

NPS Equity FAQ for Fall 2021

Updated: Oct 19, 2021

The Equity Committee documented answers to some frequently asked questions to share information with all PTOs. We encourage anyone with questions or concerns to contact us through the PTO Council's Equity Representative, Valerie Davisson, at equityrep@newtonptocouncil.org. She will share your email message with the whole Equity Committee.

General Information: The Equity Policy And Equity Guidelines

Why does Newton Public Schools have an Equity Policy?

Newton is a diverse community which values equity and excellence in its neighborhood-based public schools. Generally, each child in the Newton Public Schools should have a substantially similar experience regardless of which school the child attends. With this in mind, the first NPS Equity Committee was established in 1987, and an Equity Policy was adopted by the School Committee.

Who is currently on the Equity Committee?

The Equity Committee is composed of representatives from the Newton Public Schools (school administrators), School Committee, and PTO Council. The PTO Council elects three parents to the Equity Committee.

- Emily Prennar, Newton School Committee, eprennar@newton.k12.ma.us
- Valerie Davisson, Parent Equity Rep and PTOC Board Member, equityrep@newtonptocouncil.org
- Helen Makadia, Parent Equity rep, EquityRep1@newtonptocouncil.org
- Michelle Tsay, Parent Equity rep, EquityRep2@newtonptocouncil.org
- Renee McCall, NPS Director of Teaching and Learning
- Ayesha Farag, NPS Director of Elementary Education
- Burr principal, Mindy Johal, and Zervas principal, Diana Beck

What are the Equity Policy and Equity Guidelines?

The [Equity Policy](#) specifically addresses financial support to individual schools that is provided by Parent Teacher Organizations (PTOs). The policy reflects the overall philosophy of Newton Public Schools regarding equitable distribution of resources and access to curricular-related materials.

The [Equity Guidelines](#) are the detailed instructions that describe the current rules on prohibited, limited, and unlimited PTO spending in the schools. In general, PTO spending on items that are

considered core curriculum or curriculum-related are either prohibited or limited. There are no limits on PTO spending on non-curricular items and community-building events.

Here are some examples for the elementary level.

Prohibited	Limited	Unlimited
Staff	Technology	Community events
Textbooks	Creative Arts and Sciences	Communication
Computer Software	Teacher support	Teacher Appreciation
Whole-school Staff Development	Field trips	5th grade Activities
Peripheral technology	Small group professional development	Community outreach & donations
Technology infrastructure, consumables, and maintenance	Curriculum support/PTO mini-grants	Adult speakers
	Library	Hospitality
		Grounds & outdoor spaces

Do other NPS policies relate to Gifts and Donations from persons other than PTOs?

Yes. The School Committee also has a more general [Gifts and Donations Policy](#) that applies to gifts offered to the schools or NPS by parents and outside persons or organizations other than PTOs. The Equity Guidelines and the Gifts and Donations policy each emphasize that all gifts given become the property of NPS, and NPS is ultimately responsible for allocating how donations should be spent in and in conjunction with its educational program to best benefit all of the district’s students. Additionally, PTOs should be familiar with and abide by the [Online Fundraising and Solicitations - Crowdfunding](#) Policy.

NPS has complete control over what donations it accepts and for what purpose. With regard to PTO spending, NPS implements the policy of PTO spending through the Equity Committee.

What are the basic things PTOs should keep in mind this fall as they plan programs and spending for the 2021-22 school year?

PTOs should review these FAQs and take a close look at the Equity Policy, the Equity Guidelines, and Gifts and Donations policy to ensure their spending plans are consistent with those policies. PTO leaders are encouraged to work closely with building principals to establish

PTO spending priorities. PTO spending plans should be reviewed by the building principal before the spending plan is communicated to the wider school community. If PTO leaders have any questions, they should contact the NPS School Committee Equity Parent Representative at equityrep@newtonptocouncil.org.

Summary of Equity Guidelines effective July 1, 2021

Beginning July 1, 2021, the Annual Elementary Equity Cap can be calculated by multiplying \$40 by the greater of (a) projected enrollment and (b) the actual enrollment as of October 1, 2021. CAS programs are limited to three experiences per grade plus the concert series. The CAS programs are limited by experience and no longer by dollar value. The cost of CAS programs do not count toward the \$40 per student spending cap, unless they are preview programs. The Technology cap is \$20 per student up to a maximum of \$6,800. Technology items purchased require the advance approval of Steve Rattendi, NPS Director of Information Technology and Library Services.

Will there be any information session or training on the Equity Guidelines this year?

Yes, the Parent Equity I representatives to the Equity Committee will offer information sessions on Wednesday, October 20 (8p) and Thursday, October 21 (10a), 2021. These sessions are geared toward PTO co-presidents and treasurers who are new to PTOs but are highly informative for more seasoned PTO leaders.

Q&A from 2021-2022

- **Can the PTO buy fans or window air conditioning units for classrooms?**

PTOs can buy fans, but they count toward the \$40 spending cap because they are in classrooms. PTOs are not permitted to buy window air conditioners.

- **How does the Technology rollover work?**

Each year a school is limited to the greater of \$20 per pupil for technology or \$6800. The policy allows unused dollars to roll forward for three years. Mathematically, the formula works like this:

Year 1 \$6,800 allocated

Year 1 (\$0) spent

Year 1 \$6,800 rollover end of year 1

Year 2 \$6,800 allocated

Year 2 (\$12,000) spent (\$6,800 from Year 1 + \$5,200 from Year 2)

Year 2 \$1,600 rollover end of year 2

Year 3 \$6,800 allocated

Year 3 (\$5,000) spent (\$5,000 from Year 2 + \$0 from Year 3)

Year 3 \$3,400 rollover end of year 3

- **If we are not planning to spend any money for Technology this year, should we budget zero or the rollover amount?**

You should budget what you plan to spend, in this case, zero.

- **Is the PTO allowed to pay for paint and supplies to repaint the crosswalk in front of the school?**

Yes, this is permitted as this type of purchase is outside the classroom and has no impact on curriculum. The City of Newton would likely need to approve this work. The Newton Safe Routes to School group would be a great contact for this type of issue.

Q&A from 2020-2021

- **Can the PTO purchase masks and other personal protective equipment for teachers and staff?**

No, the PTO cannot buy masks or other personal protective equipment for teachers and staff. NPS will provide these items to its employees.

- **Can the PTO purchase tents, chairs and other materials for use as outside classrooms?**

No, the PTO cannot purchase tents, chairs or other materials for use as an outside classroom because PTOs may not pay for the physical space used for instruction or curricular activities. Just as a PTO cannot purchase a modular classroom or fund a new school building, a PTO cannot purchase an outdoor classroom and/or the components of an outdoor classroom.

- **Can the PTO have spirit wear masks for students and their school community?**

That is up to the individual PTO. PTOs may want to talk to their insurance provider about potential liability. If the PTO chooses to purchase spirit wear masks and give them to students, this expenditure is not included in the PTO's equity cap calculation. (PTO spirit wear expenditures should be reported on line 45 of the Elementary Spreadsheet.)

- **Can the PTO purchase an outdoor tent for its own use?**

Yes, a PTO can purchase an outdoor tent and it may be used solely for PTO sponsored activities. A tent purchased by the PTO may not be used by the school for any instruction or curricular activities. Elementary PTOs are able to spend unlimited amounts on the category of "Grounds and Outdoor Spaces" which include enhancements to outdoor facilities, such as landscaping and other beautification projects but specifically excludes outdoor classrooms from the items that fall within this designation (see Equity Guidelines, p. 11). A permanently installed tent, purchased by the PTO, would require written permission of the Newton Parks & Recreation department and may require the PTO to complete a Facility Improvement Request Form which must be approved by the Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education and the Director of Facilities.

- **Isn't allowing the PTO to purchase a tent for its own use a work around, effectively allowing tents to be used by the school during the school day?**

This should not be a work-around; PTOs are expected to be honest and ethical. Additionally, NPS expects principals to partner with the PTO in adhering to NPS guidelines. The Equity Guidelines are a part of annual training for NPS staff.