

Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2024

## Mayor's Newton Update

The Superintendent cancelled school tomorrow, Thursday, Jan. 25, because the union is staying on strike for a fifth day.

We have some good news, though. The two sides are talking – that's progress.

Collectively, we need to figure this out and do so immediately. With every passing day the fines are doubling for the union and with every passing day the stress and worry seem to be doubling as well for our community. Our children need to be in school.

I invite the union to end the illegal strike while we wrap this up at the bargaining table.

This has never been about "winning." I respect our teachers and admire the work they do. It is all about reaching consensus on a competitive and sustainable contract with our terrific teachers, one that will not result in program, service or staff reductions either in the School Department or our other vital City Departments from Police and Fire, to Public Works and Parks, Recreation & Culture, and more.

I have been getting a lot of questions about funding for the Newton Public Schools, including:

- How has the NPS Budget changed over the past six years?
- Are we fully funding the Newton Public Schools?
- I have heard that the Mayor has more than \$50 million in Free Cash and Overlay Surplus funding. Has she given any of that to the schools?
- Can the Mayor allocate enough funds for a 5% NPS budgetary increase next year?

Here are some of the short answers:

- I have increased the funding for NPS every single year that I have been in office.
- I have always prioritized the budget increases for the Newton Public Schools.



- I agree that the Newton Public Schools need even more ongoing and sustainable funding. That requires our voters to approve an operating override. We tried in March 2023 but that one failed.
- I have committed much of our one-time funding from Free Cash and the Overlay Surplus to address pressing needs at NPS and to increase the NPS budget for the foreseeable future, including an overall increase in the Newton Public Schools budget of 5% for next school year.
- We are required by state law to have a balanced budget. The growth of our tax levy is limited to a 2.5% increase (under Proposition 2½) plus new growth from development/ redevelopment, another 1% plus.
- We invest 65% of all our revenues in the Newton Public Schools and 89% of the NPS budget goes to compensation.
- If we increase the NPS budget faster than our revenues, there is less for other key services that make our community the kind of place where we want to raise our children.
- Similarly, if we agree to increases that are not sustainable, critical services will be harmed – fewer teachers, police officers, fire fighters, librarians, road paving crews, and more.

We pulled together the information in one place in “Frequently Asked Questions.” Click [here](#) to view it.

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I am also getting hundreds of emails from students and parents, many of whom are relaying wonderful experiences about our teachers and asking me and the School Committee to support their vital work.

Let me share a few snippets from the emails:

*“I have a 6-year -old autistic ... Kindergartener this year.... She requires a full time aide, speech, OT, and physical therapy, yet with these and other supports, she is making so much progress. She is learning to read, is able to climb the jungle gym, and is happy and confident at school. I don't take these things for granted as none of this comes easy to her. I owe a tremendous amount to the amazing, dedicated, and well-trained special educators who have helped her and who will be needed for many years to come to ensure my daughter can succeed academically and socially.”*

*“I still recall the supportive environment that I was granted in my history classes, and the way my teachers' brought their fullest selves, dedicated experience, and belief in young people's ideas everyday in the classroom. Some of the questions that animate my own research interests today, as well as questions that have guided me in numerous professional settings, came out of Newton Public School classrooms.”*

*“Our teachers have shepherded our students through a never-before-encountered landscape of pandemic and post-pandemic school. There are no older generations of teachers whose wisdom they could draw from in a situation like this. Yet they have admirably dealt with the ripple effects of anxiety, fear, and disillusionment among their students that the disruption continues to bring about.”*

All of us value our teachers.

All of us are committed to competitive compensation and a sustainable contract.

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Grab and Go Meals

Newton Public Schools has been offering Grab and Go Meals during the strike, similar to what we did during COVID.

Pick up is tomorrow, Thursday, January 25, 2024 (4 day breakfast and lunch).

Location and Time:

- Newton North (457 Walnut Dr.) - Tiger Drive, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
- Newton South (140 Brandeis Rd.) - Wheeler entrance, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
- METCO Headquarters (for Boston Families) - 11 Roxbury Street, Boston, 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

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The Newton Public Schools put together a list of resources for students and families.

Resources for Families:

- [Talking to Kids about Strikes](#)
- [Newton Health During School Closures](#)
- [FAQ - Special Education During Strike](#)

Academic Resources:

- [NPS Elementary Library Resources](#) (needs to be accessed from an NPS Google Account - student accounts will work)
- [NPS Middle School Library Resources](#) (needs to be accessed from an NPS Google Account - student accounts will work)
- For high schools - students can visit their individual school's library page.
- [NPS Guide to Sora](#) (online eBooks)

Other Resources:

- [Coding Activities/Resources through hourofcode.com](#)
- [K-5 Family Math Page](#)
- [Middle School Math Family Page](#)
- [ST Math and Investigations Math Game Center](#) (available through student page)

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The Newton School Committee has shared the following message tonight:

*Dear NPS Families,*

*Today was a day of progress in negotiations, though the parties still remain far apart on several key issues. There were meaningful discussions on issues of substance and on pathways toward an agreement.*

*The parties negotiated on the issue of parental leave and we are pleased with the forward progress. The School Committee also agreed to negotiate on a fourth year of the contract. This introduces a new variable into negotiations, but we have made it clear that we will not extend beyond our financial resources to an agreement that will require us to lay off teachers.*

*We will reconvene our negotiations on Thursday at 12:00 p.m. Smaller working groups with members from each party will be meeting tomorrow morning to work on issues of scheduling the school day.*

*We look forward to and are hoping for a productive session tomorrow. We continue to work as quickly as possible to reach an agreement and return our students to the classroom.*

*Sincerely,*  
*Newton School Committee*  
[schoolcommittee@newton.k12.ma.us](mailto:schoolcommittee@newton.k12.ma.us)

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Click [here](#) to read a message from Superintendent Anna Nolin.



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