

FAMILY INFORMATION GUIDE

A resource for PTO, SEPAC and all NPS families

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Where every student can thrive.

Our progress, priorities, safeguards and partnership with families.

Starting Strong: Learning & Growth

2026–27 back-to-school overview for PTO and family communities

VISIBLE PROGRESS IN STUDENT LEARNING

88%

K–5 literacy proficiency, June 2026

75%

Reduction in grades 1–3 students below benchmark

70%

Summer Math Bridge students improving scores

Literacy and early intervention

District K–5 literacy proficiency rose from 71.6% to 88%. The number of grades 1–3 students identified as below benchmark in the cited intervention measure fell from 521 in fall to 130 in spring. These are encouraging results, while gaps remain.

Math, science, and preschool

NPS is redesigning K–12 math pathways and curriculum, advancing hands-on K–8 science, and implementing new preschool curriculum and phonics programs. Middle and high school intervention systems remain a priority.

Summer learning continues

NPS operated 18 summer school programs. The three-week Summer Math Bridge served 59 entering middle school students; 70% improved assessment scores, with average gains of 12.2 points. Extended School Year served 245 students across 19 programs in eight buildings.

Belonging, Opportunity & Engagement

What students and families are experiencing across NPS

90.1%

Students reporting low risk on mySAEBRS screening

92

Languages supported through Pocketalk access

1,250

Students served by NCE summer camps

A stronger network of student support

Student wellness screening, language access, and the Family Welcome Center are part of NPS efforts to reduce barriers. The Family Welcome Center reported \$172,468 in first-year savings through streamlined residency management.

Inclusive learning and student leadership

Unified Champion Schools and Special Olympics activities create opportunities for shared participation and leadership. Community Connections students engage in vocational training, community service, life skills, and student-run retail experiences.

Beyond the classroom

Students excelled in drama, athletics, robotics, media arts, and career and technical education. NCE summer programs served 1,250 students, awarded 212 camp scholarships, and provided grant-funded transportation to expand access.

PTO PARTNERSHIP IDEA: Help families connect with enrichment, access, and belonging initiatives.

Our People, Resources & Next Steps

Progress to celebrate — and important work still ahead

300

New staff hired for 2026-27

525

Summer facilities projects and work orders

17% → 5%

Unit A chronic staff absenteeism, four-year trend

Supporting schools and staff

NPS hired 300 new staff for the school year and more than 350 for summer programs. Facilities teams completed 145 planned projects, 35 additional projects, and 345 other work orders.

Stewardship and transparency

The Business and Finance team earned ASBO International’s Meritorious Budget Award. NPS closed FY26 within its operating budget but carried forward \$1.4 million in Circuit Breaker funds, below its \$2.5 million target.

What we are still working to improve

District priorities include narrowing achievement gaps, improving attendance, strengthening secondary intervention, ensuring consistent instructional access, and aligning resources with enrollment and student needs.

Looking ahead: THRIVE 2030

NPS planned a public strategic-plan dashboard for December 2026, with school- and group-level progress monitoring and privacy protections. Families can follow School Committee updates and partner with school leaders and PTOs.

Source: Sept. 14, 2026 School Committee memo, back-to-school slides and press remarks.

MATH PATHWAYS

More support. More challenge. More opportunity.

A progress snapshot for PTO and SEPAC families • Fall 2026

OUR GOAL

Build coherent, high-quality math learning from elementary through high school, with targeted help when students need it and deeper challenges when they are ready.

59

Summer Bridge students

70%

improved assessment scores

92

elementary educators opted for earlier rollout of new math curriculum

ELEMENTARY | Strong foundations

Amplify Desmos is being introduced by 30 teacher teams across six grade levels. Math specialists support implementation; enrichment resources are being developed for school and home.

MIDDLE SCHOOL | Responsive support

New math specialists are providing small-group instruction. Math Lab (45 minutes) and Math Boost (22 minutes) target skills; algebra-readiness reviews and Math Olympians are in development.

GRADES 6–8 | Clearer pathways

Middle and high school teachers developed course sequences and planning guides for transition years, with pacing, assessments, and differentiation. Educator feedback and training continue.

HIGH SCHOOL | Aligned learning

Teams from both high schools are co-developing Math 2 and Math 3 with Coherent Math. Math 3 will emphasize modeling and data literacy. Accelerated Math 1 course planning continues.

WHAT WE ARE WORKING THROUGH

Scheduling currently prevents some eligible students from accessing intervention. NPS is refining student placement and support, reviewing screening data, and developing courses with educator input.

UPCOMING MILESTONES

Math 2 curriculum: March 2027 • Math 3 curriculum: December 2027

WHY IT MATTERS

Every student should have a pathway to grow: strengthen skills, build confidence, and pursue advanced mathematics.

Disability Inclusion & Belonging

Our commitment, our progress, and the path ahead

OUR NORTH STAR

Every student deserves to be understood, represented, included, and able to build authentic friendships. Disability awareness belongs in everyday school life.

WHAT WE ARE BUILDING

- A planned sequence of lessons. Eight anti-ableism and disability-awareness lessons per grade are part of the district's vision; the final four have not been systematically rolled out.
- Evidence-informed learning. Expert feedback calls for explicit, age-appropriate disability language, history, accessibility, and discussion of barriers and belonging.
- Inclusion through shared experiences. NPS is exploring Special Olympics curriculum and Unified Physical Education during WIN blocks.

WHY IMPLEMENTATION IS COMPLEX

- A very full elementary day. NPS must meet state instructional-time requirements, including core subjects taught by appropriately certified educators.
- Schedule changes are underway. This year's redesigned schedule creates some options, while upcoming collective bargaining may affect future instructional time.
- State review is approaching. A winter DESE audit may bring additional requirements that affect scheduling and curriculum delivery.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

- 1 Continue planning with SEPAC and families**
NPS leadership has met with the SEPAC board and plans continued dialogue.
- 2 Integrate rather than add on**
Align lessons with health/wellness, social-emotional learning, and the Portrait of a Learner.
- 3 Clarify rollout as schedules evolve**
Finalize feasible implementation steps as bargaining and DESE review provide greater clarity.

WHAT FAMILIES ARE ASKING FOR

A clear rollout timeline, visible disability representation, and a presentation of the full curriculum with time for family questions. These are important requests for ongoing dialogue, not yet announced commitments.

Our shared goal: less stigma, stronger belonging, and meaningful inclusion for every child.

Understanding the NSK12 Study

Special education workloads, student services & family partnership

OUR PURPOSE

Understand uneven educator caseloads and workloads so staff can better meet student needs. This is not an initiative to reduce IEP services.

WHAT IS NSK12 STUDYING?

Differences in caseloads, student assignments, service hours, schedules, meeting demands, and how staff time is used.

The study also examines service-delivery approaches and potential districtwide workload guidelines.

WHAT WILL NOT CHANGE?

Individualized Education Program (IEP) services remain determined by each student's IEP team under federal and Massachusetts law.

Study recommendations do not override IEP requirements, parent participation, or consent rules where applicable.

HOW ARE FAMILIES AND EDUCATORS INCLUDED?

Focus groups and interviews are designed to include families of students with disabilities, educators, related service providers, school leaders, and others. Approximately 100 participants were anticipated.

NPS expects to share findings with the School Committee and SEPAC and welcomes a dedicated SEPAC discussion.

TIMELINE & QUESTIONS STILL BEING RESOLVED

Fall 2026: information gathering and interviews. Mid-November: tentative draft guidelines and final report target; timing may change.

The NTA-requested pause of staff focus groups and the Time Insights Study may affect the method, scope, cost, and schedule. NPS is working through those implications.

STUDENT DATA & TRANSPARENCY

NPS reports that it has shared aggregate data only—not personally identifiable student information. Additional privacy documentation from NSK12 is still pending.

How We Hire, Support & Evaluate Our Educators

Our commitment: excellent teaching, student safety, and continuous growth.

1 Rigorous hiring & comprehensive background screening

Interdisciplinary committees assess expertise, inclusive instruction, collaboration, cultural competence and fairness. Candidates complete interviews, demonstration lessons and reference checks.

SAFETY CHECKS BEFORE EMPLOYMENT

Fingerprint-based state and national criminal history check: Fingerprints are checked through Massachusetts and FBI systems to identify criminal history across jurisdictions, as permitted by law.

Sex Offender Registry Information (SORI) check: Screens for Massachusetts sex offender registration information, including available classification and offense information.

Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) review: NPS also reviews Massachusetts criminal record information as required for school employment.

Any concerning result is reviewed under applicable law and district procedures before a hiring decision; screening is not limited to a candidate's references.

2 Support begins on day one

New educators are paired with experienced NPS mentors and plan with content-area colleagues. School and district leaders visit classrooms, review instruction and provide feedback.

3 Formal observations: minimum requirements

FIRST YEAR

2 announced + 4 unannounced

YEARS 2–3 (NON-PTS)

1 announced + 3 unannounced

4 What we evaluate

- Curriculum, planning & assessment
- Teaching all students inclusively
- Family & community engagement
- Professional culture and ethics

5 Accountability & safeguards

- Observations generate feedback and written records.
- Evaluations consider student work, goals and reflection.
- Concerns about harassment or discrimination follow district investigation protocols.

OUR PROMISE TO FAMILIES

Hiring is only the beginning. NPS combines screening, mentoring, trained evaluators, classroom visits and accountability to protect students and strengthen teaching.

School Safety Starts Every Day

How NPS works to create safe, welcoming schools—and prepares staff and students to respond to emergencies.

Our approach: School safety is more than emergency drills. It begins with relationships, clear routines, prevention, coordinated planning and trained adults.

Three layers of school safety

- 1 EVERYDAY PREVENTION Trusted student–adult relationships; communication with families; secured doors, visitor routines and staff identification.
- 2 PREPARATION & SUPPORT Regular drills, emergency planning, responding to bullying and discrimination, and targeted support for students who need it.
- 3 EMERGENCY RESPONSE Established procedures for evacuation, shelter-in-place, lockdown and a hostile event.

The four core emergency responses

EVACUATION “Get out, stay out.” Used for fire or another unsafe condition inside a building. Staff guide students to designated assembly areas.	SHELTER-IN-PLACE “Stay inside, stay safe.” Used for an external hazard or security concern; students remain inside while staff manage building movement.
LOCKDOWN “Silent and invisible.” Used for a security threat inside a building; students and staff secure themselves in rooms.	HOSTILE EVENT An options-based response to an active shooter or other armed violence. Staff assess whether to remain secured or evacuate when safe.

Prepared together: The NPS Emergency Operations Plan was developed with local safety partners and outside expertise. It includes staff procedures, student-friendly classroom materials and phone, text and email communication systems.

Source: NPS Safety Training for All School Staff, Fall 2026 (draft school template), pp. 7–12, 19–20.

Prepared Adults. Supported Students.

What families should know about training, drills, individual needs and emergency coordination.

How staff and students prepare

Staff training: School teams review the Emergency Operations Plan, practice the four core responses, study classroom-specific considerations and plan developmentally appropriate messages for student drills.

District drill expectations in the 2026 training template

4	2	2
Evacuation drills	Lockdown / hostile-event drills	Bus evacuation drills

Schools use age-appropriate scripts and plan their own safety-day schedules. These figures are expectations in the draft training document, not confirmation that drills have already occurred.

Individualized support for students with disabilities

Staff are directed to plan for students who may need additional assistance during emergencies, including students with mobility, vision, hearing, emotional or sensory needs. School student-services teams help develop individualized approaches and use district planning resources.

Medical emergencies and coordinated response

School nurses are notified of health emergencies. Medical Emergency Response Teams include staff trained to use AEDs. Nurses also help plan for allergies, medications and health considerations during field trips.

Our safety partners

NPS coordinates with the Newton Police Department, Newton Fire Department, Newton Health and Human Services, Riverside Community Care, Fallon Ambulance and employee associations.

Communication and family partnership

The district emergency plan incorporates phone, text and email communication. Families can reinforce safety by following school visitor procedures, keeping contact information current and raising safety or accessibility questions with their school team.

Important context: This overview summarizes the Fall 2026 draft staff training template. Individual schools adapt their plans; building-specific schedules, locations and procedures are not reproduced here.
Source: NPS Safety Training for All School Staff, Fall 2026 (draft), pp. 8–10, 18, 22–26.