

Norwalk Education Foundation Newsletter

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

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Norwalk Board of Education Meetings Now on Film

The Norwalk Board of Education meetings can now be viewed on public access channel 78, Monday-Friday at 8:00am & 4:00pm, and online courtesy of NEF and high school film student volunteers.

[Click here for online viewing](#)

Community Conversation on Norwalk Public Schools a Great Start

The community conversation "Creating a Formula for Student Success in Norwalk Public Schools" that was held on October 17 had a tremendous turnout - with more than 120 participants. Many of the suggestions made lend themselves to action items for the Norwalk Board of Education and the Norwalk community. With a critical superintendent search underway, there are several action items to consider that will help ensure that the next Superintendent of Norwalk Public Schools will be visible and connected to schools and the community. They include:

- A concerted, ongoing effort by the Superintendent and school leaders to leave the 3rd floor of Central Office and go into the community for meetings with various constituencies.
- Create a public relations/communication plan to educate the public on what the Board of Education and those in the public school Central Office are doing, so that people in the community understand how school funding is spent.
- Continue ongoing public dialogue on improving Norwalk schools in different places, with a diverse audience, for sustained input from stakeholders.



[To read a full summary of the Community Conversation, click here.](#)

A Learning Experience for Norwalk Middle School Teachers

Everyone needs a refresher in his or her job from time to time to discover new ideas, sharpen skills and learn about best practices. Recently, four Norwalk public school middle school teachers were given the opportunity to do just that when they participated in the National Middle School Association Annual Conference, thanks to the Norwalk Education Foundation. With the financial support of NEF, Ashley Bonara and Ellen Knapp of Ponus Ridge Middle School, Danita Coverson of Roton Middle School, and Pat Festa of West Rocks Middle School set out to join the 7,500 other teachers attending the 3-day conference in Indianapolis.

The annual conference is the nation's largest gathering for middle school educators. Attendees have access to more than 450 sessions on topic areas relevant to the middle grades including professional learning communities, differentiated instruction, classroom management, school wide literacy, becoming a global school, and technology in the classroom. Featured speakers included renowned educators such as Daniel Pink, Dr. Robert Marzano and Dr. Eugene White.

Ashley Bonara said as a new teacher, she found the experience rewarding. "The conference was informative, motivational and inspiring. As a first year teacher it exposed me to a lot of issues, and ideas that I would never have been able to learn about otherwise. I came away with many ideas that I hope to use throughout my career."

Pat Festa remarked that attending the conference reinforced for him that Norwalk schools are on the right track. "Overall, it was nice to see that on a national level, schools are doing things the same way that we are here in Norwalk."

Ellen Knapp said the conference really gave her solid helpful ideas. "Instead of just concepts, I learned practical solutions to come back to my classroom with. One great idea I've already instituted is reviewing a lesson by playing a "Deal or No Deal" game. It gets the kids involved and thinking about the material in a new way."

It seems all four returned refreshed, renewed and ready to teach. They will also

have a chance to pass along some of their good ideas. NEF is planning a Teacher-to-Teacher workshop with the four so they can share the best practices they learned at the conference with other Norwalk middle school teachers.

When asked if they would go again, all four said definitely. Bonara summed up why for all. "Teaching as a profession is changing, and this conference allows teachers to stay educated, connected and current. I believe that Norwalk is capable of doing great things for their middle schools, and wanted to be a part of that."

Teacher to Teacher Goes Scientific!

The Power of Sharing

NEF has expanded its Teacher-to-Teacher program from technology into other core curriculum. This fall, our classes focused on the Sciences. Topics included "Science Fair Project Development," "Inquiry Approaches to the 3rd Grade Rocks and Minerals Unit" and a hybrid science/technology course: "Using Notebooks in Science for the Primary Grades".



NEF's Teacher Training - Catching on Over the Border

The former head of NEF's Teacher Training program, Paula Palermo, recently held several training sessions in Wilton at the request of their new District Technology Director, Matthew Hepfer. Hepfer is a former Naramake Elementary School teacher who often worked with Palermo on teacher technology training. In his new role in Wilton, he would like to see programs similar to the ones NEF offers to teach teachers new technology skills.

Palermo said the Wilton teachers were ecstatic to have the opportunity. "Teachers don't always have the luxury of having a class right on campus where someone walks them through a new program. This allowed them easy access to the classes,

and helped them to move along much more quickly to master the technology than they would have trying to figure it out themselves."



Give the Gift of Knowledge

A donation to NEF is an investment in Norwalk's future - helping to bring quality education to 10,500 public school students. More than 88% of donations to NEF go directly to improving teachers' skills, providing targeted learning programs and promoting classroom innovation.

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