 60. Mathematics has three grades approaching an average of 60 for growth: Grade 1 (59.3), Grade 3 (58.3), and Grade 9 (57.9). These results affirm that meaningful growth is possible across grade spans and content areas.

At the same time, this data still requires urgency. High expectations for growth must become the standard, not the aspiration. High Growth signals shifts of benchmark categories for students between two testing periods: from not meeting expectations to partially meeting expectations, partially meeting expectations to meeting expectations, and meeting expectations to exceeding expectations. If high growth signals accelerated learning, then we cannot be satisfied with isolated bright spots- we must build from them and scale gap-closing acceleration across the school system. It must be stated here, however, that accelerated learning is required in order to close achievement gaps- allowing all groups of students- especially those whose performance have persistently been low in the district to achieve grade level standards. Accelerated learning is not the default for grade level mastery. The presence of high-growth cohorts proves what is possible when instructional coherence, disciplined data use, and targeted intervention align. Our responsibility now is to study those conditions with precision and scale them intentionally.

On the Move with Student Growth!

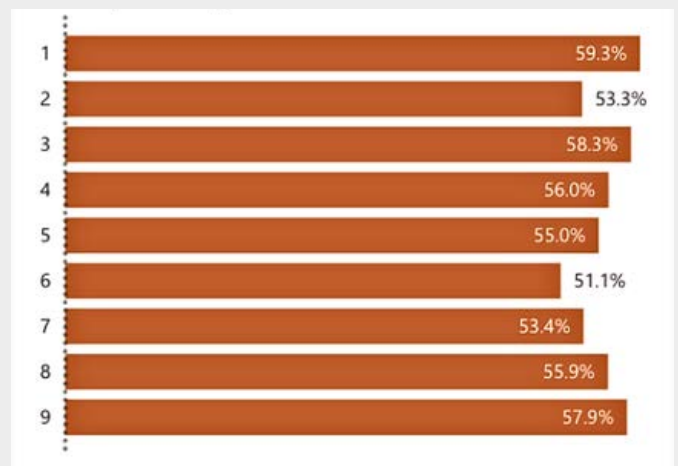
Star Reading

Average Student Growth Percentile (SGP) by Grade



Star Math

Average Student Growth Percentile (SGP) by Grade



Theme #3: Persistent Disparities in Achievement

Differences in achievement and growth across student demographic groups remain present in our Star assessment data. While districtwide proficiency exceeds 72% overall, three student groups- historically identified through MCAS reporting as experiencing achievement gaps- continue to show lower rates of meeting and exceeding benchmark expectations. These patterns are consistent with trends we have seen over time. Even in the context of strong overall district performance, the data remind us that assessment proficiency is not yet experienced equally by all students.

Winter Star Reading results, disaggregated by race, further highlight that student demographics continue to be associated with differences in outcomes. When patterns align with race, disability status, language background, or socioeconomic status, it calls us to collective responsibility rather than individual explanation. Living our district mission means ensuring that high achievement and strong growth are not dependent on an aspect of a student's identity or where they attend school. Sustained focus, thoughtful action, and aligned support will be essential to creating more equitable outcomes for every learner.

Percentage of Proficient Students on Winter Star Administration

	<i>ELL Students</i>	<i>Students Supported On IEPs</i>	<i>Students within the METCO program</i>	<i>Overall District (all students)</i>
<i>Star Reading</i>	19.7% (401 students)	39.2% (1,086 students)	45.9% (257 students)	74.4% (6,719 students)
<i>Star Math</i>	43% (561 students)	35.7% (1,312 students)	36% (299 students)	72.6% (7,466 students)

<i>Asian (1552 students)</i>	<i>Black (308 students)</i>	<i>Latino (707 Students)</i>	<i>Multi-Race (690 Students)</i>	<i>White (3452 Students)</i>
78.6%	49.4%	55%	82.2%	77.2%

^Based on primary category listed in ASPEN

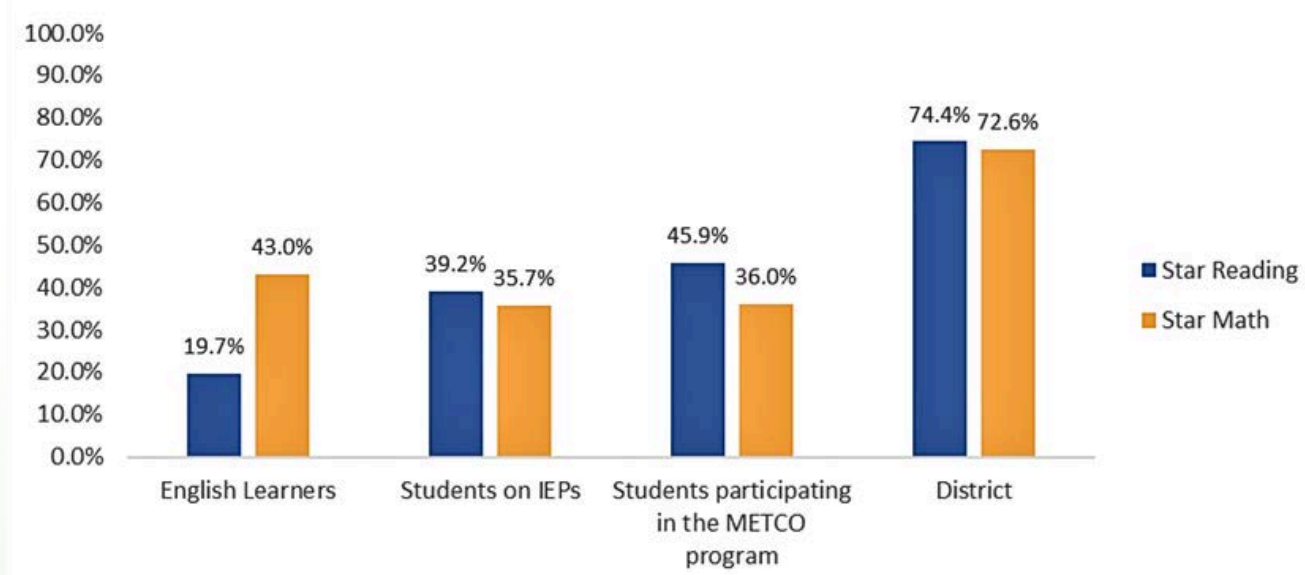
Table 4: Percentage of Proficient Students on Star Math Winter Star Administration by Race^

<i>Asian (1676 students)</i>	<i>Black (357 students)</i>	<i>Latino (833 Students)</i>	<i>Multi-Race (753 Students)</i>	<i>White (3837 Students)</i>
87.9%	37%	48%	77.6%	74.3%

^Based on primary category listed in ASPEN

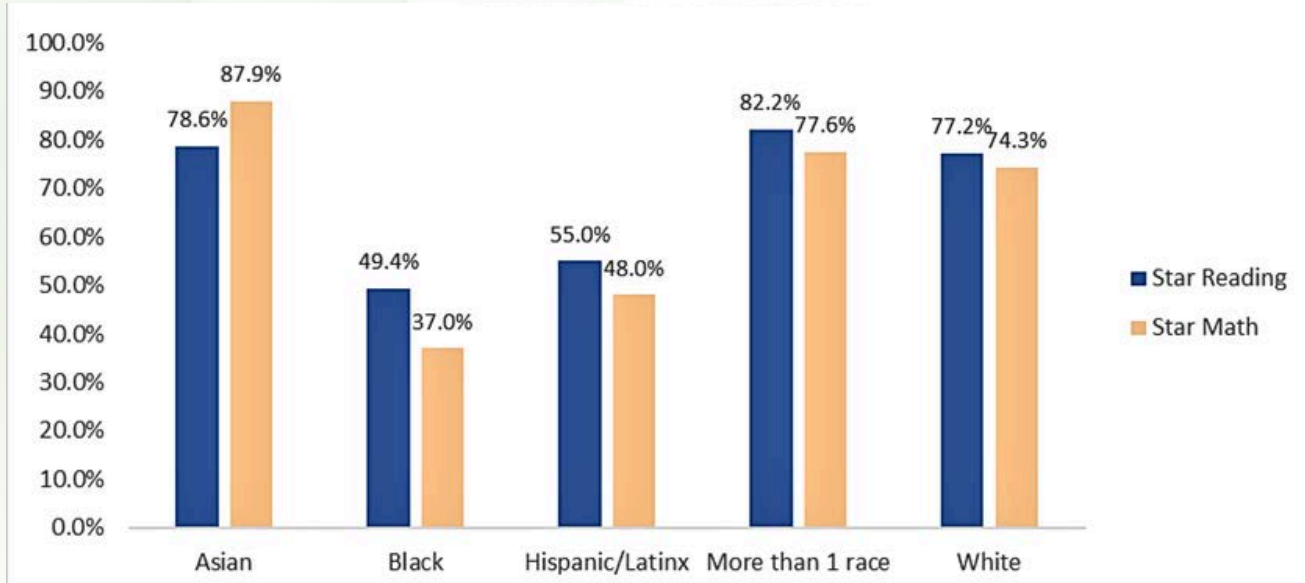
Percentage of Selected Student Groups Scoring Proficient (or higher) on Winter 2026 Assessments

(Selected Groups: English Learners, Students with IEPs, METCO Participants)



Percentage of Selected Student Groups Scoring Proficient (or higher) on Winter 2026 Assessments

(Data organized by racial group)



The Winter 2026 Star Assessments reveal three clear districtwide themes. First, overall achievement in both literacy and mathematics remains strong, with more than 72% of students in grades 1–9 meeting or exceeding benchmark expectations - a foundation that positions Newton Public Schools to pursue an 85% proficiency goal with focus and precision.

Second, emerging bright spots of growth demonstrate that accelerated learning is possible across grade spans, as all grades show average growth and several elementary cohorts are reaching or approaching the high-growth threshold.

Third, persistent disparities across student identity groups remain evident, reminding us that strong overall performance does not yet translate into equitable outcomes for all learners. Together, these themes affirm both the emerging strength of our instructional systems and the urgency of scaling effective practices with intentionality so that high achievement and accelerated growth become consistent experiences across the district.

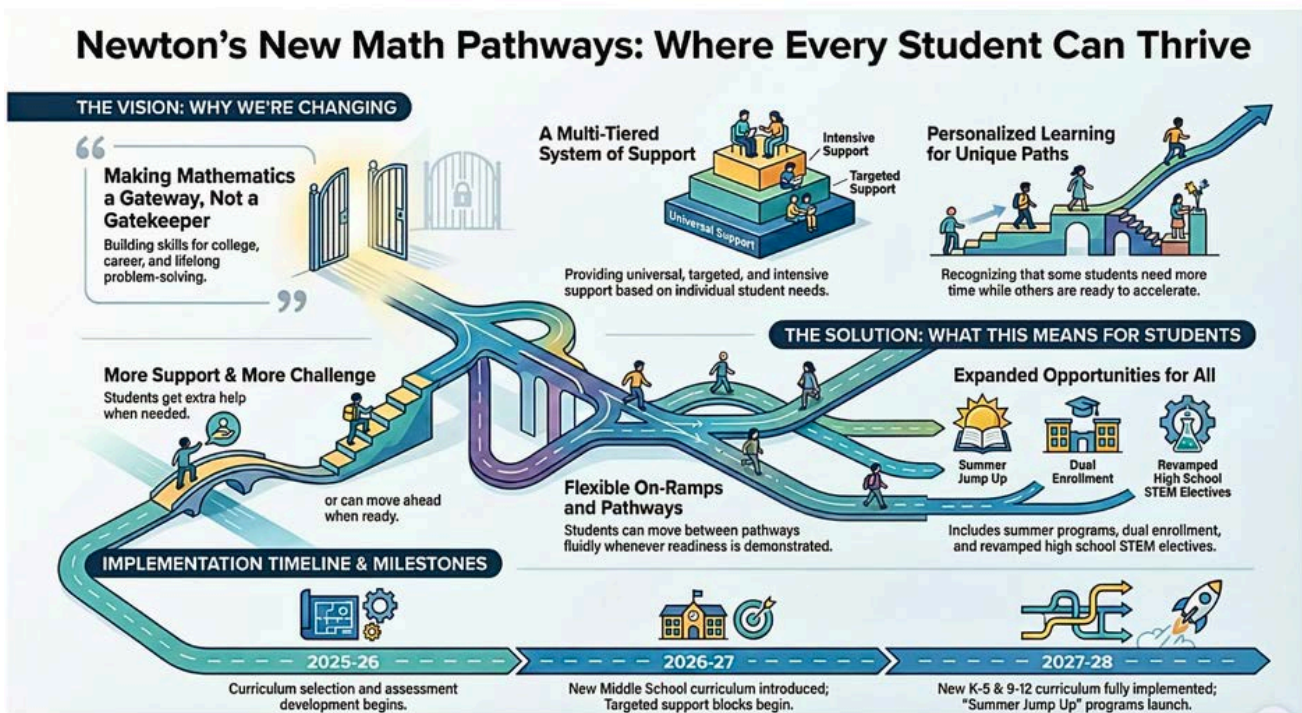
Access to advanced coursework

Progress toward Algebra by Grade 8

Newton Public Schools has made meaningful progress toward its long-term goal of ensuring that all students are prepared to access Algebra by Grade 8. Over the past year and a half, the district completed a comprehensive PK–12 mathematics review that examined curriculum alignment, instructional practices, and student outcomes. This work highlighted the need for greater coherence across grade levels, targeted support for students building foundational skills, and more flexible pathways that allow students to both catch up and move forward.

In response, NPS developed new middle school math pathways designed to strengthen readiness for high school level mathematics while expanding equitable access to advanced coursework. These pathways emphasize a balanced integration of high school level algebraic reasoning, geometry, and statistical thinking in the form of a standard and accelerated course. Placement decisions are informed by multiple measures to ensure that acceleration opportunities are aligned with demonstrated readiness, while additional supports are available for students who need more time to build core skills.

Looking ahead, NPS remains committed to its goal of Algebra for all students by Grade 8 by 2028 through the creation of the new course, High School Math 1: Algebra, Geometry and Statistics. The current phased implementation allows the district to thoughtfully address prior learning gaps, refine curriculum alignment, and ensure that both students and educators are well supported during the transition. This work reflects our ongoing commitment to equity, academic rigor, and providing every student with a strong mathematical foundation for future success.

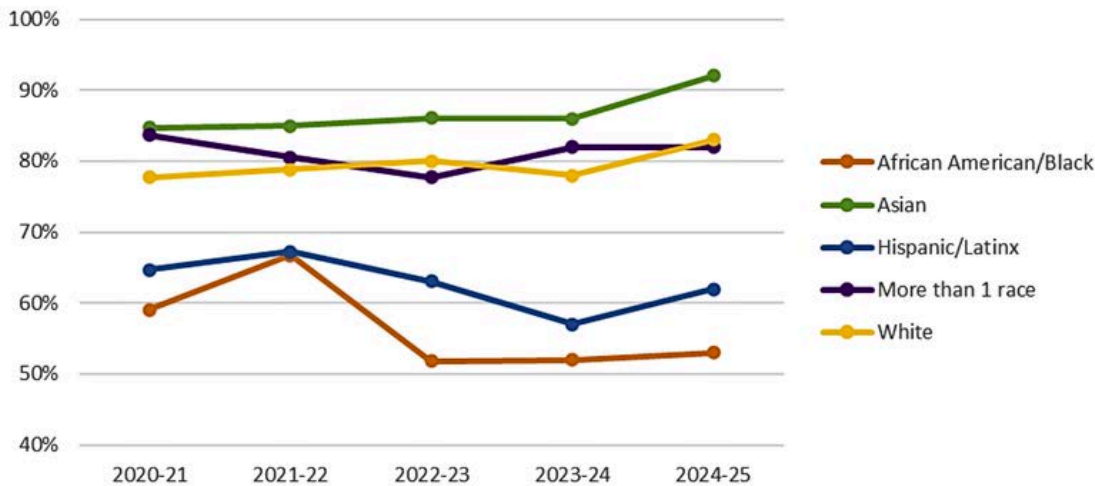


Closing opportunity gaps

At the high school level, many advanced courses are available for students. The graph below displays the percentage of students in 11th and 12th grades who complete at least one advanced course by race/ethnicity. Advanced coursework at the high school level includes AP courses and some specific advanced math, science, and computer science courses. As the graph shows, more than half of the 11th and 12th graders complete at least one advanced course in each school year; however, disparities exist between students who identify as African American/Black or Hispanic/Latinx and their Asian, multi-race, or White peers who have higher percentage of completion of advanced coursework. (Chart pictured on next page)

Percentage 11th and 12th grade students completing advanced courses

(organized by race and ethnicity)



Arts, Creativity, and Expression

Building Confidence Through Creative Expression

Arts, creativity, and expression continue to play a vital role in closing opportunity gaps and expanding access for students across the district. Participation in visual and performing arts remains strong, beginning in the elementary grades, with approximately 1,100 students in 4th and 5th grades participating in instrumental group lessons.

The district continues to expand inclusive offerings, including a Unified Theatre WIN course at Newton South and plans to develop a Unified Music course. Additional access initiatives include the third year of the Newton South Music Mentor Program, supporting students in 6th to 8th grades from Oak Hill and Brown Middle Schools, and continued participation in regional and national music festivals, including MMEA Junior District auditions and Music in the Parks experiences for middle school ensembles.

Student achievement in the arts is further reflected through a wide range of performances, exhibitions, and recognitions across K to 12. Highlights include the district-wide K12 Art Show hosted at the Education Center, ongoing art exhibitions and Open Studios events, and robust performance calendars at both high schools. Thirty students from Newton North and South participated in the MMEA Senior District Music Festival, with twenty students recommended to audition for All-State ensembles. Newton North and South music and theatre programs collectively presented dozens of concerts and productions, including over 20 concerts at each high school and numerous theatrical productions. Student accomplishments include first-place recognition for senior photography student Sam Danis at the 2025 Drexel University High School Photography Contest, continued national recognition for the Newton South Jazz Ensemble at the Charles Mingus Festival, and invitations to prestigious events such as Essentially Ellington in New York City. Together, these experiences underscore the district's sustained commitment to equitable access, excellence, and creative expression through the arts.

The Jazz Ensemble at Newton South has a strong history at major national festivals. Under the direction of Lisa Linde, Newton South has been invited multiple times to both the Charles Mingus Festival & High School Competition and the Essentially Ellington High School Jazz Band Competition & Festival, including finalist appearances at Essentially Ellington in 2018, 2021, and 2025. In 2025, the ensemble was named a winner in the Large High School Jazz Ensemble category of the DownBeat Student Music Awards, an international competition recognizing outstanding student musicians.

Arts, Creativity, and Expression (continued)

These arts experiences directly support Newton's Portrait of a Learner by fostering adaptability, communication, critical thinking, empathy, and a learner's mindset. Through rehearsals, performances, exhibitions, and collaborative projects, students learn to adapt to new challenges, respond to feedback, and persevere through revision and practice. Artistic work requires students to communicate ideas clearly and creatively, think critically about technique and expression, and reflect on their own growth. Ensemble-based and inclusive programs, including Unified offerings and mentoring opportunities, cultivate empathy by encouraging students to listen, collaborate, and value diverse perspectives and abilities. Collectively, participation in the arts nurtures confident, reflective learners who are prepared to engage thoughtfully with their communities and the world.

STEM, Technology, Innovation & Robotics

Preparing Students to Design, Build, and Innovate

Newton Public Schools is advancing rigorous, inquiry-driven science and technology/engineering learning experiences that build students' scientific literacy, critical thinking, and ability to use evidence and design processes to solve real-world problems. In 2025–2026, this work is anchored by two major STE initiatives. Students in grades K–8 are engaging with a new science curriculum grounded in OpenSciEd, with elementary units integrated into the EL literacy curriculum where appropriate. K–2 students investigate real-world phenomena through hands-on, indoor and outdoor explorations, while middle school students use OpenSciEd units to construct evidence-based explanations for complex scientific concepts. At the high school level, teachers continue to develop shared resources and assessments focused on scientific modeling and explanation, with educators from both high schools collaborating to analyze student learning.

This year also marks the launch of a districtwide review of Engineering and Digital Literacy/Computer Science. A committee of teachers and administrators is conducting learning walks and a curriculum audit to identify opportunities to expand and strengthen engineering and computer science pathways, particularly in the elementary and middle grades. Together, these efforts reflect the district's commitment to preparing students to design, build, and innovate.

AI Integration & Student Learning

Newton students are learning in a rapidly evolving digital world. NPS has adopted [AI Use Guidelines](#) to ensure technology supports learning while protecting privacy and promoting responsible use.

Key initiatives and outcomes include:

- Implementation of AI Use Guidelines for staff and students, centered on:
 - Human expertise
 - Productivity and learning enhancement
 - AI literacy
 - Data privacy and online safety
 - Transparency
- Pilot program with Brisk Teaching app providing teachers with AI-powered tools to personalize learning, generate feedback, and adapt activities to student needs while maintaining data privacy
- Standards-aligned, AI-enhanced lesson plans allowing for individualized instruction and increased teacher efficiency
- Focus on developing AI literacy ensuring students are prepared to use AI responsibly now and in their future personal and professional lives

Educators and leaders across the district are participating in the MassCUE Partnership for Educators Advancing AI Knowledge (PEA²K) Cohort, a statewide initiative designed to help districts integrate artificial intelligence intentionally, responsibly, and in alignment with DESE's AI guidance. Through this collaboration—supported by MassCUE, Throughline Learning, EdTechTeacher, and UMass Lowell's AI Teach Co-Design Lab—Newton is evaluating its current use of AI, refining a districtwide vision, and developing a strategic roadmap for implementation. The cohort provides structured time, expert coaching, and a readiness framework that enables district teams to assess strengths and gaps, co-design next steps, and build shared capacity.

A central focus of this work is ensuring that students develop strong AI literacy so they are prepared to use AI effectively, ethically, and confidently in both their academic work and their future personal and professional lives. By engaging in this statewide community of practice, Newton is helping shape the future of AI in education with intention, equity, and care. While still moving cautiously, AI integration in the district is student-centered, and literacy-focused.

Writing, Research & Media Literacy

Building Strong Writers and Thoughtful Thinkers

Newton Public Schools is committed to building strong writers, thoughtful researchers, and confident communicators from the earliest grades. Across our elementary schools, students in grades K–5 participate in regular writing opportunities that allow them to develop and demonstrate their skills throughout the year. Students complete four writing assessments and four performance tasks annually, each aligned to the EL Education modules they study in class. These experiences provide students with consistent opportunities to practice writing for different purposes, apply research skills, and deepen their understanding of content in meaningful ways.

Students are also encouraged to share and celebrate their learning through publications, performances, and public showcases. Elementary schools highlight student performance tasks in a variety of ways, from classroom celebrations to school-wide assemblies. For example, this year, Underwood Elementary fifth-grade students participated in a particularly meaningful celebration connected to their study of Esperanza Rising and human rights. At the middle school level, students from all four middle schools participated in the district's first Middle School Oratorical Festival, where selected students showcased their writing and speaking skills by reflecting on how their culture shapes their experiences as learners. These opportunities empower students to find their voices, engage thoughtfully with their communities, and see themselves reflected in their learning.



Service, Leadership & Civic Engagement

Learning to Lead and Serve with Purpose

Civics instruction across the district is intentionally sequenced to prepare students for informed participation in a democratic society. All 8th graders take a dedicated Civics course that includes a year-long Civic Engagement Project, building skills in inquiry, research, deliberation, and action. Each student ultimately takes informed action on an issue of their choice, with projects often shared with families and the community to highlight student voice and civic responsibility.

At the high school level, this foundation is extended through Civic Engagement Projects embedded in U.S. History courses through interdisciplinary programs such as Global Studies and New Media. Civic learning is further supported through assemblies with historical witnesses and student-led dialogues on identity and race. The Center for Civic Engagement and Service partners with teachers to support Civic Action Projects, experiential learning such as courthouse visits, and events including Civics Night and the Close Up program in Washington, DC. Together, these experiences reflect a coherent districtwide approach that emphasizes inquiry, engagement, and meaningful civic action.

School Highlights & Achievements

Academic & Co-Curricular Excellence

- **Mock Trial State Champions:** Newton South advancing to the national competition. (Top in state)
- **Journalism Honors:** student journalists from both high schools named among the top high school journalists in New England; both publications recognized by the New England Scholastic Press Association.
- **State Gymnastics Champions:** Newton North clinched its first state title since 1972. (Top in State)
- **Robotics Success:** The LigerBots reached the highest level of global competition at the FIRST World Championships, earning a division award for autonomous robot performance. (Top in Nation)
- **Prague Summer Program:** 50 students from both high schools participated in a 17-day experiential learning program across Central Europe, building academic and SEL skills.

Three NPS Elementary Schools Recognized by the State



NPS Superintendent Nolin, Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education Farag, and the principals of Burr, Ward, and Williams Elementary Schools—Kotraba, Brogadir, and Byers, respectively—were among 63 school leaders recognized by the Healey-Driscoll administration during a ceremony at the State House.

Athletics

- **Nordic Skiing:** A Newton South athlete won the final varsity race of the season and the Mass Bay East Varsity Boys' League, Dashill Martin (**Top in League**)
- **Alpine Skiing** Summer Flannery, (**Top in League**) and NSHS girls won top in DCL (**Top in League**)
- **Soccer:** Boys' team won the DCL Championship and reached the MIAA Final Four. (**Top in League**)
- **Volleyball:** NSHS Girls' team reached the MIAA State Championship Final Four. (**Final Four**), NNHS In 2025, the Newton North High School girls volleyball team was the MIAA Division 1 state runner-up, losing a 5-set thriller (3-2) to Franklin High School on November 15, 2025, which ended their quest for a fourth straight state title.
- **Basketball:** Franklin High School defeated [Newton North](#) 55-52 to win the 2025 MIAA Division 1 Boys Basketball State Championship on March 16, 2025. The championship game, held at the Tsongas Center in Lowell, saw Franklin secure their first-ever state title in a close match against the Newton North Tigers, who finished their season as state runners-up with a 24-2 record.
- **Baseball:** In the 2025 season, the Newton North High School varsity boys baseball team concluded their regular season with a 14-6 record, finishing as the Dual County League Foley Division champions. They were ranked for the MIAA Division 1 tournament, with notable wins including a 4-0 victory over Cambridge Rindge & Latin. (**Top in Division**)

Arts, Media & Performance

Building Strong Writers and Thoughtful Thinkers

- **Arts Integration Recognition:** Memorial Spaulding Elementary featured nationally for its long-standing arts-integration model. **(Top in Nation)**
- **Television & Media Arts Awards**
 - 33 nominations (across 19 categories) in the Student Production Awards, with multiple wins advancing to national judging. **(Top in Nation)**
 - Named Class 1 All-New England Broadcast Publication. **(Top in New England)**
 - Multiple first-place and top-ten finishes in regional and statewide film and PSA contests. **(Top in State)**
- **Fine & Performing Arts**
 - Districtwide K–12 art exhibitions at the Education Center are held twice yearly.
 - New cross-level music collaborations, including combined middle and high school concerts and the first Northside Choral Festival.
 - Massachusetts Educational Theatre Guild Drama Festival: Day Middle School Drama Gold Medal Award for *Shadow Stories: A Cursed Play*
 - Students accepted into MMEA Junior, Senior, and All-State festivals. **(Top in State)**
 - Continued growth in student leadership in lighting, sound, and costume design.
 - Fourth year of the Lost + Found theatre production.
 - Jazz Excellence: Newton South Jazz Ensemble welcomed alumni performers, delivered strong winter performances, and was accepted into the Mingus Festival in NYC. Obtained “Best Big Band,” designation and “Best Outstanding Soloist, Max Stober” (2025). Jazz Teacher, Lisa Linde named John LaPorta Jazz Educator of the Year– a national award given annually to an outstanding jazz educator who represents the “highest standards of teaching” and brings distinction to “their institution and their students,” according to the [Jazz Education Network](#).
 - Additionally, the NSHS Ensemble was named one of 30 finalists in the [Jazz at Lincoln Center’s annual Essentially Ellington competition](#). Participation in the Essentially Ellington festival, which took place in New York City from May 7-11, was restricted to finalists and marked the NSHS Ensemble as one of the top 30 high school jazz groups in the world. Adam Sheena and Leila Mostaghimi won Outstanding Trumpet and Outstanding Clarinet awards, respectively.

Business & Financial Literacy

- **Business Program Expansion:** Launching a new AP course and a Business Seal for students pursuing advanced study.
- **Financial Literacy:** Students earned financial literacy certificates through a partnership with Village Bank.

STEM & Research Achievement

- **National Science Recognition:** A Newton South student named a Regeneron Science Talent Search Award Winner for groundbreaking research in neuroscience, marking the fourth South honoree in five years. **(Top in Field)**

Community, Leadership & Student Life

- **YouthWorks Partnership:** Virtual Reality (VR) career-exploration workshops offered through the College & Career Center at Newton South.
- **The Center at South:** Hosted hands-on wellness workshops, including sensory-tool making for stress management.
- **Courageous Conversations on Race (CCoR):** 86 upper-grade facilitators led schoolwide discussions on identity and equity.
- **Early Childhood Outreach:** High school vocal ensembles performed for preschool students before winter break.
- **Fashion Design Service Project:** Students created covers for newborn medical devices for Children’s Hospital.



How We Get These Results & The Strategic Plan

Strategic Focus Areas

1



Learning & Well-Being

Thrive 2030 begins with a simple but non-negotiable commitment: every student in Newton Public Schools will experience inclusive, rigorous classrooms and demonstrate measurable academic and social-emotional growth.

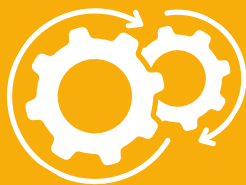
2



Community Engagement

Thrive 2030 is dedicated to transparent communication while establishing strong and meaningful partnerships with families and the Newton community-at-large.

3



Financial Resources & Facilities

Thrive 2030 commits to operational strength with strategic discipline.

4



Human Resources

Thrive 2030 identifies workforce stability and leadership development as prerequisites for student success.

Learning & Well-Being

Strategic Focus Area 1

Status: Ahead of Timeline | Building the Conditions for 85% Proficiency

Learning & Well-Being: Thrive 2030 begins with a simple but non-negotiable commitment: every student in Newton Public Schools will experience inclusive, rigorous classrooms and demonstrate measurable academic and social-emotional growth. Our strategic plan is explicit: achievement gaps are not student deficits; they are systemic responsibilities.

Year 1 Accomplishments

At the midpoint of Year 1, Learning & Well-Being is significantly ahead of timeline :

- Developed and began implementation of the Instructional & Student Support Playbook
- Established a funded districtwide curriculum review cycle through 2030
- Implemented K–5 common assessments
- Launched districtwide data inquiry protocols
- Built intervention tracking systems
- Developed individualized ELL support plans
- Embedded MTSS expansion proposals into FY27 budget planning

Building Capacity Together: Expanding Instructional Leadership in NPS

Over the past two years, our work with the University of Washington Center for Educational Leadership (CEL) has supported building and district leaders to develop a shared vision for high-quality instruction and meaningful feedback.

This year, the Instructional Leadership Academy (ILA) expanded to include teams of teacher leaders from each school. This shift brought together school-based Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs) to engage in shared learning and planning. Investing in effective teaming is a key strategy for supporting strong multi-tiered systems of support across the district's schools. Instructional leadership teams provide school and teacher leaders opportunities to connect instructional systems with their schools so that evidence of student learning drives the focus of staff professional learning and the common planning time meetings that shape classroom instruction.

Central to this effort is the implementation of inquiry cycles, a continuous improvement process where teams gather a variety of data, including data gathered from students themselves (such as student interviews and classroom observations) to identify specific learning challenges. By shifting the focus from teacher performance to student experience, teams focused on developing a shared vision for an ideal state of learning. This process empowers staff to create clear theories of action that link intentional changes in instructional practice directly to improved, equitable outcomes for students.

Scope and Sequence of Learning

The scope of the year centered on building collective efficacy, the shared belief that the team's combined work can directly increase student achievement. The sequence of the Academy moved from establishing a shared purpose and team commitments to the technical work of the Inquiry Cycle. Participants practiced specific "facilitator moves" to foster an adult learning culture that values risk-taking, vulnerability, and data-driven reflection. Through shared learning walks and observations, teams calibrated their understanding of student engagement and learned to facilitate more productive, student-centered meetings.

ILA visits have benefited both individual team and district team learning. Each visit has given teacher teams the opportunity to lead data-focused meetings and get feedback from peers from other schools. The shared observation of team meetings has helped create a shared vision for teacher common planning time. The ILA engaged teams in a sustained cycle of learning, practice, and reflection across the full school year. Teams built foundational understanding of collective efficacy and what it means to lead for continuous improvement, then developed practical skills in facilitating adult learning, observing classrooms through a student-centered lens, and using multiple forms of data, including student voice, to name specific problems of student learning and teaching practice. Central to this work was the inquiry cycle: teams learned to develop a theory of action, implement it with their PLCs, and gather evidence of impact. School visits added a powerful dimension by bringing cohorts together to observe team meetings, co-construct shared look-fors for effective collaboration, and refine their facilitation practice.

Impact on Practice

Across all cohorts and session types (whole group institutes and cohort based school visits) participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with 97%+ of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing on all three outcome measures:

- 97.5% — My learning from this session will help me be more student-centered
- 98.7% — My learning from this session will help me create more equitable learning outcomes
- 98.5% — My learning from this session will help me have greater impact in my job

The consistency of these results across both institute days and school visits, and across cohorts at very different stages of their work, demonstrates the meaningfulness and relevance of this work. Whether participants were brand new to inquiry cycles or deepening an existing practice, they left sessions feeling more equipped to center students, address equity, and lead with greater impact. The sessions were consistently rated as supportive of participants' growth, reinforcing the value of a shared instructional language across leadership roles.

Beyond the survey data, the most compelling evidence of impact is visible in the work itself. Teams were bringing their learning back to their schools, designing staff meetings around the inquiry cycle, gathering data from students and teachers, and maintaining a consistent focus on students. The learning was not abstract: it was showing up in how teacher leaders planned, facilitated, and kept their colleagues anchored to the students at the center of it all.



Short-term Stabilization Programs

Newton Public Schools provides short-term stabilization programs to support students whose social-emotional or mental health needs temporarily require a more therapeutic learning environment. Key supports include:

- Elementary Stabilization Program (ESP) and Harbor (middle school) provide short-term, therapeutic alternatives to the traditional classroom
- Programs serve students from general and special education with diverse cognitive, social-emotional, and mental health needs
- Students continue accessing the general education curriculum and receive services outlined in their IEPs when applicable
- Targeted supports focus on stabilizing students and preparing them for a successful transition back to their school setting

At this time, Newton Public Schools does not operate an in-district stabilization program at the high school level, however options (funding dependent) are currently being explored.

Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

Right Support, at the Right Time, for Every Student

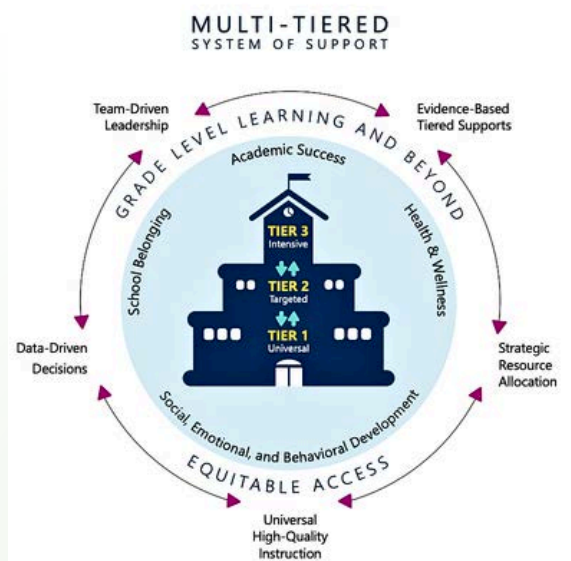
The district continues to build its Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework to ensure that all students thrive academically and socially-emotionally, within our schools and beyond. Through strong core instruction and systematic tiered support systems, students are able to receive supports and extension at the time that they require those scaffolds. All MTSS work with Newton Public Schools is rooted in the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) MTSS blueprint, which guides our schools in building the structures and systems, as well as the instructional practices and climate and culture to address the needs of all learners.

When a school (and school system as a whole) is a multi-tiered system of support, a student with lagging skills in an academic or social/emotional area will receive targeted and intensive interventions that are matched to those lagging skills and adjusted based on ongoing progress monitoring and data review. Interventions focus on building foundational skills and accelerating learning.

By aligning MTSS structures with curriculum, instruction, and professional learning, Newton Public Schools is deeply committed to ensuring that supports are timely, coordinated, and equitable—strengthening student well-being and academic growth across the district.

Our elementary students complete the Star Math and Star Reading/Early Literacy universal screeners for literacy and math three times a year in grades 1-5, and twice a year in Kindergarten. These assessments, produced by Renaissance, provide educators with actionable instructional insights in a variety of formats and reports. Students access literacy or math intervention during WIN blocks or small group times in the day, and have their progress tracked and communicated with caregivers utilizing an additional Renaissance product, eduCLIMBER. The What-I-Need blocks at the elementary level is a time for students to receive targeted instruction on lagging skills or extension needs, within any content area (including social-emotional learning). The professional learning community structure on Wednesday afternoons allows for high-quality collaboration regarding meeting all student needs by grade level teams each week.

Massachusetts MTSS Blueprint at a Glance



**Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2025). MA Multi-Tiered System of Support Blueprint: A blueprint for Massachusetts educators (MTSS Blueprint). Massachusetts MTSS Blueprint*

Within middle schools, MTSS systems and structures are being formed collaboratively with school leadership teams. It is of note that our middle school level does not have the literacy and math specialist staffing to provide systematic literacy and math labs for extension or intervention, outside of Title 1 support at one school. However, the What-I-Need blocks at the middle school level are a time for students to receive support from educators, and further systems and structures are being strengthened. There is a strong practice at the middle school level of teaming by content area and also by grade, with educators meeting during the school day together to unpack student data, plan for upcoming curriculum units, and brainstorm instructional shifts needed for individual students or classes as a whole. All middle school students also complete Star assessments for literacy and math three times a year, as well as the social-emotional universal screener within the Wayfinder system- all of which support our educators in guiding instruction for students throughout the year.

Within our high schools, MTSS anchor the general educator student support processes that occur across content areas, social-emotional needs, and attendance. Our high schools offer a wide variety of student supports based on the data points of educator referrals, course grades, and performance in class on common assessments and coursework. Both MTSS systems are robust, wide-reaching, and expertly managed by educators that have part of their position allocated to MTSS lead in the building. This is also the first year that our grade 9 students have completed Star assessments for literacy and math, and utilize the Wayfinder social-emotional data points.

Return on Investment: MTSS Reorganization

Elementary MTSS reorganization demonstrates measurable impact :

- Specialist-led SGP: 67.3 (Math) / 71.2 (Literacy)
- 93 students moved up at least one full benchmark level in Math that were in targeted intervention with a Math Specialist in just three months time
- 62% of Math intervention students that received support starting in September no longer flagged in January

This is not incremental improvement — it is structural acceleration.

Attendance as an Academic Lever

Chronic absenteeism currently stands at 9.6% districtwide (as of early April 2026), with higher rates among Grade 12, English Learner, IEP, and METCO students. These patterns represent a direct challenge to instructional continuity and student well-being. Chronic absenteeism is also associated with student achievement; on Star and MCAS assessments, students who are chronically absent have lower scores, on average, than students who are not chronically absent.

For the first time, Newton Public Schools established a formal truancy prevention framework aligned with Massachusetts requirements, introducing a structured tiered intervention model that allows schools to identify attendance barriers early and coordinate supports.

Attendance is now addressed through a three-tier intervention framework:

- Tier 1: Schoolwide attendance expectations and engagement strategies
- Tier 2: Targeted attendance support plans for emerging absence patterns
- Tier 3: Intensive intervention and coordinated services for chronic absenteeism

Early indicators show progress. Year-to-date attendance has increased from 94.8% to 95.2%, while rolling chronic absenteeism has declined from 11.1% to 9.6% between April 2025 and April 2026. Attendance is no longer treated as a compliance metric. It is treated as a foundational strategy for learning.



Special Education Services

Maintaining a comprehensive continuum of special education services designed to support students' academic, social-emotional, behavioral, and communication needs makes Newton Public Schools a district of choice for many families. The district prioritizes educating students in their home schools, alongside peers whenever possible, with the supports needed to succeed. Key structures include:

- Inclusive and specialized programs across PK–12, including language-based learning, autism supports, therapeutic programs, intensive learning services, transition programs, and integrated co-teaching models
- Students with diverse needs served in-district, including:
 - learning disabilities
 - autism spectrum disorder
 - communication disorders
 - intellectual disabilities
 - emotional disabilities
 - health impairments
 - physical and sensory disabilities
 - developmental delays
- Programs focus on building independence, strengthening academic skills, and preparing students for postsecondary pathways
- When students require highly specialized settings, the district partners with approved out-of-district programs to ensure individualized services aligned with Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) requirements

This approach reflects the district's commitment to inclusion, expertise, and individualized support so all students can access meaningful learning opportunities.

bryt Spot: Strengthening Student Well-Being and Belonging Through Coordinated Mental Health Support

As part of our robust special education and student services programming, the district continues to expand its capacity to support students' mental health and ensure they remain connected to school during periods of crisis. In partnership with the Brookline Center for Community Mental Health, both high schools operate bryt (Bridge for Resilient Youth in Transition)—a nationally recognized, school-based program designed to help students return to school following mental-health-related absences.

Each bryt program provides a structured, research-based transition model, including a dedicated classroom space, daily academic coordination, a full-time clinician, and close collaboration with families, outside providers, and school staff. This integrated approach ensures that students receive both the academic scaffolding and social-emotional support needed to reestablish routines and reengage in learning.

During the 2025–2026 school year (up through early April 2026), nearly 50 students across both high schools were served through bryt.

Of these students:

- 50% were chronically absent at the time of referral,
- 89% returned from hospital-level care, and
- Nearly all successfully transitioned back to full participation in their high school programs.

These outcomes demonstrate the program's effectiveness in stabilizing students during periods of acute need and reflect the district's broader commitment to ensuring that every student feels safe, supported, and able to thrive academically and emotionally.

Build Inclusive, Culturally Responsive, and Anti-Ableist Environments

To foster more inclusive classrooms, Newton Public Schools provides districtwide professional learning in culturally responsive teaching for elementary leaders and school-based equity teams. Key initiatives include:

- Annual summer training for elementary principals and building equity teams, now in its fifth year
- Expanded focus on student dignity and belonging as the foundation for equitable, culturally responsive instruction
- Training supports schools in identifying equity priorities across culture and climate, systems and structures, and instructional practices
- Future expansion to Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) to better support multilingual learners and inclusive instructional practices

This work helps ensure classrooms reflect and affirm students' identities while strengthening inclusive learning environments across the district.

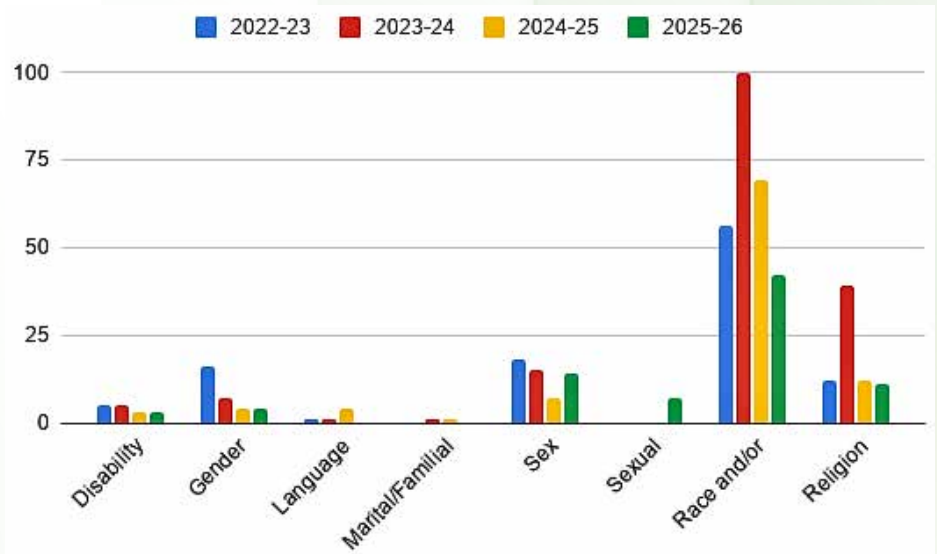
Discrimination Reporting: What You Should Know

We strive to cultivate safe, welcoming, and inclusive learning environments where every Newton student feels a true sense of belonging. In 2022, the district introduced a Non-Discrimination Protocol to ensure that concerns about harmful or biased behavior are reported and addressed quickly, consistently, and thoughtfully. This process helps us respond in ways that focus on education, accountability, and repairing harm when it occurs.

We continue to monitor reports closely so we can understand trends, strengthen our practices, and provide the right support to students and staff.

What the Data Shows

- Overall reports have dropped by about 52% over the last four years. This is a strong sign that our prevention and response efforts are making a difference.
- Race and/or National Origin continues to be the most commonly reported category. While this area saw a spike in 2023–24, reports have since decreased significantly.
- Sex-based incidents remain one of the more frequent categories. After a decline last year, we've seen a small increase this year.
- Gender Identity/Expression incidents have steadily decreased for three years and now appear to be leveling off.
- Religion-based incidents rose sharply in 2023–24 but have since returned closer to previous levels.
- Reports related to Disability, Language, and Marital/Familial status remain low and stable across all years.



Note: 2025–26 numbers include reports through March. Previous years include reports through June.

What This Means for Our Schools

These trends show that our reporting system is working as intended—helping us identify concerns early, respond consistently, and provide restorative and educational supports. We will continue to refine our practices so every student feels safe, respected, and included at school.

Newton METCO Program: 60 Years of Partnership, Student-Centered Growth

The 2025–2026 school year marked the 60th anniversary of the NPS-METCO partnership. The Newton METCO program focused on supporting student success and belonging through literacy, social-emotional support, leadership, transition programs, and community engagement.

Strengthening Student Support

Elementary & Secondary Academic Support

- Elementary Reorganization: Four METCO Academic Advisors embedded in classrooms, doubling student support frequency and reinforcing academic and social-emotional growth.
- Secondary Support: Middle and high school counselors continue part-/full-time support, providing academic, social-emotional, and college planning guidance.



Literacy Initiatives

- Sundae Reading Challenge: Elementary students tracked reading logs Oct–June; monthly prizes and year-end celebration reinforced reading habits.
- Reading Buddies: Bigelow Middle School students mentor Underwood Elementary students weekly, building literacy skills and leadership.
- Recorded Read-Aloud Library: METCO staff and high school students are creating online story recordings for elementary students.

Transition Programming

- 5th and 6th Grade “Moving On Up” program: Four- to five-week student workshops on METCO history, identity, advocacy, and middle school readiness; includes parent transition meeting.
- 8th and 9th Grade transition program: Two-day middle-to-high school program with leadership activities, building tours, and counselor guidance to support confident entry into high school.

High School Student Leadership & Engagement

- BLAC Day (Newton North High School): Student-led celebration of identity and culture with keynote, art gallery, and interactive events.
- South Legacy Scholars Alumni Panel: Alumni shared college experiences with current students, offering guidance and mentorship.
- MLK Community Event Participation: METCO students delivered speeches and performances representing justice, courage, and community responsibility.

How We Get These Results: Teaching, Supports, and Systems

Building High-Quality Teaching and Learning Across PK–12

Instructional Coherence and Curriculum Alignment

We are strengthening instructional coherence by ensuring that what students experience in classrooms is aligned, rigorous, and consistent across grades, schools, and content areas. Through a district-wide curriculum review cycle, educators collaborate to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment with state standards, research-based practices, and our Portrait of a Learner. This work helps reduce variability across classrooms, ensuring that all students—regardless of school or teacher—have access to high-quality learning experiences that build knowledge and skills in a coherent, intentional progression from PK–12. This year, NPS has been engaged in multiple curriculum reviews that are either in their self study, pilot, professional development or curriculum development phase. For example, our Math department has utilized their findings from last year’s self study to identify potential curriculum resources that meet the needs of our students. We have implemented pilots across the district this year to assess these resources for potential district wide adoption. Selection of our core math curriculum resources will take place by May 2026. We continue to support our elementary teachers with the roll out of EL Education and OpenSci (science curriculum). We are also engaging in the self study of our technology, engineering, computer science and digital literacy programs at NPS.

English Language Development (ELD) Curriculum Working Groups were established at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Through these groups, ELL teachers collaborated to develop ELD unit overviews aligned with the WIDA 2020 Framework and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) Rubric.

Prior to the implementation of WIDA 2020, ELD instruction focused primarily on students' language development in the four domains—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—while supporting access to the Massachusetts English Language Arts standards. The WIDA 2020 Framework expanded this approach by introducing content-specific language standards for English Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science. These standards emphasize a student-centered and functional approach to language development, making ELD instruction more explicit, systematic, and sustained across grade levels.

This year, our focus has been on strengthening collaboration among educators to design meaningful, culturally responsive performance tasks that connect language development with grade-level content. These tasks promote instructional coherence across the ELL program and foster stronger partnerships between ELL and content-area teachers, supporting more engaging learning experiences and improved outcomes for multilingual learners.

The Office of Teaching & Learning partners closely with school leaders and teachers to provide curriculum tools, common assessments, and job-embedded professional learning that support instructional clarity and shared expectations. For example, this year, we provided our staff access to Brisk, an instructional support tool that helps educators enhance teaching and learning by using artificial intelligence. We also have a team of teachers and central office administrators participating in the first cohort meeting of PEA²K (Partnership for Educator Advancing AI Knowledge). Co-created by MassCUE and Throughline Learning, this initiative brings MA school districts together to support intentional AI integration aligned with district goals and state standards. These activities help the district engage in critical conversations about leveraging generative AI to support our vision and our commitment to our Portrait of a Learner, while carefully balancing ethical and logistical implications.

Data from classroom assessments and district measures are used to inform instruction and activate timely supports through Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). Together, these structures enable educators to make informed instructional decisions, strengthen practice, and continuously improve teaching and learning across Newton Public Schools.

Spotlight on Social- Emotional Learning

At the Elementary Level: Every elementary school is staffed with a dedicated team, including a Social Worker, Psychologist, and SEL Interventionist. This team ensures that all students—and those needing extra support—have access to proven programs that build emotional skills, safety, and well-being. These specialists are key to providing proactive, data-driven support for every child.

At the Secondary Level: Middle and high schools use Advisory and "WIN" (What I Need) blocks to give students personalized attention.

1. Middle School: Daily check-ins focus on building connections and social skills.
2. High School: Structured time is used for academic help and personal guidance. By focusing on consistent relationships, these programs help students build the coping skills they need to feel a sense of belonging and thrive in school.

Community Engagement

Strategic Focus Area 2

Status: Ahead of Timeline | Trust Built Through Infrastructure

The Thrive 2030 Community Engagement goal commits to transparent communication and meaningful partnerships.

Year 1 Accomplishments

Rather than piloting engagement structures over multiple years, the district accelerated implementation to establish a coordinated support system for families. By streamlining core district functions of attendance, enrollment, residency, communications, and family engagement under one office, we have been able to develop streamlined and robust systems of engagement.

Welcome Center: Centralized Support Hub

By centralizing access to enrollment and support services, we create a more accessible and welcoming environment that strengthens our partnership with families. As part of the Thrive 2030 Community Engagement strategy, NPS launched the Welcome Center to serve as the district hub for families. Key family support systems now in place include:

- Welcome Center launched, providing centralized access for enrollment and family support
- Supported ~25% of new student enrollments, serving as the primary point of contact for family questions and guidance
- Multilingual support expanded, reaching 92+ languages through Pocketalk devices deployed to every school
- Districtwide enrollment system transitioned with standardized procedures to streamline registration and improve the family experience
- Winter coat distribution: 103 coats provided across 12 schools, informing the District Care Closet initiative to ensure PK-12 students have essential items
- Community partnership network expanded, connecting families to health services, youth development, and material supports

Family support is no longer fragmented and is now structured with a centralized and accessible model.

Family Learning & Engagement Systems Expanded

Effective family engagement is sustained by providing accessible, regular channels for families to connect with educators and advocate for their student's academic success. As part of the Thrive 2030 Community Engagement strategy, NPS launched the Family Academy to coordinate districtwide workshops, events, and learning opportunities for families. Key engagement structures now in place include:

- NPS Family Academy launched, creating a centralized platform for family learning and engagement opportunities
- Tiered family engagement framework implemented, aligned with the district's MTSS model to support families at varying levels of need
- Title I elementary programming expanded, strengthening parent-child engagement through targeted learning opportunities

Family Academy engagement details:

- 650+ families engaged through Family Academy workshops and events across the district
- 350+ additional video views, extending access to families who could not attend in person
- Overwhelming participation from parents at school conferences from grades K through 12

Together, these initiatives create a more consistent and accessible system for family participation in student learning. This infrastructure shift moves engagement from event-based outreach to systemic partnership with families.

Attendance Engagement Systems are Formalized

Regular student attendance thrives when schools and families maintain a clear and consistent line of communication. As part of the Thrive 2030 Community Engagement strategy, NPS implemented systems that support real-time communication and proactive outreach. Key engagement structures now in place include:

- Automated absence notification system through ParentSquare, ensuring families receive immediate alerts when students are absent
- Attendance engagement protocols that guide schools in early outreach and family partnership
- Districtwide communication practices that emphasize supportive engagement rather than punitive responses
- Family access to attendance resources and support through the Welcome Center

These systems transform attendance monitoring from a passive reporting function into an active family partnership strategy. Schools are able to identify barriers earlier and work collaboratively with families to address challenges such as transportation, health needs, or scheduling conflicts. Attendance engagement is a proactive partnership with families.

What is the impact of missed school days for kids?

An overview on the impact of missed school days from grades K to 9.



Title I in Action: Families and Schools Collaborating for Student Success

As part of our Title I program in 2025–2026, the district focused on providing targeted math, literacy, and social-emotional support for students in grades 1 and 2 while strengthening family engagement as a core component of student success. At Lincoln-Eliot, families were invited to a hands-on learning event designed to show how simple, joyful games at home can build essential skills in numeracy, literacy, problem-solving, and social-emotional development.



Nearly half of all invited families attended with their children, demonstrating strong partnership and enthusiasm for supporting learning beyond the school day. The event highlighted how shared play fosters perseverance, communication, and resilience, and offered families practical strategies—such as modeling flexible thinking, talking through math observations, and using sound-tapping techniques during reading. Families also received curated book recommendations and access to online Title I resources to continue learning at home. This work reflects our commitment to empowering families as active partners in their children’s academic and social-emotional growth.

Addressing Basic Needs to Improve Attendance & Engagement

In alignment with strategic priorities, the district expanded essential-needs support. The 2025 Winter Coat Distribution revealed concentrated pockets of need affecting attendance:

- 12 schools (half the district) submitted coat requests
- 103 coats distributed to students and younger siblings
- Largest requests came from Lincoln-Eliot (32), Cabot (16), and Peirce (11). (Lincoln-Eliot is our Title I elementary school.)
- Needs ranged from toddler sizes to adult small, highlighting diverse family circumstances

This work is strengthened by the district's partnership with Cradles to Crayons and by the resources available through the [NPS Family Resource Guide](#), an accessible, multilingual hub that connects families to supports such as food assistance, housing resources, clothing, mental-health services, and community organizations.

By pairing direct distribution efforts with year-round access to comprehensive basic-needs information, the district is better able to identify unmet needs, reduce barriers that disproportionately affect low-income and multilingual households, and promote consistent attendance and engagement for all students.

District Communication Systems

Clear, consistent communication between the district, schools, and families is the foundation of meaningful family engagement. As part of the Thrive 2030 Community Engagement strategy, NPS established districtwide communication structures designed to improve transparency, ensure consistency of messaging, and strengthen how information is shared across the organization. Key communication systems now in place include:

- Districtwide communication and branding guide finalized, establishing consistent messaging and visual identity across schools and departments
- Leadership training on communication protocols, ensuring administrators follow shared expectations for timely and coordinated outreach
- Regular ParentSquare communication cadence established, creating predictable and accessible channels for family communication
 - 99.6% of families contactable through ParentSquare, reaching over 11,600 families over students districtwide (including pre-K and out placed students)
 - 93% of parents have opted in to receive text messages, ensuring time-sensitive updates reach families quickly
 - 59% of parents have downloaded the ParentSquare app, with 46% actively receiving push notifications through the app
- Standard operating procedures introduced, improving institutional knowledge sharing and ensuring consistent practices across departments
- Together, these systems strengthen the district's ability to communicate clearly, coordinate information across schools, and maintain reliable connections with families and the broader community.

District communication now has a formal and consistent structure to ensure coordinated messaging that reaches the most families possible.

Why this Matters

Strong instructional change cannot be sustained without strong community trust. By formalizing two-way communication systems, increasing transparency, and expanding family access points, NPS is strengthening the social capital necessary to sustain academic reform. Engagement is no longer episodic; it is part of our operations.



Financial Resources & Facilities

Strategic Focus Area 3

Status: Ahead of Timeline | Spending Aligned to Student Outcomes

Thrive 2030 commits to operational strength with strategic discipline .

Year 1 Accomplishments

Technology Modernization

- Technology Advisory Committee established
- Districtwide technology vision created
- Building-level audits completed
- Multi-year technology plan with funding scenarios produced
- Budget alignment embedded with strategic plan THRIVE initiatives

Planning and execution occurred simultaneously — accelerating modernization.

Financial Transparency

New systems now in place :

- Quarterly fiscal reports to School Committee
- Five-year forecasts embedded in budget book
- ROI tracking protocols established
- Meritorious Budget Award pursuit underway

This infrastructure allows multi-year decision-making instead of reactive annual budgeting.

Facilities & Capital Planning

- Long-range facilities planning underway
- MSBA submissions completed
- Capital Improvement Plan alignment strengthened
- External grants secured

Cost Context

Budget increases are driven primarily by transportation, special education, and health care inflation — not program expansion. The strategic work underway is designed to reduce long-term special education growth by strengthening Tier 1 and Tier 2 systems earlier in the student experience. We are not spending more for activity. We are spending smarter for outcomes.

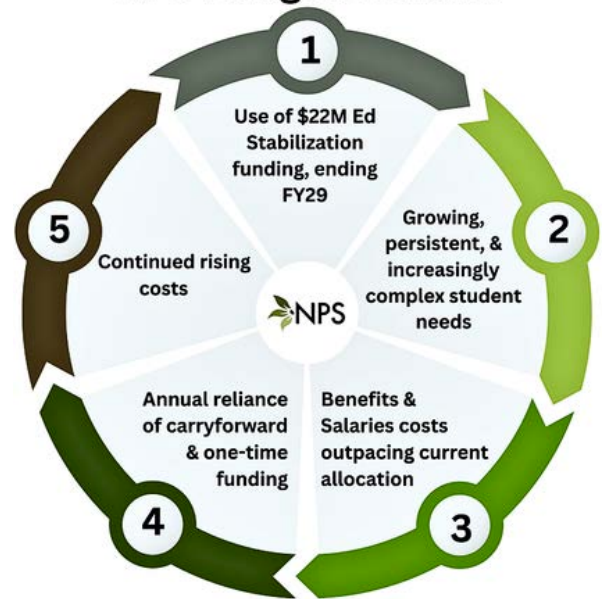
Our budget is responsive to the current Newton Public Schools System-wide Goals, both educational and managerial, to support the [District Strategic Plan and Goals](#).

The district's budget is a transparent and student-centered financial plan that aligns available resources with educational priorities, operational needs, and long-term capital goals. Revenues and expenditures are presented in a clear and accessible manner to support public understanding and informed decision-making. The budget reflects responsible stewardship through conservative forecasting, multi-year financial planning, and the maintenance of appropriate fund balances. Ongoing monitoring and internal controls ensure fiscal accountability, compliance, and sustainability.

Our budget upholds Newton's core commitments: a high-quality, equitable education for all; a focus on the whole child; investment in instructional leadership; and support for educators through collaborative professional learning. It reflects the collective input of school leaders, families, city officials, and the hundreds of community members who engaged in the development of our new strategic plan and [Portrait of a Learner: Competencies - Newton Public Schools](#). It reflects a belief that every Newton student—regardless of background or circumstance—deserves access to enriching, rigorous, and supportive learning experiences.

The Newton budget landscape reality includes five major contextual areas.

NPS Budget Context



1. **Use of \$22M Ed Stabilization funding, ending FY29:** This indicates a significant reliance on temporary federal or state funds that have a set expiration date.
2. **Growing, persistent, & increasingly complex student needs:** This point highlights that the demand for services and specialized support for students is rising.
3. **Benefits & Salaries costs outpacing current allocation:** This identifies a structural gap where the cost of personnel and their benefits is growing faster than the budget assigned to cover them.
4. **Annual reliance on carryforward & one-time funding:** This notes that the budget depends on non-recurring funds (money left over from previous years or one-time grants) to meet ongoing needs.
5. **Continued rising costs:** This summarizes the general trend of increasing operational expenses over time.

We are excited to announce that we have been awarded the Pathways to the Meritorious Budget Award through ASBO International. This award affirms our commitment to a budget that adheres to the principles and standards of ASBO International and that we understand the importance of presenting an accessible and accurate budget to build trust and clearly communicate with stakeholders. More information can be found here: [Meritorious Budget Award](#). View the [Newton Public Schools FY26 Digital Budget Book](#).

Our Budget aligns with Vision, Mission, Core Values, Strategic Priorities and the competencies of the Portrait of Learner. All of these goals are captured in our Thrive Promise: Where every student can thrive. Every student is known, challenged, and supported. The goal of the NPS budget is to dedicate the funding in staff, resources, and provide the tools necessary to achieve this Thrive Promise.

Facilities progress and long-range planning: Newton Public Schools continues to be in a period of transformative and significant progress on major school building projects and other facility improvements across the district. The City's leadership and City of Newton voters have been instrumental in their support for projects to upgrade facilities at an unprecedented pace, and their support and partnership is appreciated by the district. Since 2010, eleven of NPS' 23 buildings have been replaced with new buildings, or have had significant additions and/or renovations. Eight of these projects have been completed and three schools are currently in construction. Additional information about these projects can be found on the NPS website at [Long Range Planning and Building Projects](#), and on the City of Newton [Public Building Project Website](#). Below is a list of these major building projects since 2010:



Horace Mann Elementary Addition/Renovation



Countryside Elementary New Construction



Lincoln-Eliot Elementary Addition/Renovation



Franklin Elementary New Construction

School / Program	Project Description	Completion Year
Franklin Elementary School	New Building (In Progress)	2027
Countryside Elementary School	New Building (In Progress)	2027
Horace Mann Elementary School	Major Addition/Renovation (in Progress)	2026
Lincoln-Eliot Elementary School	Major Addition/Renovation	2025
Newton Early Childhood Program (NECP)	Full Building Renovation	2022
Oak Hill Middle School	Classroom Addition	2021
Cabot Elementary School	Major Addition/Renovation	2019
Zervas Elementary School	New School Building	2017
Angier Elementary School	New School Building	2015
F.A. Day Middle School	Addition/Renovation	2012
Newton North High School	New School Building	2010

Long Range Planning

Despite the significant pace of major building projects, much work is still ahead of us to ensure that all students can access 21st century learning environments that are designed for the future of education, are accessible, and sustainable over time.

In December 2025, the School Committee voted on an updated Long Range Facilities Plan recommendation which shows that Ward and Underwood elementary schools are the next buildings in need of major renovation or replacement. In addition to Ward and Underwood elementary schools, several of our Middle schools and Newton South High School are also in need of significant investment. Indeed our demand outstrips the capacity to fund all of these projects and will need City and resident partnership and support over time to continue our momentum. The district continues to work closely with our City partners to update the School Capital Improvement Plan. More information [can be found here Long-Range Planning and Building Projects - Newton Public Schools](#).

Other Facility and Sustainability Improvements

In addition to the major school building projects, the City and NPS continue to invest in a number of other critical infrastructure and sustainability initiatives, which include:

- Rooftop and Carport solar arrays to reduce or eliminate fossil fuel usage
- Electrification of all new school buildings and additions
- Geo-thermal at two new elementary school building projects
- Electric vehicle charging stations at school buildings
- Upgrades to parks, courts and fields at schools
- [Newton Walk, Roll, and Bike Network Plan | City of Newton, MA](#)
- Recycling and Food Waste Collection in School Kitchens
- LED Lighting upgrades
- Traffic Trials, RRFBs and traffic calming projects to improve walking, rolling, and biking routes to school
- Collaboration with Safe Routes to School and Newton's Complete Street working group
- Staff Green Team Captains in all school buildings
- Helpsy™ Textile Collection bins

Technology Modernization

Reliable and up-to-date technology is an important part of preparing students to live and work in a digital world developing the skills needed to fully participate in society. It is also a critical component of district operational needs from transportation to curriculum planning and communication. The information technology department touches all facets of life within the Newton Public Schools.

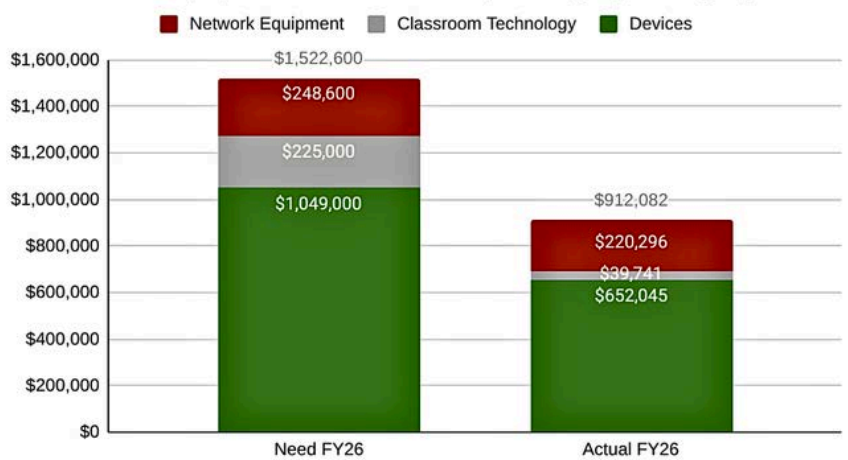
In addition to all new technology as part of the Lincoln-Elliott project, this year the Newton Public Schools funded the following initiatives:

- \$220,000 to upgrade the wireless networks at Angier, Peirce, Underwood, Ward and Williams elementary schools.
- \$257,000 for 1000 new Grade 6 student 1:1 Chromebooks.
- \$78,000 to replace high school Engineering and Art labs.
- \$260,000 to upgrade staff devices.
- \$40,000 to replace desktop projectors at Bigelow Middle School with mounted projectors.

The district also allocated \$56,000 on pilots for teacher Chromebook+ laptops and Grade 2 ChromeOS Tablets to determine financial savings, operational viability, and management efficiencies of alternative devices for both students and teachers.

Despite this spending, the district continues to fall short of what is needed to upgrade student devices and classroom technology. An additional \$550,000 annually over Fiscal Year 2026 spending is needed to replace aging equipment throughout the district.

FY26 Tech Equip Needs vs Actual Spending by Category



Grants and Alternative Funding Secured



The district is committed to sourcing and securing funding through multiple channels. The district avails itself of both federal and state entitlement and competitive grants as well as multiple private grants totaling approximately \$16 Million dollars in FY25. We are also grateful to our local partners - including the Newton Schools Foundation, PTOs, Boosters, dedicated support organizations, and many local businesses and individuals - that contribute both financial and in-kind resources towards our overall success.

As an example of the competitive grants for which Newton applies, we are awaiting an award decision from the Executive Office of Education on Newton's application for the CTE Expansion Grant where Newton has requested significant funding to expand our Career & Technical programs at both high schools. If approved, we would add Dental Assisting and Information Support Services and Networking programs at Newton South and Health Assisting at Newton North.

Expanding our Career and Technical program is critical to meet the broad spectrum of our students' needs and interests and prepare them for continued education or gainful employment after graduating from the Newton Public Schools.

In a multi-pronged approach to support the district's operations, we continually look to partnerships with alumni, vendors, and local businesses and venture capitalists seeking to leverage opportunities and synergies that align with the Newton Public School strategic priorities. These efforts have resulted in additional support to Newton Public Schools.

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Human Resources

Strategic Focus Area 4

Status: *On Track to Ahead of Timeline* | *Building the Talent System*

Thrive 2030 identifies workforce stability and leadership development as prerequisites for student success.

Year 1 Accomplishments

- University pipeline partnerships established
- Equity-centered leadership development underway
- Stay and exit interview systems implemented
- Surveyed leadership staff on experiences and meeting structures

Educator Pipeline Partnerships

Unit A to Unit B:

Perrone-Sizer Institute for Creative Leadership Fellowship Program

This program cultivates teacher leaders as equity-centered instructional leaders prepared for principal licensure through the nationally recognized Perrone-Sizer Institute for Creative Leadership. Grounded in the belief that leadership must be both imaginative and justice-driven, the program empowers educators to lead anti-racist change, mobilize authentic community engagement, and examine their impact through ongoing reflective practice. Participants deepen their creative problem-solving, strengthen their communication and facilitation skills, and develop the ethical leadership dispositions needed to navigate complex school environments. Through PSI's human-centered approach—rooted in collaboration, culturally responsive practice, and a commitment to dismantling inequities—educators learn to design learning environments where every student is seen, supported, and challenged. This preparation equips future school leaders to advance academic, social, and emotional growth for all learners while fostering thriving, inclusive school communities.



Learning Leaders Network (current non-aligned leaders and Unit B):

This year, the district invested in strengthening leadership capacity through a comprehensive professional learning series designed to build trust, deepen reflective practice, and equip educators with the tools needed to lead in complex and evolving school environments. Participants engaged in team-building experiences that fostered strong cohort relationships and explored high-trust leadership practices to better understand their own strengths and growth areas. Through frameworks such as Compass Points and Sociometric Mapping, leaders examined their individual styles and the dynamics that shape effective collaboration. The series also introduced adaptive leadership concepts, preparing participants to navigate uncertainty with clarity and resilience. Over the course of six interactive sessions held from August through the spring, educators developed skills in observation and feedback, data-driven improvement, project design, consultancy protocols, and leadership communication. Each participant received individualized coaching—up to 45 hours—to support goal-setting, refine professional practice goals, and advance school-based projects. Together, these experiences are cultivating a stronger, more connected, and more adaptive leadership community across the district.

University pipeline partnerships established

College Pipeline Partnerships (contributing to recruitment strategy):

- College Work Study Student partnership established NPS as an off-campus work-study site for Boston College and UMASS-Mt. Ida Campus. Future agreements with: Northeastern University, Lasell College, and William & James College
- Awaiting award information on Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program (RTAP) grant, a DESE-funded pathway that helps aspiring educators become licensed special education teachers

Lasell Newton Scholars: Advancing Educators of Color

Strong student outcomes depend on a diverse and well-supported educator workforce. NPS continues its partnership with Lasell University to reduce barriers for Unit C staff of color pursuing advanced degrees and to strengthen recruitment, retention, and advancement of a diverse educator pipeline. Key highlights:

- Fourth cohort of Newton Scholars launched, expanding access and professional growth opportunities for aspiring educators
- 11 Newton Scholars graduated last May, with 5 additional graduates anticipated this coming May
- Partnership supports professional development and leadership capacity, building a more diverse and sustainable educator workforce within the district

These initiatives continue to advance equity, leadership, and career pathways for educators of color in Newton.

Equity-centered leadership development underway

Black Educator Leadership & Development

Strong student outcomes depend on a diverse, supported educator workforce. NPS continues to invest in recruiting, retaining, and advancing Black educators through targeted professional development and leadership experiences. Key highlights from 2025:

- 12 Black male educators and administrators attended the 8th Annual Black Male Educator Convening (BMEC) in Philadelphia, up from 9 participants the previous year
- Convening brought together 1,000+ Black male educators nationwide for professional learning, strategic dialogue, and community-building
- Follow-up district event allowed participants to share insights and reflections, highlighting leadership, excellence, and commitment to strengthening Newton's educator community

These initiatives expand leadership capacity, foster professional networks, and reinforce NPS's commitment to a diverse, thriving educator workforce.

Critical Friends Group (current principals)

A Critical Friends Group for seasoned principals provides a structured, confidential environment where experienced school leaders can engage in meaningful, practice-based inquiry. Utilizing facilitated protocols, participants collaboratively explore authentic challenges they encounter in their work, exchanging honest, equity-focused feedback that informs their leadership strategies. This community of peers not only promotes continuous professional growth but also enhances decision-making skills. By fostering a supportive network, leaders are better equipped to tackle complex challenges and improve outcomes for students, staff, and the entire school community.

D.R.U.M. Professional Development for Educators

Strong student outcomes depend on educators who are equipped to support the social, emotional, and cultural development of all learners. As part of its Vanguard District partnership with COSEBOC, NPS launched D.R.U.M. (Discovering Rituals, Understanding Manhood), its third professional development offering for educators of boys and young men of color. Key engagement highlights:

- 15 district educators participated in experiential training grounded in African and Indigenous rituals, manhood development, and hip-hop pedagogy
- Participants engaged in a personal and professional Rites of Passage experience, exploring research-based frameworks to strengthen academic and socio-emotional outcomes
- Training equips educators to integrate the D.R.U.M. framework into existing or new programming, centering an asset-based approach that cultivates leadership, potential, and positive identity development for boys and young men of color

This initiative strengthens educators' capacity to deliver culturally responsive instruction and foster student success.

Educator Development & Community-Building

NPS continues to strengthen partnerships with The Teachers' Lounge to expand professional learning, leadership development, and community-building for educators of color. These opportunities provide dedicated spaces for staff to deepen practice, build networks, and connect with peers across the region. Key highlights from this year:

- 12+ NPS staff members of color participated in Classroom Leaders of Color (CLOC) Professional Development Days, centering their experiences and instructional growth
- One elementary educator enrolled in the two-year CLOC Fellowship, building leadership capacity and a statewide professional network
- For the second consecutive year, NPS sponsored tables at the Educator Prom, engaging alongside 500+ educators of color from Greater Boston to celebrate contributions, expand networks, and foster belonging

These initiatives support workforce stability, leadership development, and the district's commitment to retaining and empowering educators of color.

Stay and exit interview systems implemented

We strengthened our stay and exit interview process by transitioning to an AI-powered data analysis platform (ThoughtExchange), allowing us to capture and analyze staff feedback at scale, identify trends, and surface actionable insights in real time. This approach is complemented by continued 1:1 meetings upon request, ensuring that individual voices are heard while also informing system-level improvements in retention, workplace culture, and employee experience.

Why this Matters

- High-performing systems do not rely on individual heroics. They build leadership pipelines and protect institutional knowledge.
- As noted in the Winter Analysis (the district's mid-winter data analysis of student academic achievement and emotional well-being benchmarks), misalignment forces teachers to "work harder than necessary" to compensate for systemic gaps. The Human Resources strategy is designed to eliminate burnout culture by replacing fragmentation with coherence.

Adult conditions determine student outcomes.

Evidence Tracking & Dashboard



Evidence of Progress Dashboard

Tracking What Matters: Measuring Progress Toward Thrive 2030

The Thrive 2030 Strategic Plan established a clear expectation: progress must be measurable, transparent, and publicly visible. The Evidence of Progress Dashboard is the primary tool Newton Public Schools uses to monitor implementation, assess outcomes, and maintain accountability to students, staff, families, and the broader community.

This dashboard is not simply a collection of metrics. It is the operational framework that connects our strategic vision to daily practice, ensuring that decision-making is grounded in evidence and aligned to student outcomes.

Why a Dashboard?

Historically, school systems have often relied on fragmented indicators or retrospective reporting. Thrive 2030 shifts Newton Public Schools toward a disciplined system of continuous improvement.

The Evidence Dashboard serves three core purposes:

1. Alignment

Every metric is intentionally tied to one of the four strategic focus areas:

- Learning & Well-Being
- Community Engagement
- Financial Resources & Facilities
- Human Resources

This alignment ensures that initiatives, budgets, and outcomes reinforce one another rather than operate independently.

2. Transparency

The dashboard allows the School Committee and community to see:

- Where progress is strong
- Where improvement is accelerating
- Where additional focus or resources are required

Public accountability is strengthened when progress is visible and understandable.

3. Continuous Improvement

The dashboard enables real-time reflection rather than end-of-year evaluation alone. By reviewing indicators regularly, district leaders and school teams can:

- Identify emerging trends early
- Adjust strategies based on evidence
- Scale practices that demonstrate measurable success

What the Dashboard Tells Us So Far

Year 1 evidence shows that Newton Public Schools is building the structural backbone necessary for long-term improvement.

Key patterns include:

- Foundational systems — curriculum alignment, communication infrastructure, and financial transparency — were established earlier than projected.
- Accelerated progress is emerging where coherent systems are in place.
- Achievement gaps persist and remain a central focus for the next phase of work.
- The district's shift from isolated initiatives toward systemwide coherence is becoming visible in both implementation milestones and early student outcomes.

Key Indicators by Strategic Focus Area

Learning & Well-Being

- Indicators focus on student outcomes and instructional system coherence, including:
- Literacy and mathematics proficiency and growth
- Implementation of common assessments
- Expansion of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)
- Attendance trends and chronic absenteeism
- Access to advanced coursework and learning pathways

Winter assessment data shows strong overall achievement, with more than seven in ten students meeting or exceeding benchmark expectations, alongside emerging bright spots of accelerated growth. At the same time, disparities among student groups remain an urgent priority, reinforcing the need to scale instructional precision and targeted supports across all grade spans.

Community Engagement

Indicators monitor the strength and consistency of relationships with families and community partners, including:

- Participation in Family Academy and engagement events
- Communication consistency across schools
- Survey participation rates
- Growth in partnerships with community organizations, alumni, and local businesses

Early implementation of districtwide communication infrastructure and family engagement structures has established a strong foundation for building trust and increasing two-way engagement.

Financial Resources & Facilities

Indicators emphasize stewardship and strategic alignment, including:

- Budget alignment to strategic priorities
- Multi-year financial forecasting
- Technology modernization milestones
- Facilities planning progress
- External grants and partnerships secured

The dashboard ensures that financial decisions are evaluated not only for fiscal responsibility but also for their impact on student outcomes and long-term system sustainability.

Human Resources

Indicators track workforce stability and leadership development, including:

- Recruitment and retention trends
- Leadership pipeline development
- Professional learning implementation
- Staff well-being measures
- Workforce diversity progress

Investments in leadership development and retention systems recognize that strong adult conditions are essential to sustaining instructional improvement and student success.

Looking Forward: From Tracking Progress to Driving Impact

The Evidence Dashboard will continue to evolve as Thrive 2030 progresses. Future iterations will include:

- Expanded outcome targets based on baseline data
- Public-facing visual dashboards for community access
- Longitudinal trend analysis across multiple years
- Increased integration of student voice and experience measures

The goal is not simply to measure activity — but to ensure that Newton Public Schools delivers meaningful results for students. Because progress is not defined by what we say we will do. It is defined by what changes for students.

Evidence of Progress Dashboard: What We Heard. What We Did. What Changed. From Entry Plan to Thrive 2030

How Community Voice Became System Change

When the superintendent began service, stakeholder feedback identified key themes shaping the future direction of Newton Public Schools. Thrive 2030 translates those themes into concrete action and measurable progress. Thrive 2030 is a five-year strategic plan.

This dashboard shows both what has been built and what is improving over time.

What We Heard (Entry Plan 2023)	What We Did (Thrive 2030 Action)	What Has Changed (2026 Evidence)
Curriculum and instruction varied across schools; need for clearer academic expectations and rigor.	<i>Created Instructional & Student Support Playbook; launched district curriculum review cycle; implemented common benchmark assessments.</i>	Greater instructional coherence; strong literacy and math proficiency rates; early accelerated growth in elementary cohorts.
Student supports existed but lacked consistent structure (MTSS fragmentation).	<i>Implemented districtwide MTSS framework; intervention tracking; structured data inquiry protocols.</i>	Specialist-led intervention showing accelerated growth; more proactive support systems in place.
Families wanted clearer communication and greater transparency about decisions and curriculum.	<i>Developed district communication framework; ParentSquare cadence; Family Engagement Center and Family Academy launched.</i>	More consistent messaging across schools; stronger two-way engagement and access points.
Teachers experiencing burnout; desire for clearer leadership systems and professional growth pathways.	<i>Instructional Leadership Academy launched; teacher leadership roles defined; stay/exit interview systems implemented.</i>	Stronger leadership pipeline; more aligned professional learning; clearer expectations supporting staff.
Budget process lacked long-range clarity; community wanted transparency tied to outcomes.	<i>Five-year financial forecasting; quarterly fiscal reporting; ROI tracking protocols embedded.</i>	Improved public understanding of spending decisions; stronger alignment between strategy and budget.
Leadership described as reactive (“firefighter mode”) rather than system-focused.	<i>Thrive 2030 strategic plan adopted; EOS-aligned leadership structures; strategic dashboards created.</i>	The district shifted from fragmented initiatives to coordinated system implementation ahead of timeline.
Need for better data use and consistent measurement of student performance.	<i>Universal screening and assessment mapping launched; evidence dashboard created.</i>	Regular performance monitoring; clearer progress tracking toward 85% proficiency goal.

Dashboard: What We Heard. What We Did. What Changed. From Entry Plan to Thrive 2030

What this Shows

The Thrive 2030 Strategic Plan is not separate from the Entry Plan — it is the direct response to what students, staff, families, and community members said the district needed.

Three years of implementation demonstrate:

- Listening translated into strategy.
- Strategy translated into systems.
- Systems are now producing measurable results.

Each indicator includes:

- A clearly defined measure aligned to the strategic plan
- Current baseline data
- Status classification (Completed, In Progress, or Emerging)
- Evidence of implementation or outcome
- Future targets where appropriate

At the midpoint of Year 1 implementation:

- Multiple foundational measures have already been completed.
- Many Year 2-3 deliverables are operational earlier than projected.
- The district has shifted from planning to execution, with infrastructure now in place to track outcomes consistently across schools and departments.



Looking Ahead: Priorities for 2026–27

From Foundation to Acceleration

Year 1 of Thrive 2030 focused on building the structural backbone of a coherent school system — aligning curriculum, strengthening MTSS, establishing communication infrastructure, modernizing financial planning, and launching leadership pipelines.

In 2026–27, the focus will shift from building systems to scaling impact, and the work ahead is targeted and outcome-driven.

2026–27 Priorities

1. Scale MTSS to Middle Schools

Elementary intervention redesign has demonstrated measurable acceleration. In 2026–27, we will:

- Expand specialist-led Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports at the middle level
- Align intervention schedules across grade spans
- Strengthen secondary math and literacy acceleration pathways

The goal: prevent the “compounding growth gap” from widening in Grades 6–9 and ensure older students receive the same structural supports proven effective in elementary schools.

2. Implement Math Pathway Redesign

Based on district performance data, 2026–27 will mark the launch of:

- Updated math pathways aligned to rigor and conceptual mastery
- Clear course-level descriptors and expectations
- Earlier intervention for students struggling with foundational skills (especially fractions-to-algebra transition)

This redesign prioritizes both excellence and equity — expanding access to challenge while strengthening support structures.

3. Deepen Instructional Coherence

With the Instructional & Student Support Playbook now launched, next year will focus on:

- Professional learning aligned to playbook expectations
- Consistent implementation across schools
- Ongoing curriculum review cycle work
- Expanded common assessment use and data-informed instruction

Coherence reduces burnout and improves results.

4. Reduce Chronic Absenteeism

Attendance remains one of the strongest predictors of academic success. In 2026–27, we will:

- Strengthen attendance monitoring systems
- Expand proactive outreach to families
- Align attendance supports with MTSS structures
- Continue consistent enforcement of state requirements

Our goal is not compliance — it is presence, belonging, and readiness to learn.

5. Strengthen Workforce Stability & Leadership

Student success depends on strong adult conditions. Next year we will:

- Expand the Instructional Leadership Academy
- Refine recruitment and retention strategies
- Analyze stay/exit data to reduce turnover
- Continue building leadership pipelines reflective of our community

A stable, skilled workforce is the engine of system improvement.

6. Expand Community Transparency

In 2026–27, the Evidence Dashboard will evolve to include:

- Multi-year trend lines
- Refined targets informed by baseline data
- A public-facing visual dashboard
- Continued quarterly reporting to the School Committee

Progress will remain visible and measurable.

What the Community Can Expect

In the coming year, the community will see:

- More consistent instructional experiences across schools
- Stronger early intervention for struggling students
- Clearer math pathways and academic expectations
- Continued fiscal transparency
- Increased communication consistency
- Ongoing public reporting on student outcomes

This is not a year of new initiatives layered on top of old ones. It is a year of disciplined execution and scaled implementation.

How Progress Will Continue to Be Reported

Newton Public Schools will continue to report progress through:

- Biannual Evidence Dashboard updates
- Quarterly fiscal and operations reports
- Public School Committee presentations
- Annual State of the Schools Review
- Strategic Plan Implementation Reports

Transparency is not a one-time act. It is a practice.

Reaffirming the Thrive Promise

Thrive 2030 represents more than a strategic plan—it is a districtwide commitment to ensuring that every student is known, every classroom is rigorous and inclusive, and every learner has equitable access to opportunity. It affirms that identity will never determine outcomes, that resources will align to student needs, and that progress will be visible and measurable. At the heart of this work is the Thrive Promise: every student in the Newton Public Schools will experience excellent instruction, targeted support, meaningful opportunities, and a pathway to a future of their choosing. Year 1 established the foundation; Year 2 accelerates the impact. The work continues with clarity, discipline, and a shared sense of purpose.

Glossary of Terms & Acronyms

Why This Glossary Matters

Educational systems often use specialized language that can unintentionally create barriers to understanding. This glossary reflects Newton Public Schools' commitment to transparency, clarity, and shared understanding as we work together toward the Thrive Promise.

Academic & Instructional Terms

Instructional Coherence

A system in which curriculum, teaching practices, assessments, and supports are aligned across schools and grade levels so students experience consistent expectations and learning progression.

MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports)

A structured framework used to support all students through increasing levels of assistance:

- Tier 1: High-quality core classroom instruction for all students
- Tier 2: Targeted small-group support for students needing extra help
- Tier 3: Intensive individualized interventions

MTSS helps ensure students receive the right level of support early.

Common Assessments

Shared assessments given across classrooms or schools to ensure consistent expectations and help educators compare student progress and identify needs.

Universal Screening

Regular assessments given to all students to identify strengths, learning gaps, or support needs early.

Growth vs. Proficiency

- Proficiency: Whether students meet grade-level expectations at a specific point in time.
- Growth: How much progress students make compared to academic peers.

Both are important measures of success.

Math Pathways

Structured course sequences that define how students progress through mathematics, ensuring both challenge and support at appropriate stages.

Student Support & Equity

Inclusion

Educational practices that ensure students with disabilities or diverse learning needs participate fully in general education environments whenever possible.

ELL (English Language Learners)

Students who are learning English while also mastering academic content.

IEP (Individualized Education Program)

A legally required plan outlining specialized instruction and supports for students with disabilities.

SEL (Social-Emotional Learning)

Instruction that helps students develop skills such as emotional regulation, relationship-building, and responsible decision-making.

Glossary of Terms & Acronyms

Student Support & Equity

Chronic Absenteeism

Defined as missing 10% or more of school membership days in a year. Attendance is closely linked to academic success.

BT (Behavior Therapist)

A Behavior Therapist works directly with students who require targeted behavioral support. BTs implement behavior plans, teach replacement skills, and help students build self-regulation and independence within classroom settings.

Teaching Aide

Teaching Aides provide direct support to students under the supervision of certified educators. They assist with academic tasks, facilitate inclusion, and help students access the curriculum and daily school routines.

SLP (Speech-Language Pathologist)

Speech-Language Pathologists support students with communication needs, including articulation, language development, social communication, and, when necessary, augmentative or alternative communication systems.

OT (Occupational Therapist)

An Occupational Therapist supports students whose disabilities affect their ability to participate fully in school routines and learning tasks. OTs address fine motor skills, visual-motor integration, sensory processing, self-regulation, and functional daily living skills that impact classroom performance. They work collaboratively with educators and families to adapt materials, modify environments, and build student independence so that children can access academic instruction and school activities with greater confidence and success.

APE (Adapted Physical Education Teacher)

Adapted Physical Education teachers design and deliver physical education instruction tailored to students whose disabilities impact motor skills, coordination, or participation in general physical education.

BCBA (Board Certified Behavior Analyst)

A BCBA is a credentialed specialist in applied behavior analysis. They assess behavior, design intervention plans, train staff, and monitor data to ensure that supports are effective and aligned to student goals.

Strategic Planning & Leadership

Thrive 2030 Strategic Plan

Newton Public Schools' five-year roadmap focused on four key areas:

- Learning & Well-Being
- Community Engagement
- Financial Resources & Facilities
- Human Resources

Instructional & Student Support Playbook

A district guide that outlines shared expectations for teaching practices, student support systems, and collaboration across schools.

Evidence Dashboard

A tool used to track progress toward strategic goals through measurable indicators.

Strategic Indicators

Specific metrics used to monitor implementation and outcomes aligned with Thrive 2030 priorities.

Glossary of Terms & Acronyms

Organizational & Operational Terms

ROI (Return on Investment)

Evaluation of how financial resources contribute to improved student outcomes or system effectiveness.

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

Long-term planning for facilities and infrastructure improvements.

Technology Modernization

Strategic planning and upgrades to ensure technology supports teaching, learning, and operations

Family & Community Engagement

Family Engagement Center/Welcome Center

A centralized resource connecting families to information, support, and district services.

Family Academy

Workshops and learning opportunities designed to help families better understand school systems and support their children's education.

Two-Way Communication

A communication approach focused on listening as well as sharing information, ensuring families and community members can provide feedback and influence decisions.

Have the Best Summer Ever with NCE!

Newton Community Education (NCE) summer camps are still registering in visual arts, animation, engineering, STEM exploration, robotics, creative problem-solving, and sports camps focused on teamwork and skill-building.

Families are encouraged to sign up and reserve your child's spot!

 [Learn about scholarships available.](#)



[Register today!](#)

In Partnership with the
Newton Schools
Foundation

NPS Annual Giving Campaign Thrive2030!



Why give?

NPS strives to accelerate the improvement and strengthening of targeted school programs, as well as prioritize operation funds for student support services and staffing needs.

Help us help our district THRIVE!



Elementary Robotics \$125,000

Help us start a new enrichment program for any elementary student interested in robotics.

[Donate to elementary robotics!](#)



Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) Enhancements \$75,000

Biotechnical, computer science, math enrichment resources to challenge our students in the STEM area. Promote cross-disciplinary STEM projects.

[Donate to support STEM!](#)



Musical Instruments \$100,000

Guarantee that no student is left behind from participating in a musical ensemble by supporting district-owned instruments.

[Donate for musical instruments!](#)

All donations should be directed to Newton Public Schools and will be accepted through the Newton School Committee. Email: nolina@newton.k12.ma.us for questions or directions.

FY2026

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