



WARD	
I	Bridget Ray Canada
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IV	Diana Fisher Gomberg
V	Steven Siegel, Vice Chair
VI	Ruth Goldman, Chair
VII	Kathy Shields
VIII	Matthew Miller

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Dear Elementary School Families:

Recently, several questions and concerns have been raised about the revised equity policy and guidelines scheduled for implementation in July 2019. The School Committee would like to clarify the purpose of the policy and guidelines, review the process by which the revised policy was determined, and identify the opportunities for public feedback in the coming weeks.

Equity is a core value of the Newton Public Schools. The School Committee is steadfast in our commitment to elementary students receiving a similar educational experience no matter which school they attend and despite any demographic differences among our school communities. In 1988 when it became clear that a large and increasing disparity in PTO fundraising and provisioning of schools threatened the level playing field, the School Committee instituted equity guidelines and limitations. These are reviewed and updated every few years by an Equity Committee composed of parents, a school committee member, an elementary principal, the director of information technology and the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning. The guidelines define three different categories of PTO spending: unlimited, limited and prohibited. This does mean that there continue to be areas of PTO spending that are not capped at all and where PTOs may spend unlimited amounts of money. Expenditures are tracked by PTOs and reported to the Equity Committee annually.

In spring 2018, after an in-depth analysis of PTO spending for the past three years, the Equity Committee recommended changes to the [Equity Policy](#) and [Guidelines](#) that were passed unanimously by the School Committee in June 2018. The Committee also recommended investigating the possibility of a central fund where donations could be gathered from various sources and distributed to schools to even out funding in key categories. The School Committee's approval of the new Equity Guidelines reflects our ongoing commitment to close persistent disparities in PTOs' ability to fund enrichment opportunities that directly impact students' educational experience.

Implementation of these new guidelines was intentionally delayed until July of 2019 so that people could understand and respond to the new spending limits established. Members of the Equity Committee and several School Committee members have provided several opportunities for all parents to provide feedback, including focus groups and education sessions, as well as informational meetings at individual elementary schools requesting them (8 to date with 2 more scheduled).

On March 25<sup>th</sup>, the Equity Committee will update the School Committee on the guidelines and as a result, there may be adjustments. On April 24<sup>th</sup>, there will be a similar update on the proposed central fund. Additionally, the Equity Committee is working on an “FAQ” or Frequently Asked Questions that will provide more in-depth information.

We encourage anyone who is interested to attend the School Committee Meetings in Room 210 at the Education Center. You are welcome to make public comment at the beginning of the meeting. You may also view the meetings at home on NewTV. At any time, feel free to reach out to any of us via email or phone. Contact information can be found on our website:

[www.newton.k12.ma.us/schoolcommittee](http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/schoolcommittee).

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Newton School Committee