

New London Public Schools took swift action, *responding immediately*, when information about past sexual assaults surfaced in early 2019. The allegations resulted in the suspension, termination and arrest of staff. Additionally, the District focused on taking steps to make sure students were safe in school; felt comfortable coming forward with any safety concerns; and that the onboarding process for new employees was appropriate to make sure candidates were thoroughly vetted and best qualified to contribute to a healthy school environment. This document captures many of the initiatives and new procedures implemented, since 2019, that have resulted in greater transparency, accountability, and a safer environment for children.

#### New London Public Schools Initiatives and Procedures Implemented

1. NLPS has provided increased mechanisms for reporting incidents or concerns. On September 11, 2019, the district published an Incident and Complaint Reporting link on the NLPS website that provides school employees, students, or the public a mechanism for reporting concerns or incidents.
2. A new Reporting App was introduced during the 2019/2020 school year. The *Anonymous Alerts* district app allows students, families, and staff 24-hour anonymous reporting opportunities for any physical or emotional safety concern. Continued anonymous reporting boxes will remain located in several locations in schools. All 5<sup>th</sup> grade and secondary-level students receive training on how and what to report, it is placed on all district devices, and monthly notification reminders are sent out to families. The app is on the front page of the district webpage and on all school sites.
3. To increase training and ensure compliance with various training requirements, the district has expanded mandatory Professional Development for all staff and centrally located the recording and tracking of such.
4. As part of the first week of the 2019/2020 school year Professional Development training included Sexual Harassment, Mandated Reporter, Human Trafficking, FERPA and Bloodborne Pathogens for all staff. Subsequently, we have added several more topics for annual and new hire compliance including an Anti-Bullying module, Title IX overview, and review and sign off on the Employee Handbook. All employees are required to complete these trainings *annually*, as well as all new hires.
5. Sexual Harassment and Mandated Reporter Trainings are now required annually. All elementary staff participate in training in bullying prevention and sexual assault prevention through the Second Step curriculum.
6. The District created a Para-Educator Handbook that is updated annually. Each September para-educators are given the handbook, are provided time to review it and ask questions, and are required to sign off that they have read and understood the regulations. Information presented includes that para educators do not spend time alone 1:1 with a student, without supervision.
7. When schools went remote due to Covid-19, each para-educator received over 200 hours of additional special education training, including topics around Applied Behavior Analysis, trauma informed practices, social emotional learning, and instructional and behavioral practices for working with students with disabilities.
8. Steps have been taken to strengthen the HR onboarding process, to include the following:
  - a. New leadership and restructuring of the Human Resource department was completed with an experienced HR professional who was previously the CHRO in school districts in Hartford, New Britain, Greenwich, and Stamford CT starting July 2020, and the addition of 2 more HR Team members August of 2021.
  - b. New policies and procedures are also being put into place based on the district's Human Resource audit, initiated by the Superintendent, as well as any recommendations from the Office of Child Advocacy. The new Executive Director has put a process in place to create HR Procedures for operational items.

- c. Prior to new employees commencing employment, HR now requires documented proof of Mandated Reporter Training, Sexual Harassment Training, FERPA Training, Bloodborne Pathogen Training, an Anti-Bullying module, a Title IX overview, and review and sign-off of the Employee Handbook. Except for Mandated Reporter Training, the training courses are taken online through a service contracted with NLPS.
  - d. HR has access to an online portal which provides real-time records of completed training by each staff member. A start date is not provided until proof of training is confirmed by HR. We are now in the process of switching to a more robust training platform – SafeSchools.
  - e. Prior to new employees commencing, HR requires that they return to HR the DCF Authorization for the Release of Information for DCF CPS Search (DCF Form 3031). A start date is not provided until the release is signed by the prospective employee and returned to HR.
  - f. Prior to new employees commencing employment, the employee must be fingerprinted and take a drug test. A start date is not set until documentation of both have been provided by the prospective employee to HR.
  - g. A new process has been implemented when a criminal record search produces a past criminal history. This process requires that the analysis of the criminal record and a recommended course of action taken because of the criminal history is documented by HR and signed off by the Superintendent.
  - h. A newly created onboarding workflow chart is facilitating the process of ensuring all onboarding paperwork is completed and centrally located in the applicants personnel file located in the HR office. The workflow chart makes it clear what documents, including proof of training records, are required to be collected by staff during the onboarding process, and holds school and HR staff accountable for making sure all the required documentation is received and centralized in the HR personnel file room.
9. New Leadership Teams: New London High School and Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School are led by new leadership teams and team structures.
10. Increased Mentoring/Partnerships:
- a. Assemblies for students, to include inspirational and motivational guest speakers have occurred for secondary school students and families.
  - b. All students, grades 6-12, have been assigned to a school guidance counselor and/or to an assistant principal, for check-ins, coaching, and mentorship.
  - c. Mentors continue to be assigned to middle and high school students. Mentoring occurs in person and through virtual platforms.
  - d. NLPS maintains continued partnerships with New London Police Department, New London Fire Department, and various Community Partners to support healthy development in students.
11. Bullying: A new anonymous Bullying Reporting Form has been created and is featured in paper form and on our website. Mandatory CIRMA training is required for all staff regarding anti-bullying expectations, anti-bullying direct instruction for students is provided through new SEL curriculum.
12. District-made “Operational Staff Meeting” Power Points: The district developed and shared operational Power Point presentations that featured key reminders, expectations, procedures, and policies for all schools. (An example of such included guided presentation on all aspects of the Safe School Climate Plan, etc.) Principals turn-keyed these “operational” presentations to all staff. In addition to presenting the information in each, Principals then followed-up by emailing the presentations directly to all staff so they also had all detailed information in written form.
13. A new District department for Mental Health Services and a department for Physical Education

and Health, K-12, have been created:

- a. The new Mental Health department provides tiered supports for social-emotional learning, behavioral intervention services, and mental health needs.
  - b. Members of the team coordinate crisis intervention and response for more intensive mental health needs of students and staff.
  - c. Members of the department train school support teams to assess and intervene in mental health crises, including collaboration with emergency services as needed.
  - d. Each department is headed by an Assistant Director and supported by teams (social workers and psychologists or certified health/PE teachers) in all buildings.
  - e. Implementation of deep monitoring of students' proficiency of both healthy living standards and physical health standards.
  - f. Newly expanded after school programming being prepared to allow students more physical movement opportunities.
14. Hired additional Board-Certified Behavioral Analysts ("BCBA") to help with challenging behaviors.
15. Second Step and School Connect (SEL) Curricula now being implemented:
- a. These curricula include social emotional lessons for all students, starting in PreK through Grade 12 (aligned to the CASEL SEL standards). Sequential lessons for all secondary students regarding healthy relationships, teen dating and sexual assault prevention are also included.
16. Calm Classroom: A mindfulness program, Calm Classroom, was added for 2021-2022 school year from PreK through Grade 8 to teach students self-regulation and awareness. There is a consistent implementation in all classrooms twice per day, with trainers in each building and overseen by Assistant Director of Mental Health Services.
17. Comprehensive Suicide Prevention Program: The Signs of Suicide program is in place for students in Grades 6-12. This program includes: mental health literacy, awareness of mental health warning signs, and intervention steps. All teachers in middle and high school receive yearly training and students participate in an annual lesson that also provides an outlet for them to seek immediate help from support staff. In addition, yearly events on suicide prevention are provided to parents/guardians.
18. New Handbooks and Policies have been generated for the following:
- a. Special Education Services
  - b. Transgender/Gender-Expansive Students
  - c. Student Code of Conduct
  - d. Gifted and Talented Students
  - e. Crisis and Threat Assessment
  - f. 504 Services
  - g. Safe School Climate Plan
  - h. Bullying and Restorative Practices
  - i. Mental Health Programming
19. Technology Tools: District-wide technology tools have been introduced to monitor safe browsing for students. A program called Go Guardian is installed on all student-issued devices. This program alerts staff when it detects concerning activity.
20. Continued Focus on Building Strong Culture: All district and school administrators participated in monthly professional development surrounding the theme of building positive culture and teaming.
21. Leadership Clubs for Students: Student Leadership Clubs are present in elementary, middle school, and high school; these clubs will meet monthly to discuss building-level strengths and needs.
22. Multiple Family Engagement/Community Social Events - New opportunities for staff, students, family, and community engagement.
- a. Examples: U for Youth parent/student nights, adult/student pick-up basketball games, special assemblies and performers, celebrations with diverse foods, dance, music, special events sponsored by our various community partners, etc.

- b. Various events, both in person and virtual, are available to parents to support health, social-emotional and mental health development. Examples of events have included Community Agency Resource Night, Minding Your Mind presentation on Resilience Required: Teen Mental Health During COVID-19, and a screening and discussion of the film *Angst* about managing anxiety.
  - c. Parent Ambassadors serve in parent leader roles as co-educators of students' success.
  - d. New City/School District Birth to Age 8 Community Resource Center opening in Sept. of 2021.
- 23. The 2019-2020 "Share Your Story, Share Our Story, Make a Difference Campaign":
  - a. The Superintendent continuously promotes positive relationships and opportunities for students to have role models as well as become role models. This campaign invited all-students, staff, families, and community to share their personal story of their culture, their "why" of being a part of NLPS and their creative idea for donating to the community. These videos had the aim to bring people together and were featured on the district website.
- 24. Sandy Hook Promise Programming: Programming for middle and high school students on violence prevention and building skills around relationships, social awareness, responsible decision making, and self-awareness.
- 25. Several District Committees are in place including expanded committees for staff, students, and families to become involved:
  - a. DELT (District Equity Leadership Team)
  - b. Magnet Pathways Committee
  - c. Employee Recognition Committee
  - d. EL/Bilingual and Cultural Competencies Committee
  - e. Student Advisory Committee
  - f. Staff Advisory Committee
  - g. Technology Committee
  - h. Early Childhood Committee
  - i. Specialized Instruction for Special Education Committee
  - j. Attendance Committee
  - k. Social Emotional/Mental Health Committee
  - l. Professional Development Committee
  - m. Committee for Excellence in Staff Diversity
- 26. Varied Communication Avenues - Commitment to multiple avenues of on-going (and two-way) communication:
  - a. New district website
  - b. New district app
  - c. *At A Glance* Newsletter
  - d. Podcasts
  - e. Blackboard Communication texts and robo-calls
  - f. Anonymous Alerts (open 24 hours)
  - g. "All Staff" Monday Memos sent by Superintendent
  - h. Building-level parent newsletters
  - i. Building-level PTO/School Governance Council Meetings
- 27. Common Systems for supporting students' social-emotional needs and developmental trajectories:
  - a. Support Systems are in place across the district
    - i. NLPS SRBI Intervention Manual (Tier 1)
    - ii. NLPS Attendance Committees
    - iii. Specialized goals in the students' IEP and 504 Plans
    - iv. Wellness Initiatives
    - v. P.B.I.S. Celebrations

28. NLPS speech pathologists, serving our non-verbal special needs students, have worked to have each student learn some form of communication that includes a safety request e.g., Communication boards with pictures of help and hurt, and teaching sign language for “help” words.
29. The District has changed to a new behavior program called SAFETY Care and all persons involved with special population students are trained annually.
  - a. SAFETY Care Behavioral Safety Training Program provides the skills and competencies necessary to effectively prevent, minimize and manage behavioral challenges with dignity, safety, and the possibility of change. The district has trained in house trainers, so this safety training is happening monthly.
30. The district purchased and trained teachers of autistic and neuro-diverse special class students in N2Y curriculum.
  - a. N2Y is a one-of-a-kind curriculum solution designed specifically to help students with special learning needs master their state’s extended standards. Students from pre-K through transition have the advantage of consistent, high-quality instruction, a motivating interactive learning environment, engaging symbol support, and a path to independence.
31. School Based Diversion Initiative (SBDI): NLPS had acceptance into grant program for school years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 through Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut (CHDI) and funded by DCF. The mission of SBDI is to reduce the rate of in-school arrests, expulsions, and out-of-school suspensions by supporting equitable discipline practices, promoting Restorative Practices to complement district procedures, and connect students to mental health supports.
32. School Health Assessment and Performance Evaluation System (SHAPE): All schools participate in yearly self-assessments through the National Center for School Mental Health. This system allows for each school team to assess various aspects of their mental health services, tiered support systems related to mental health and behavior, and the impact of their services on student outcomes. Each team then targets an area with a shared goal that will have a positive impact on their school’s services.
33. PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports): PBIS is currently implemented across NLPS. It is a prevention framework that works for all students. PBIS is a general term that refers to positive behavioral interventions and systems used to achieve important behavior changes. An effective social culture is a proactive approach that schools use to improve school safety and promote positive behavior. Each school has previously worked with SERC to develop effective PBIS systems and received ongoing training and support each school year.
  - a. A digital system is currently utilized to award and track student points, PBIS Rewards, in grades K-8.
34. NLPS negotiated a monthly toileting stipend for para educators in their union contract for personnel that would be toileting our most involved students, thus demonstrating the importance of such daily tasks. Para-educators trained by physical therapist on best procedure for toileting including safety and sensitivity.
35. In September, and again mid-year, special education monthly meetings have an agenda item addressing the concerns and vulnerability of students with intense needs.
36. Discoverers Training: This was delivered to all non-certified staff in 2018/2019. This training is designed to give school and childcare personnel, along with medical, mental health and other therapeutic providers the tools needed to optimally respond when a child discloses or indicates that he or she may be a victim of abuse or maltreatment. How professionals react and respond to a suspected child abuse allegation will have a direct impact on the child’s recovery from the traumatic act and on the integrity of the subsequent investigation. Training provided through CT Sexual Assault Crisis Center.
37. Revised Sexual Assault Prevention methods for parents/guardians and Revised Title IX procedures:
  - a. Virtual events were held several times during the 2020-2021 school year to familiarize guardians with the Child Protection Unit curriculum, provide education on warning signs, and discuss how to open conversation on this topic.

- b. Additional training was provided to all families on internet safety and exploitation was hosted by the district in April 2020, titled Social Media and Distance Learning Safety, which was presented by the state police. In addition, revised Title IX procedures ensured that parents receive the written policy and procedures at least twice when making a claim.
- 38. Special education staff, psychologists, and social workers regularly review warning signs around sexual assault, exploitation, and trafficking. Any concerns are reviewed with supervisors to ensure systems are in place to report incidents and support affected students.
- 39. A new District department for Climate and Culture, K-12 has been created:
  - a. A brand-new Leadership Team and Department has been assigned to oversee all district Climate and Culture initiatives.
  - b. The department is led by a Director and is supported by a team of school-based Counselors, Behavioral Leaders, Behavior Managers and Attendance Liaisons.
- 40. To ensure student safety and supervision, district procedures require staff to document all student contacts in PowerSchool. Written procedures outline staff expectations and are continuously reviewed with various departments that work with students. In addition, office space for staff is strategically designed for visibility and monitoring. Offices are placed in areas of high traffic, all offices that are used for student meetings have windows, and there is a strict policy in place regarding any coverings of the windows.
- 41. District safety officers have been trained and regularly review camera footage for both the middle and high schools. Any suspicious behavior, either by adults or students, is reported to administration. All buildings have upgraded camera systems and regularly monitor areas of concern and potential gaps in coverage.
- 42. NLPS has ongoing collaboration with the NLPD. In addition, the district has fostered a CORE Safety team to respond to any safety issues with a multifaceted approach. NLPS meets with the Police Chief and members of his team regularly. NLPS is grateful for its strong partnership.

The safety and well-being of all students continues to be a priority. As you can see from the above, NLPS has done a lot to put much needed district-wide systems and trainings into place. All will continue to work hard to support all students, staff, and families and to make continuous improvements.