



## Newtown Public Schools

BOE DEAI Committee Meeting  
October 22, 2025

BOE Conference Room 1  
Municipal Building  
3 Primrose Street  
Newtown, CT 06470  
6:00 PM

*As citizens of our community, we will conduct ourselves in accordance with Newtown's Core Character Attributes as displayed in our character tree. We will be responsible for our actions and show respect for each other. We will interact peacefully, productively, and politely. We will be trustworthy and honest and show compassion toward others. Newtown's continued success is contingent upon our ability to persevere, to follow through with our commitments, and to stay focused on the greater good.*

### AGENDA

1. **CALL TO ORDER**
2. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**
3. **NEW BUSINESS**
  - A. Action on Minutes of June 10, 2025
  - B. Overview of the 3-Year goals that relate to this committee
  - C. Harmful Language Protocol
  - D. Discussion of the Mission of the Subcommittee
  - E. Possible Future Topics
4. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**
5. **ADJOURNMENT**

**Board of Education**  
**3 Primrose Street, Newtown, CT 06470**  
**Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion Subcommittee**  
**June 10, 2025**

Minutes of the Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion Subcommittee meeting held on June 10, 2025 at 6:00 pm in the Board of Education conference room, 3 Primrose Street.

C. Gilson, Chair  
D. Linnetz  
D. Zukowski

A. Uberti  
K. DiBartolo  
4 Public

Item 1 - Call to Order

Dr. Gilson called the meeting to order at 5:59 pm.

Item 2 - Public Participation

None

Item 3 - New Business

Action on minutes of April 8, 2025:

MOTION: Ms. Zukowski moved to approve the minutes of April 8, 2025. Mrs. Linnetz seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Hateful Language Protocol Update:

Mrs. DiBartolo updated the committee with the hateful language protocol. She stated that she has been working diligently to develop a comprehensive draft. Throughout the process, she has collaborated closely with Amanda Pickett, a state-level Education Consultant, as well as members of the DEI Roundtable and also received valuable feedback from Nixon & Co. In addition to collaborating with external stakeholders, Mrs. DiBartolo consulted with district counselors, Hope Bray and Lisa Kilcourse to ensure alignment with Newtown's systems for responding to both students impacted by and those exhibiting hateful language. She explained that the important components of this protocol are immediate responses, investigation and resolution, and education.

The key features are emotional support for all students involved, parent partnership throughout the process, clear follow-up plans for students and families and sample language to guide staff interactions.

Mrs. DiBartolo said that her next steps will be to gather more feedback from Equity Leaders to help finalize the protocol. After the protocol is finalized, she will organize training for the administrators, Equity Leaders and Climate Specialists through scenario based application.

Ms. Zukowski asked if hateful language is uniform across the board.

Mrs. DiBartolo answered that it will be a case by case situation. It will all warrant an investigation.

Ms. Zukowski asked if the Board will see the protocol and Mrs. DiBartolo answered that they will.

Mrs. Linnetz asked if Mrs. DiBartolo reviewed the new school climate policy before creating this protocol. Are they aligned?

Mrs. DiBartolo answered that she kept the policy in mind while creating this protocol but they are different. This protocol is about what we are doing to support the students and what words and/or actions are needed.

Dr. Gilson asked if this protocol was just for high school.

Mrs. DiBartolo said that they are only developing a protocol for K-8 right now. They will need to connect with high school administrators to create something different that is age appropriate.

Mrs. Linnetz asked for a timeline.

Mrs. DiBartolo said that their goal is to have the draft and receive feedback before the school year. They will then need to provide training. They discussed having training at the Administrators retreat over the summer, prior to the Equity Leaders training.

Website Update:

Mrs. DiBartolo reported that she and Dennis Colclough have been collaborating to develop Newtown Public Schools' DEAI webpage. The work has been guided by the district's core beliefs and values, which served as the foundation for the page's design and content. The goal is for visitors to immediately recognize and feel, "*Yes, this reflects Newtown Public Schools.*" The Webpage sections are:

1. Celebrating Differences in our Schools ie. pictures of events, bulletin boards, candid photos, recognized months, etc
2. Mission
3. Professional Development
  - a. Role of Equity Leaders
4. District School Climate
5. DEAI FAQ
6. Policies
7. Restorative Practices
8. Connection to School Success Plans

Mrs. DiBartolo said that the webpage will be finalized and published this summer.

Ms. Zukowski praised the website and is excited for it to be live. She asked if the statement will become obsolete after the website is published.

Mrs. Uberti answered that she will have to look at the statement. She believes that a lot of progress has been made since that statement was created and it may be time to make a change.

Incident Data Review:

Mrs. Uberti started her report by saying that the end of the year is very different from the rest of the school year. School provides structure and caring adults that students may not have otherwise and the end of the year can be triggering for some. Once students are out of routine and there is less structure, there are more opportunities for students to act out.

This month's review trends are high and there are a high number of significant incidents. The data forces us to ask the questions on why there is an increased amount of trouble behavior including racial incidents. Mrs. Uberti said that it is possible that students feel more comfortable by the end of the year to report these incidents.

Mrs. Uberti said that she and Frank Purcaro have reviewed the data and the incidents seem to start at Reed Intermediate. They both agree that changes need to happen at Reed and Middle School in terms of programs that support the admin and students. The consensus is that

Newtown needs to do better and they will continue to find ways to improve and make all of the students feel safe and accepted. Building trust with the community is very important and that can be accomplished by constant and direct communication.

#### Nixon & Co. Update:

Newtown is currently at the end of our 3 year contract. Nixon and Co. expressed that they do not feel like their work is complete here. However, Mrs. Uberti believes that this is an opportunity for Newtown to take a step back from Nixon and Co. and implement all that Newtown has learned. There may be a time for Newtown and Nixon & Co. to continue their relationship but it is time for Newtown to take ownership.

#### Goals and Planning for Next Year:

Dr. Gilson stated that he was looking forward to the protocol and believes that we need to start being more aggressive and direct about who we (Newtown) desire to be. There needs to be better ways to get the information to the students so they can understand the importance of this.

Ms. Zukowski agrees with everything that was talked about in this meeting. She is looking forward to the new website and believes that with that, it may be time to sunset the statement.

Ms. Linnetz feels a sense of urgency with this work being finalized by the beginning of the school year. It is important to monitor it closely and if the trend continues to rise, then an immediate triage needs to happen.

The subcommittee agreed to get more meeting dates on the calendar for the fall. Dr. Gilson and Mrs. Uberti will meet to discuss dates that work for everyone.

#### Item 4 - Public Participation

Nicole Maddox, 14 Nighthawk Lane, was happy to hear that more meeting dates will be on the schedule for the fall. She suggested adding more meetings because there are not currently enough meetings to accomplish what you want to accomplish. She believes that with each meeting, more progress is being made. She advised the committee to not underestimate what is happening at the elementary school because they may not be reporting it. She also agrees that there is still a lot of work to be done and although trust is being built, it is still not completely there yet.

Kenneth Miller, 72 Forest Drive, spoke about what he experiences in school. The racial incidents are more difficult to report and many of them are slipping through the cracks. When they are reported, the only consequence seems to be one day of in school suspension so students don't feel like it is worth it to report anymore. Racial incidents never dwindle, they just go unnoticed. He urged the subcommittee to commit to make real changes.

MOTION: Mrs. Linnetz moved to adjourn and Ms. Zukowski seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

#### Item 5 - Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:59 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sarah Connell

*\*These minutes are pending committee approval\**

## NPS 3-Year Strategic Instructional Goals

**Goal 5. (Family and Community Relations) Cultivate strong, reciprocal partnerships with families and the community to support student learning and well-being.**

**Strategy 1. Enhance district and school climate and culture through consistent practices across schools.**

Strategic Action(s)	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	<i>Persons Responsible</i>
<p>Implement the new Connecticut School Climate Policy in all schools throughout the district.</p>	<p>The district will provide training to all administrators on requirements outlined in the new climate policy.</p> <p>The school climate committee (SCC) and district climate committee (DCC) will develop regulations that show a continuum of behavior/practices for each grade-level(see the policy).</p> <p>Each school will develop a school climate committee with the following responsibilities:                      1. assisting in the development, annual scheduling, and administration of the school climate survey, and reviewing of the</p>	<p>By September 2026, the DCC will finalize and disseminate the continuum of behavior/practices for each grade-level across the district. This will include professional development for all staff on its application.</p> <p>Based upon the results of the annual school climate survey, each school climate coordinator develops and updates as necessary, a school climate improvement goals as part of their school's strategic goals.</p> <p>A written or electronic copy of such goals shall be made available to members of the school community.</p>	<p>The DCC will monitor the consistent application of the grade-level behavior continuum across all schools, providing targeted support and problem-solving for any remaining inconsistencies.</p> <p>SCCs will continue to administer the school climate surveys.</p> <p>SCCs will serve as lead advocates for positive school climate within their buildings, presenting their successes and challenges to school leadership, parent groups, and potentially the Board of Education.</p>	<p>Superintendent                      Assistant Superintendent                      Director of Teaching and Learning                      Assistant Principals (School Climate Specialists)                      Building Principals</p>

	<p>school climate survey data.</p> <p>2. using the school climate survey data to identify strengths and challenges to improve school climate, and to create or propose revisions to the school climate improvement plan.</p> <p>3 assisting in the implementation of the school climate improvement plan and recommending any improvements or revisions to the plan.</p> <p>4. advising on strategies to improve school climate and implementing evidence and research-based interventions, including, but not limited to, restorative practices, in the school community.</p> <p>5. annually providing notice of the uniform challenging behavior and/or bullying complaint form, or similar complaint form used by the school, to the school community.</p> <p>In coordination with the district climate committee, the school climate committee, for each school, shall administer a school climate survey to</p>	<p>The district will continue to expand and update a collection of school climate/culture resources, and evidence-based interventions, adding more specific and differentiated materials.</p> <p>The district's trained Restorative Practices facilitators will deliver Spring 2026 and Fall 2026 staff training dates for advanced Restorative Practices using after-school meeting times. The train-the-trainer model is fully operational.</p>	<p>The "train-the-trainer" model for restorative practices will be fully embedded, with a sufficient number of internal experts to provide ongoing coaching, advanced training modules, and support to all staff as needed. Schools will continue to designate fall and spring training dates, but these will be offered as needed.</p>	
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	<p>students, school employees and families of students.</p> <p>The district will provide resources and training to school employees regarding:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. social and emotional learning (resources);</li> <li>2. school climate and culture and evidence and research-based interventions (resources); and</li> <li>3. restorative practices. (training)</li> </ol> <p>The district will adopt a train-the-trainer model for providing restorative practices training to staff in each of the schools throughout the year. School will designate a fall and a spring training date for staff using one of the after-school meeting times.</p>			
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**Strategy 2. Promote inclusive and welcoming school environments that embrace diversity and ensure a sense of belonging for all.**

<b>Strategic Action(s)</b>	<b>2025-26</b>	<b>2026-27</b>	<b>2027-28</b>	<b>Persons Responsible</b>
Continue the growth and development of the district ELL programming	Implement professional learning sessions for <i>all</i> staff (not just ELL specialists) on basic ELL instructional strategies, language acquisition stages, and cultural	Review and update curriculum materials to ensure they are accessible for various ELL proficiency levels. Start with HS English and Science courses. Add	Review and update curriculum materials to ensure they are accessible for various ELL proficiency levels. Finish HS English and Science courses and	Superintendent Assistant Superintendent Director of Teaching and Learning

	<p>competency. Prioritize training for content-area teachers who have ELLs in their classrooms.</p> <p>Review and improve existing communication protocols to ensure all critical district and school-level information is accessible in the primary languages of ELL families.</p> <p>Create a plan to increase ELL family engagement within the schools, e.g. Open House event for ELL students and families, increased participation in school-based PTAs.</p> <p>Integrate technology tools, especially AI tools and software specifically designed to support English language acquisition and content area learning for ELLs.</p> <p>Complete the ELL/MLL Handbook.</p>	<p>modified lessons directly into the curriculum documents.</p> <p>Continue to offer professional learning to all staff, including an advanced training on specific sheltered instruction techniques (e.g., SIOP Model), academic language development, and assessment of ELLs.</p> <p>Meet with the building administrative assistants to refine and standardize the procedures for timely and accurate identification, placement, and reclassification of ELL students in accordance with Connecticut state regulations.</p> <p>Implement strategies to increase ELL family engagement within the schools.</p>	<p>begin work on Social Studies and Math courses Add modified lessons directly into the curriculum documents.</p> <p>Continue to offer both beginner and advanced professional learning to all staff.</p> <p>Analyzing ELL student trend data (proficiency gains, student's exiting ELL programming, state assessment growth) and identify areas of strength and improvement; present the findings to A-Team and BOE.</p>	
<p>Promote inclusive, respectful language and positive communication to foster a welcoming and supportive culture across all schools.</p>	<p>Launch districtwide training on the <i>NPS Harmful Language Protocol</i>, as an intervention and response tool, emphasizing responsibility to</p>	<p>Assess the impact of Year 1 action steps through a combination of staff and student school climate surveys, disciplinary data trends including anonymous alerts, and</p>	<p>Finalize SEL/advisory harmful language lessons based on feedback.</p> <p>Evaluate impact through staff and</p>	<p>Superintendent Assistant Superintendent Director of Teaching and Learning Building Principals Assistant Principals Dean of Students (NHS)</p>

	<p>recognize, report, and address harmful language.</p> <p>Create parent-facing documents that outline the district response to harmful language reports.</p> <p>Identify at least one person in each school who will be trained as a person to follow-up with families following such incidents.</p> <p>Train equity leaders to serve as a point person for staff questions or concerns and help support a shared responsibility for addressing harmful language.</p> <p>Revise and pilot at least 2 SEL/Advisory lessons that address, in a developmentally appropriate manner, the connections between kindness, language and inclusion and the impact of harmful language on others and explicitly teaches what constitutes harmful language.</p> <p>Launch visual messaging in every school centered</p>	<p>anecdotal reports.</p> <p>Review and revise SEL/Advisory lessons piloted last year, as needed, and consider creating any additional necessary lessons.</p> <p>Include NPS Harmful Language Protocol training as part of new staff orientation.</p> <p>Provide building-based refresher training for staff on the use of the Harmful Language Protocol.</p> <p>Identify existing student structures to elicit the student voice on how we are doing at addressing this topic at the middle and high school levels.</p> <p>Develop and make available family resources on promoting respectful language at home, aligned with the district's messaging.</p> <p>Develop student leader training modules for grades 6-12 on Words Matter: Lead with Kindness, Speak with Respect.</p>	<p>student surveys, disciplinary data trends, and school climate indicators.</p> <p>Establish "Words Matter" recognition programs to highlight students or classes demonstrating inclusive and respectful language.</p> <p>Present a culminating report to the Board of Education outlining outcomes, success stories, and sustainability recommendations.</p>	<p>EquityTeam Leaders</p>
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	<p>on the theme: Words Matter: Lead with Kindness, Speak with Respect.</p> <p>Rely on restorative practices for repairing harm between students.</p>			
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**Strategy 3. Enhance communication with community stakeholders to promote transparency, trust, and meaningful engagement in district initiatives.**

<b>Strategic Action(s)</b>	<b>2025-26</b>	<b>2026-27</b>	<b>2027-28</b>	<b>Persons Responsible</b>
<p>Review and build upon the recently redesigned NPS website to ensure content is accurate, user-friendly, and visually representative of the district's identity.</p>	<p>Identify outdated or generic content and imagery that do not reflect NPS schools or programs.</p> <p>Work with school leaders and staff to update building-specific pages with accurate information, timely announcements, and school-specific visuals.</p> <p>Develop a plan to curate and upload new photos that showcase students, staff, programs, and events from across the district.</p> <p>Ensure all content meets accessibility standards and is optimized for both desktop and mobile users.</p>	<p>Evaluate website traffic analytics to adjust and improve user engagement and navigation design over time.</p> <p>Create a system for updating relevant sections of the site to maintain accuracy.</p> <p>Explore the use of an AI chatbot to enhance user engagement and streamline communication. Research chatbot platforms suitable for school districts, focusing on those that are FERPA/COPPA compliant, customizable with district content, and capable of multilingual support.</p> <p>Evaluate website traffic analytics to adjust and improve user engagement</p>	<p>Pilot the selected AI chatbot on the NPS website with limited functionality (e.g., answering FAQs, directory help, calendar access), and gather user feedback from families and staff.</p> <p>Evaluate effectiveness and usage data to determine scalability. Adjust or expand chatbot functions based on needs (e.g., tech support, enrollment help, transportation info).</p> <p>Train designated staff to monitor chatbot interactions and ensure content is kept up to date..</p>	<p>Superintendent Assistant Superintendent Director of Technology Director of Teaching and Learning</p>

	Establish a recurring schedule for content review and updates to maintain accuracy and relevance.	and navigation design over time.		
Enhance the NPS Weekly Update	<p>Establish consistent structure for the newsletter.</p> <p>Incorporate a new feature: Curriculum Corner that highlights curriculum and instruction initiatives.</p> <p>Explore options to expand newsletter accessibility, such as enabling audio versions that can be listened to on the go.</p> <p>Survey readers to seek suggestions for next year's newsletter.</p>	<p>Analyze results from surveys and incorporate valid suggestions.</p> <p>Consider expanding beyond the newsletter to other social media platforms.</p> <p>Implement audio version of the NPS Weekly Update.</p>	<p>Embed clickable media (audio clips, student interviews, or podcast links) to make the newsletter more interactive.</p> <p>Introduce a rotating "Guest Contributor" feature spotlighting student journalists, staff members, or community partners.</p> <p>Incorporate brief video or audio messages from principals or students connected to key district events.</p>	<p>Superintendent</p> <p>Assistant Superintendent</p>
Develop and Promote the Newtown Public Schools Podcast	<p>Develop a plan to launch a district podcast that identifies who manages content, editing, and promotion to ensure feasibility..</p> <p>Pilot at least one episode by the end of this school year.</p> <p>Develop a publishing schedule and content</p>	<p>Implement the publishing schedule.</p> <p>Promote the podcast through district communication channels, social media, and school newsletters.</p> <p>Evaluate listenership data and gather feedback to refine topics and improve engagement.</p>	<p>Expand audience through additional platforms.</p> <p>Develop a long-term content calendar with recurring segments</p> <p>Submit episodes or the series for recognition (e.g., CAFE Communication Awards,</p>	<p>Superintendent</p> <p>Assistant Superintendent</p> <p>Director of Technology</p>

	plan for next year that includes interviews with students, staff, administrators, and community partners.			
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## **Addressing Harmful Language in Our Schools**

Newtown Public Schools is committed to maintaining a safe, respectful, and inclusive school climate. As part of that commitment, we recognize our responsibility to respond to incidents of harmful language with care, sensitivity, and effectiveness—modeling the very characteristics we strive to instill in our students. We expect our students to be open and respectful communicators, as well as ethical and responsible citizens within our community. It is essential that they understand that their words, like their actions, have impact—and that using language to insult, demean, exclude, or cause harm to others based on aspects of their identity, particularly those protected by law or district policy, is never acceptable.

### **Harmful Language Defined**

Harmful language is defined as the use of words, symbols, or gestures that insult, exclude, demean, or cause harm to others based on aspects of their identity—especially those protected by law or district policy.

### **How We Respond: Guiding Principles for Addressing Harmful Language**

Our approach to responding to an incident of harmful language will:

- Be guided by the context of the situation and the relationships between those involved, recognizing that effective responses depend on understanding the individuals and their experiences.
- Ensure the physical and emotional safety of all students, staff, and parents/guardians at every stage of the response.
- Clearly communicate that harmful language and related behaviors are unacceptable and violate the values and policies of the school community.
- Educate students on the impact of their words and actions through interventions that promote behavior change, alongside appropriate and proportionate consequences.
- Provide timely, compassionate support to those who have been harmed and, when possible, those who have witnessed incidents.
- Apply protocols consistently and equitably, taking into account students' developmental levels and individual needs.
- Maintain clear, accurate, and confidential records of incidents and responses.
- Communicate promptly and appropriately with students, parents/guardians, and staff to promote understanding, accountability, and support.

## Newtown Public Schools

### Harmful Language Response Protocol

- Respond immediately and calmly.  Report all incidents—no matter how small.
- Support the impacted student.  Document every step.  Focus on both accountability and learning.

Harmful language occurs when a student uses words, symbols, or gestures that insult, exclude, or cause harm to others based on aspects of their identity—particularly those protected by law or district policies. The expectation is that ALL staff are responsible for addressing incidents of harmful language or behavior that they witness or are informed of.

#### 1. Act Immediately to Stop the Behavior

- Stop the behavior calmly and directly.: “That language/behavior is not acceptable here.”
- Do not debate intent or lecture students in front of others.
- Check in with the impacted student **privately**: “Are you okay? That was not okay.”

#### 2. Report to Administration

- Reports should be made as soon as possible to the administration - do not wait until the end of the day.
- Be sure to report all known facts to administration.

#### 3. Immediate Administrator Response (Within 1 School Day of Report)

- Receive report from person who experienced or observed the incident.
- Contact parents/guardians of the impacted student to explain what was reported, review the investigation process and provide a timeline
- Send follow-up [Family Information](#) email
- Meet with the impacted student, offer supportive measures pending investigation

***\*\*If the harmful language/behavior involves a threat, report to principal to conduct a School-based Threat Assessment.\*\****

#### 4. Assessment & Investigation

- Record all **reports** of harmful language/behavior in PowerSchool, regardless of outcome
  - Use “Harmful Language” drop-down for student(s) who may have caused harm
  - Use “Parent Contact” for impacted student
- Conduct full investigation:
  - Interview impacted student, determine all possible witnesses
  - Interview all possible witnesses, separately
  - Review and preserve any video tape, if it exists
  - Review relevant existing student records of impacted student and possible persons who caused harm (i.e. Prior log entries, Student behavior plans, IEP, 504 plan)
  - Interview student who may have caused harm
- Review evidence gathered and determine impact, intent, and any patterns of behavior to determine if harmful language incident can be verified
- Document outcome of investigation in PowerSchool

## 5. Resolution

### If Verified:

- Contact parents of impacted student and student(s) has/have caused harm **within 3 days of report**
- Report what was determined through investigation maintaining student privacy, to the degree possible
- Impacted Student:*
  - Offer support to both the impacted student directly and in discussion with parents - expressions of empathy and support are critical
  - Explicitly state that this behavior is not tolerated in our schools and express regret that their student experienced this
  - While you cannot share the specific consequences issued to the student(s) who caused harm, you can share with parents the range of consequences that can be applied in these situations
  - Consider developing a documented safety plan for the impacted student, include emotional support, when appropriate
- Student(s) Who Caused Harm:*
  - Consequences for student(s) who caused harm are determined in alignment with the school-specific behavior continuum and, when appropriate, the restorative practices model and should also be instructive in nature:
    - Reflection or apology
    - Counselor sessions or lessons on empathy
    - Opportunities for curriculum intervention (e.g., counselor lesson)
    - In-school suspension
  - Reiterate to parent and student that this behavior is not tolerated in our schools and further incidents will result in escalation of consequences

### If Not Verified:

- Contact parents of impacted student and student(s) who may have caused harm within **3 school days of report**
- Report what was determined through investigation maintaining student privacy, to the degree possible
- Impacted Student:*
  - Offer support to both the impacted student directly and in discussion with parents - expressions of empathy and support are critical
  - Explicitly state that this behavior is not tolerated in our schools, express regret that their student experienced this and assurance that incident has been documented to inform possible future incidents
  - Consider developing a documented safety plan for the impacted student, include emotional support, when appropriate
  - Plan a date for a follow-up with the impacted student and the parents of the impacted student and decide who is following up: Investigator, Counselor (K-8) or Principal (NHS)
    - Date: \_\_\_\_\_
    - Person following up: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Notify principal or other qualified person of what has taken place and the plan for followup

## 8. Team Debrief (Is Needed)

- Admin, teachers, counselor/social worker, Equity Leader
- Review incident, confirm follow-up, and identify supports for individuals or classrooms

# Newtown Public Schools

## Harmful Language Staff Quick Response Guide

### *Respond. Support. Restore.*

**Harmful or hateful language** occurs when a student uses words, symbols, or gestures that insult, exclude, or target another person or group. All staff are responsible for interrupting the behavior, ensuring safety, and reporting it to administration.

#### ■ 1. STOP – Interrupt the Behavior

**Goal:** End the behavior immediately in a calm, clear, and direct way. Examples:

- “Excuse me. That language is not acceptable in our school.”
- “We don’t use words like that here — they’re hurtful and go against our values.”
- “That comment is not okay. Please think about how your words impact others.”

#### ■ 2. SUPPORT – Check on Those Affected

**Goal:** Ensure emotional and physical safety for anyone harmed. Examples:

- “I saw what happened — are you okay? That was not acceptable.”
- “No one should be spoken to that way. Let’s make sure you have support.”
- “Thank you for letting me know — you did the right thing.”

#### ■ 3. REPORT – Notify Administration of the Incident

**Goal:** Report the incident to administration as soon as possible after the incident.

- Report the incident to administration as soon as possible after the incident.
- Include details of what occurred, who was involved, and your initial response.
- Maintain confidentiality and professionalism in all follow-up communication.

#### ■ 4. RESTORE – Repair Harm, Reinforce Learning, and Restore a Respectful Classroom Climate

**Goal:** Reestablish shared norms and promote a classroom culture of respect and belonging. Possible topics:

- **Revisit Class Norms:** Review shared expectations for kindness, respect, and inclusion.
- **Reinforce Learning:** Integrate a brief mini-lesson, reflection, or SEL activity on
  - The power of words and how language shapes the learning environment
  - Respectful disagreement and active listening.
  - Inclusion and belonging in diverse communities.
- **Communicate Follow-Up and Support**
  - Let students know you’re committed to maintaining a respectful environment
  - “I care about this class and want everyone to feel like they belong here.”
  - “We all make mistakes, what matters is how we learn and move forward.”
- **Model Respectful Dialogue:** Demonstrate active listening and constructive disagreement.
- **Encourage Empathy:** Use short activities or discussions to help students consider others’ perspectives.
- **Reaffirm Belonging:** Remind students that everyone is valued and contributes to the classroom community.

**Subject Line: Follow-Up to Incident of Harmful Language**

Dear [Parent/Guardian Name],

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me **earlier today**. I wanted to follow up in writing to confirm that we received a report indicating your child experienced an incident of harmful language at school. I know this kind of situation can be upsetting, and I want to assure you that it is being addressed with care and attention.

At Newtown Public Schools, we are committed to maintaining safe, respectful, and inclusive learning environments for all students. Harmful or hateful language has no place in our schools and is addressed quickly, fairly, and with care.

**What Is Harmful Language?**

Harmful or hateful language includes words or actions that insult, exclude, or target someone based on:

- Race or ethnicity
- Religion or belief
- Gender identity or expression
- Sexual orientation
- Disability or ability
- Physical appearance or other personal traits

Even if the behavior wasn't intended to cause harm, we focus on the impact on students.

We discussed in our conversation what actions the school district will take to address these situations when they occur. I have outlined them below for your reference:

- **Respond:** Adults stop the behavior right away and check in with students to ensure safety and support.
- **Report:** Staff report the incident to administration, who begin reviewing what happened and notify families.
- **Investigate:** Administrators speak with all students involved and any witnesses; counselors may assist. We consider student age, history, and intent.
- **Follow-Up and Support:**
- **For students who were harmed:** Their experience is validated, they receive continued support, and are included in next-step planning when appropriate.
- **For students who caused harm:** Consequences are age-appropriate and consistent with district policy. Ideally, consequences also include ways that promote learning and growth, including reflection or restorative practices.

When details cannot be fully confirmed, we still offer support, reinforce respectful behavior, and monitor the situation closely.

Following our investigation, you can expect:

- Notification of the outcome within 3 days of the incident
  - A clear explanation of what happened (as appropriate)
  - A description of next steps and supports
- Opportunities to ask questions or request additional assistance

Please know that we take these situations seriously and remain committed to ensuring your child feels safe, supported, and included at school. If you have any questions or wish to discuss additional supports while this matter is being investigated, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Sincerely,

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

# Additional Language Examples Broken Down by Grade

## Grades K-4

### **Receive and Document the Report**

"Thank you for telling me. Can you tell me what happened? Who was there? Where were you? It's important that we figure out what happened so we can make things better."

### **Ensure Immediate Support**

"I want to make sure you feel okay. I'm going to have our counselor meet with you. They are here to listen and help. While you are with them, I'm going to talk to the other kids to figure out what happened. We'll make sure everyone feels safe."

### **Investigate the Incident**

"Let's talk about what happened. I want to hear your side of the story. I'll also talk to the other kids to see what they remember. It's important for everyone to tell the truth so we can find a way to fix this."

### **Determine Impact and Intent**

"I know you didn't mean to, but your words or actions made the other person feel sad or scared. We need to think about how we make other people feel. Was this a mistake, or has this happened before? We need to learn the difference between being a little bit rude and being unkind."

### **Notify Families**

"I'm calling to let you know that we had an issue today involving your child. We're looking into it to make sure everyone is safe and supported. I'll follow up with you as soon as I have more information."

### **Respond with Action**

"We need to find a way to fix this. To help make things right, we can do a few things. You might need to tell the other person you're sorry. You might also need to think about what happened and learn how to be a better friend. We might also have to take away a privilege for a little while."

### **Document and Monitor**

"We're going to write down what happened and how we fixed it. I'll also check in with you and the other students to make sure everything is okay and that no one is still feeling sad. Remember, if you need to talk, I'm here to help."

## Grades 5-6

### **Receive and Document the Report**

"Thank you for sharing this with me. I want to make sure I understand everything clearly so we can handle it correctly. Can you tell me what happened, who was involved, when and where it took place, and if anyone else was there?"

### **Ensure Immediate Support**

"We want to make sure you feel safe and supported. I'm going to have a counselor or another staff member come speak with you now. They are here to help. While you talk with them, we'll begin to address the situation with the other students involved."

### **Investigate the Incident**

"I'm meeting with everyone involved to hear their side of the story. I want to hear your perspective first. Please be honest and tell me what happened from your point of view. I may need to look at notes, social media, or other evidence, and a counselor might join us to help everyone feel comfortable."

### **Determine Impact and Intent**

"As we review this, we'll consider the comments or actions, their impact on the person targeted, and whether this is a pattern or a one-time event. We'll also distinguish between a typical conflict, rude behavior, and something more serious. Our top priority is understanding the impact on the other student, no matter what the intent was."

### **Notify Families**

"I'm calling to inform you of an incident involving your child. We're taking this seriously and have started an investigation. To protect the privacy of others,, I can't share details about other students, but I want to assure you we're addressing the situation and will follow up with you as soon as possible."

### **Respond with Action**

"Based on our findings, we have decided on a course of action. This could include a conversation to help you understand the harm caused, a reflection activity, or consequences such as detention, in-school suspension, or loss of privileges (whichever fits). The goal is to address the behavior and help everyone move forward."

### **Document and Monitor**

"We're documenting all the details and the actions we've taken. We'll continue to monitor the situation to prevent any retaliation and will provide ongoing support, including counseling, as needed. We will also make sure staff are informed to create a supportive and safe environment for all our students."

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## **Grades 7-8**

### **Receive and Document the Report**

"Thanks for telling me. I want to be sure I understand exactly what happened so we can handle it the right way. Can you tell me what happened, who was involved, when and where it took place, and if there were any witnesses?"

### **Ensure Immediate Support**

"We want you to feel safe and supported. I'm going to have a counselor or another trusted staff member meet with you now. They're here to help. While you talk with them, we'll start addressing the situation with the other students involved."

### **Investigate the Incident**

"I'm meeting with everyone involved to hear their side. I want to hear from you first—please be honest and walk me through what happened from your perspective. I may need to review notes, social media, or other evidence, and a counselor may join us to help make sure everyone feels comfortable."

### **Determine Impact and Intent**

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## **Document and Monitor**

"We're keeping a record of what happened and what actions we've taken. We'll continue to check in to make sure there's no retaliation, and we'll provide ongoing support—like counseling—if needed. Staff will also be informed so they can help keep the environment safe and supportive for everyone."

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## **Grades 9-12**

### **Receive and Document the Report**

"Thank you for bringing this to my attention. I want to be sure I have an accurate understanding so we can respond appropriately. Please walk me through exactly what happened, who was involved, when and where it took place, and whether there were any witnesses."

### **Ensure Immediate Support**

"Your safety and well-being are our priority. I'm going to connect you with a counselor or another trusted staff member who can support you right now. While you meet with them, we'll begin addressing the situation with the other students involved."

### **Investigate the Incident**

"I'm meeting with all individuals involved to hear their perspectives. I'd like to start with you—please give me your honest account of what happened from your point of view. I may need to review written statements, social media, or other evidence. A counselor may also join us to ensure a supportive environment."

### **Determine Impact and Intent**

"As we review the information, we'll consider both what was said or done and how it affected the person targeted. We'll also determine if this was a repeated behavior or a single occurrence, and whether it was a misunderstanding, conflict, or something more serious. Our primary focus is the impact on those affected, regardless of intent."

### **Notify Families**

"I'm calling to inform you of an incident involving your child. We are taking this matter seriously and have begun a formal investigation. While I cannot share details about other students, I want to assure you that we are addressing the situation and will provide you with updates as soon as possible."

### **Respond with Action**

"Based on our findings, we have determined the next steps. These may include a restorative conversation, a reflective assignment, or disciplinary actions such as detention, in-school suspension, or loss of privileges. The goal is to address the behavior, repair harm where possible, and prevent future incidents."

### **Document and Monitor**

"We are documenting the incident and our response in detail. We will continue to monitor the situation to prevent retaliation and will offer ongoing support, including counseling, if needed. Key staff will be informed so they can help maintain a safe and respectful environment for all students."

# Additional Language Examples Broken Down by Grade

## Grades K-4

### **Receive and Document the Report**

"Thank you for telling me. Can you tell me what happened? Who was there? Where were you? It's important that we figure out what happened so we can make things better."

### **Ensure Immediate Support**

"I want to make sure you feel okay. I'm going to have our counselor meet with you. They are here to listen and help. While you are with them, I'm going to talk to the other kids to figure out what happened. We'll make sure everyone feels safe."

### **Investigate the Incident**

"Let's talk about what happened. I want to hear your side of the story. I'll also talk to the other kids to see what they remember. It's important for everyone to tell the truth so we can find a way to fix this."

### **Determine Impact and Intent**

"I know you didn't mean to, but your words or actions made the other person feel sad or scared. We need to think about how we make other people feel. Was this a mistake, or has this happened before? We need to learn the difference between being a little bit rude and being unkind."

### **Notify Families**

"I'm calling to let you know that we had an issue today involving your child. We're looking into it to make sure everyone is safe and supported. I'll follow up with you as soon as I have more information."

### **Respond with Action**

"We need to find a way to fix this. To help make things right, we can do a few things. You might need to tell the other person you're sorry. You might also need to think about what happened and learn how to be a better friend. We might also have to take away a privilege for a little while."

### **Document and Monitor**

"We're going to write down what happened and how we fixed it. I'll also check in with you and the other students to make sure everything is okay and that no one is still feeling sad. Remember, if you need to talk, I'm here to help."

## Grades 5-6

### **Receive and Document the Report**

"Thank you for sharing this with me. I want to make sure I understand everything clearly so we can handle it correctly. Can you tell me what happened, who was involved, when and where it took place, and if anyone else was there?"

### **Ensure Immediate Support**

"We want to make sure you feel safe and supported. I'm going to have a counselor or another staff member come speak with you now. They are here to help. While you talk with them, we'll begin to address the situation with the other students involved."

### **Investigate the Incident**

"I'm meeting with everyone involved to hear their side of the story. I want to hear your perspective first. Please be honest and tell me what happened from your point of view. I may need to look at notes, social media, or other evidence, and a counselor might join us to help everyone feel comfortable."

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## **Grades 7-8**

### **Receive and Document the Report**

"Thanks for telling me. I want to be sure I understand exactly what happened so we can handle it the right way. Can you tell me what happened, who was involved, when and where it took place, and if there were any witnesses?"

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## Grades 9-12

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