

NEWTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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TO: School Committee
David Fleishman, Superintendent

FROM: Cynthia Bergan, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education & Special Programs
Sandra Guryan, Deputy Superintendent/Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: May 27, 2014

RE: **2013-14 Fee Review**

As of May 2014 after the implementation of School Committee fee policy changes, participation in all fee-based activities is higher than last year. For example, the number of high school students reported as participating in clubs has increased by 100% after the elimination of the high school student activity fee, and there are 80 clubs this year versus 57 clubs last year. The percentage of elementary school students participating in music programs is up by three percentage points after a 25% reduction in the fee. The number of high school athletes as a percent of total high school enrollment has increased for the third year in a row, and is currently 44%, up from 38% last year. There are 97 more families in the district this year; however, the number of families subject to fees has decreased by 263 due to the elimination of the high school activity fee.

Fee Policy and Implementation

This report will illustrate fees using a variety of tables with data from the current year as well as past school years. In addition, Appendix A at the end of the report compares Newton's 2013-14 student fees to other school districts.

The five School Committee approved reductions to the district's 2013-14 fee policy were as follows:

- High school student activity fee of \$125 was eliminated.
- Elementary school instrumental music fee was reduced from \$200 per year to \$150 per year.
- All city band, chorus and orchestra fee was reduced from \$200 per year to \$150 per year; students who pay the elementary school instrumental music fee are exempt from the all city ensemble music fee.
- High school parking fee was reduced from \$360 per year to \$310 per year.
- Supercap (the maximum amount any family pays for fees in one school year) was reduced from \$1,800 per year to \$1,200 per year.

The FY15 School Committee Approved Budget includes one important change to the fee policy for next school year (2014-15) as follows: *the elimination of the elementary bus fee in order to assure consistency for elementary students as the buffer zones are continued and the re-opening of Carr marks the beginning of multiple years of elementary school renovation and expansion.* The elimination of the elementary school bus fee will affect approximately 315 current elementary school bus riders.

In concert with School Committee policy changes, administrative efforts ensured that the financial waiver process continues to be highly accessible and avoids burdensome additional requirements for families. The number of waivers issued for financial reasons including the supercap is up by 9% since last year, with 850 waivers as compared to 780. Recent efforts include the following:

- Simplification and revision of the financial waiver application with more flexible options for documenting financial need.
- Streamlining the process for automatic waivers for participants in the school nutrition program whereby families must grant permission to the district to share lunch status for the purpose of receiving other types of waivers and scholarships (to comply with federal regulations).
- Extending automatic transportation fee waivers for reduced lunch program participants in addition to free lunch participants.
- Mid-year reminder to district families regarding the new, lower limits on fees as established by the decrease in the family supercap this year.

Student Participation and Other Data

This section of the review provides information in table format on student participation in fee related activities and programs, family fee payments, waivers for financial hardship for the various fees, and the impact of family caps and the supercap, with comparisons to prior years. Family caps refer to the total number of one particular type of fee which any given family pays in one school year. For example, each family pays a maximum of two bus fees, so the family cap is \$310 times 2, or \$620. In high school athletics, each family pays a maximum of three athletics fees – the family cap is thus \$300 times 3, or \$900. Set at \$1,200, the supercap is an annual ceiling on the total dollar amount of fees any one family must pay. All fees contribute toward the supercap except for high school parking and the elementary school early morning program.

Table 1 shows the number of fees by type in the current year showing the percentage of each fee that is waived. The total number of student fees by type is 8,757 as compared to 8,924 last year. Seventy-five percent of all fees have been paid in full this school year, 10% qualify for a financial waiver or supercap limit, 4% are transportation distance waivers, 3% are family cap waivers, and the remaining 8% have not been paid in full and are still being collected as of this report. For all city music, family cap waivers are due to the change in the fee policy to exclude all city music students from paying the fee if they participate in elementary school instrumental music.

Table 1: Total Fee Participation - 2013-2014 School Year

Fee Description	Total Fee Participation										
	Paid in Full		Waived - Family Cap		Waived - Distance		Waived - Financial/ Other		Not Paid in Full		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Transportation	1,534	65%	71	3%	327	14%	277	12%	152	6%	2,361
High School Athletics	1,932	72%	166	6%	0	0%	368	14%	207	8%	2,674
Middle School Athletics	1,333	95%	29	2%	0	0%	44	3%	0	0%	1,406
High School Drama	98	41%	0	0%	0	0%	6	3%	136	57%	240
Middle School Student Activities	361	61%	0	0%	0	0%	37	6%	192	33%	590
Grade 4/5 Instrumental Music	927	92%	5	0%	0	0%	69	7%	3	0%	1,003
All-City Music	117	72%	34	21%	0	0%	9	6%	2	1%	162
Early Morning Program	127	76%	0	0%	0	0%	40	24%	1	1%	168
Newton South Parking	153	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	153
Total Fee Payments	6,582	75%	305	3%	327	4%	850	10%	693	8%	8,757

Note: For High School Athletics, Middle School Athletics and High School Drama, the figures include each student for each sport. A student may participate in up to three sports or productions per school year. For example, there are 1,675 high school students participating in 2,674 individual sports in 2013-14. The average number of sports played by each student is 1.6. For middle school, the average is 1.4. The high school drama average is 1.4.

Table 2 shows the numbers of fees and the collections from those fees over three years' time as well as expected collections for 2013-14. As expected, there is a decrease of \$116,000 (7%) in expected fee collections in FY14 as compared to FY13 due to the revenue implications of the fee policy changes. Collections for two of the three fees not subject to the supercap, including use of school buildings and the early morning program, are up over last year; high school parking revenue is down by 5% due to the lowering of the parking fee; however, there were 14 more parking spaces sold this year as compared to last year.

Table 2: Fee Collections (\$) by Fiscal Year

Fees	FY11		FY12		FY13		FY14		Change from FY13 to FY14
	#	\$	#	\$	#	\$	#	\$	
Fees Subject to the Supercap:									
High School Athletics	2,438	\$483,452	2,342	\$655,037	2,338	\$641,405	2,674	\$615,224	(\$26,181)
Middle School Athletics	1,263	\$136,252	1,232	\$175,984	1,242	\$178,040	1,406	\$163,928	(\$14,112)
Bus Transportation	1,879	\$364,512	2,200	\$479,660	2,415	\$500,657	2,361	\$514,828	\$14,171
Grade 4/5 Instrumental Music	1,037	\$106,059	1,043	\$173,040	965	\$178,062	1,003	\$131,341	(\$46,721)
High School Student Activity			613	\$35,245	677	\$33,335	1,330	\$0	(\$33,335)
Middle School Student Activity			743	\$41,881	631	\$33,366	590	\$30,440	(\$2,926)
All City Music Ensembles			139	\$20,650	144	\$25,350	162	\$18,435	(\$6,915)
High School Drama			102	\$10,160	211	\$20,775	240	\$21,050	\$275
Total Fees Subject to the Supercap	6,617	\$1,090,275	8,414	\$1,591,657	8,623	\$1,610,990	9,766	\$1,495,246	(\$115,744)
Fees Not Subject to the Supercap:									
Use of School Buildings	n/a	\$520,201	n/a	\$552,789	n/a	\$651,133	n/a	\$687,703	\$36,570
Early Morning Program	161	\$84,548	151	\$96,014	162	\$144,078	168	\$146,424	\$2,346
Newton South Parking	127	\$50,900	131	\$47,080	139	\$50,140	153	\$47,430	(\$2,710)
Total Fees Not Subject to the Supercap	288	\$655,649	282	\$695,883	301	\$845,351	321	\$881,557	\$36,206
Total Fees	6,905	\$1,745,924	8,696	\$2,287,540	8,924	\$2,456,341	10,087	\$2,376,803	(\$79,538)

Table 3 shows the distribution of the total fee obligations by family in \$300 increments for this school year as compared to last. Although the total number of families in the Newton Public Schools has grown by 97 since last year, 263 fewer families are subject to fees due to the elimination of the high school student activity fee. This year's recalibrated supercap of \$1,200 has been reached by 138 families as compared to the six families who reached last year's \$1,800 supercap. Sixty-four percent of families pay between \$1 and \$599 for fees this school year as compared to 65% in 2012-13.

Table 3: Total Fee Obligation by Family in \$300 Increments*

Total Family Fee Obligation Amount	2013-14			2012-13			Change Number of Families
	Number of Families	% of Total Families Subject to a Fee Payment	% of All Families in NPS	Number of Families	% of Total Families Subject to a Fee Payment	% of All Families in NPS	
\$0 (Waiver Approved)	375	9%	4%	399	9%	5%	-24
\$1-299	1,206	29%	14%	1,398	32%	17%	-192
\$300-599	1,468	35%	17%	1,409	33%	17%	59
\$600-899	672	16%	8%	641	15%	8%	31
\$900-1199	319	8%	4%	320	7%	4%	-1
\$1,200	138	3%	2%				
\$1200-1499				95	2%	1%	-95
\$1500-1799				35	1%	0.4%	-35
\$1,800				6	0.1%	0.1%	-6
Total Families Subject to Fees	4,178	100%	49%	4,303	100%	51%	-263
All Families in NPS	8,478		100%	8,381		100%	97

*This table does not include the Early Morning Program or High School Parking fees.

Table 4 shows the impact of the family caps for busing and athletics, another measure which limits the financial impact on families. No family pays more than \$900 per year, or three sport seasons, regardless of the number of participants. The table shows that 266 fee payments were saved due to family caps in 2013-14, resulting in a savings to families of \$76,500, or \$30,500 more than last year. With the increase in the number of high school athletes, the magnitude of family caps is also up over last school year.

Table 4: Total Family Caps: Transportation and Athletics

Fee Description	TOTAL FAMILY CAPS FOR FEE PAYMENTS							
	2010-11		2011-12		2012-13		2013-14	
	#	\$	#	\$	#	\$	#	\$
Transportation	27	\$7,020	61	\$18,910	65	\$20,150	71	\$22,010
High School Athletics	108	\$17,690	127	\$28,700	98	\$22,000	166	\$49,865
Middle School Athletics	25	\$2,160	26	\$3,540	28	\$3,860	29	\$4,640
Total Family Caps	160	\$26,870	214	\$51,150	191	\$46,010	266	\$76,515

Table 5 shows the distribution of fee waivers for the various fees including the early morning program. The waiver process is confidential and flexible enough to meet various hardship circumstances, and in total there are 850 waivers granted for the various fees. The waivers included in this chart include those due to the supercap.

Table 5: Total Waivers - Financial/Other

Fee Description	TOTAL WAIVERS FOR FEE PAYMENTS							
	2010-11		2011-12		2012-13		2013-14	
	#	\$	#	\$	#	\$	#	\$
Transportation	176	\$45,110	221	\$68,355	284	\$87,575	277	\$85,870
High School Athletics	175	\$30,850	205	\$56,735	255	\$69,715	368	\$110,540
Middle School Athletics	55	\$6,600	56	\$8,370	58	\$8,690	44	\$7,040
High School Student Activities	n/a		15	\$1,875	30	\$3,750	n/a	
High School Drama	n/a		3	\$450	5	\$750	6	\$900
Middle School Student Activities	n/a		27	\$2,220	32	\$2,360	37	\$2,220
Grade 4/5 Instrumental Music	43	\$8,600	78	\$15,600	68	\$13,600	69	\$10,350
All-City Music	n/a		15	\$3,000	17	\$3,400	9	\$1,350
Early Morning Program	27	\$52,272	31	\$54,864	31	\$61,992	40	\$83,376
Total Fee Waivers	476	\$143,432	651	\$211,469	780	\$251,832	850	\$301,646

Table 6 provides the detailed information on elementary school instrumental music fees and includes the current year as well as data from the previous six years. Keeping in mind the fee reduction of \$50 per year, participation information for 2013-14 shows that there are 1,006 students in elementary schools who receive instrumental music instruction, up from 965 students last year. On a percentage basis, 52% of all grade 4 and 5 students are enrolled in music lessons as compared to 49% last year. In total between the two grades, 7% of students receive financial waivers, consistent with last year. Participation rates vary from year to year due to the choices of different cohorts of students. The data shows there is a reduction in music participation from grade 4 to grade 5 regardless of whether or not a fee is charged; 67% of grade 4 students participated in music in 2009-10 versus 51% of those same students in grade 5 one year later - before the grade 5 fee was instituted. As a second illustration, 59% of grade 4 students participated in music in 2012-13 versus 39% of those same students in grade 5 this year, even though the fee was decreased by \$50.

Table 6: Instrumental Music - Grade 4 and Grade 5 Participation History

Grade*	School Year	Fee	Total NPS Enrollment	Total Music Lesson Enrollment	% of NPS Enrollment Taking Music	Total Financial Waivers	% of Music Students with a Financial Waiver
Grade 4	2007-08	No Fee	897	558	62%	N/A	N/A
Grade 4	2008-09	\$150	908	602	66%	50	8%
Grade 4	2009-10	\$150	967	652	67%	51	8%
Grade 4	2010-11	\$200	932	543	58%	43	8%
Grade 4	2011-12	\$200	1,017	664	65%	61	9%
Grade 4	2012-13	\$200	938	554	59%	50	9%
Grade 4	2013-14	\$150	993	633	64%	39	6%
Grade 5	2010-11	No Fee	960	494	51%	N/A	N/A
Grade 5	2011-12	\$200	937	379	40%	17	4%
Grade 5	2012-13	\$200	1,021	411	40%	18	4%
Grade 5	2013-14	\$150	944	370	39%	30	8%
Total	2010-11	\$200/NA	1,892	1,037	55%	43	4%
Total	2011-12	\$200	1,954	1,043	53%	78	7%
Total	2012-13	\$200	1,959	965	49%	68	7%
Total	2013-14	\$150	1,937	1,003	52%	69	7%

*The Grade 5 Ensemble Program includes students in lower grades who are proficient at a higher level and do not require the Grade 4 instrumental Lessons Program.

High School Athletics

Table 7 provides four years of data on the number of high school athletes as well as the number of athletes as a percentage of total high school enrollment. As indicated in the chart, 1,675 high school students (44%) are currently participating in athletics as compared to 38% last school year. The high school athletics directors attribute the increase in participation to the types of programs offered and to the success of the programs. For example, there are currently 110 athletes participating in girls track at North as compared to 85 athletes last year. The table also shows the total number of participants over time which is a count of athletes by sport and by season; thus, one student who participates in a sport for each of the three seasons would be counted as a participant three times in one year.

Table 7: High School Athletics Participation History

School Year	Total # Student Athletes	Change from Previous Year	Total # Participants	Change from Previous Year	# Athletes as a % of HS Enrollment
2013-14	1,675	300	2,674	336	44%
2012-13	1,375	40	2,338	(4)	38%
2011-12*	1,335	-55	2,342	(96)	37%
2010-11	1,390		2,438		39%

* Commencing in 2011-12, the fee was raised to \$300 per sport and \$400 hockey/football, with a family cap of \$900. The fee was raised from \$210 per sport with a family cap of \$630.

Regular Transportation

Table 8 provides a complete history of average daily ridership and bus pass information for regular transportation. Average daily ridership is determined by taking a physical count of the number of riders during each of the five school days of one full week and averaging the number of riders on those five days. The average daily ridership for 2013-14 of 2,105 students is very similar to last school year. Of the 2,361 passes issued in 2013-14, 71% have been paid versus 70% last year. The percent of waivers for both family cap and financial reasons remain the same as last year, at 3% and 12%, respectively.

Table 7: Transportation Ridership and Bus Passes

School Year	Average Daily Ridership	TOTAL BUS PASSES								Total Bus Passes
		Paid		Waived - Family Cap		Waived - Distance		Waived - Financial/ Other		
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
2003-04	1,715	2,056	73%	62	2%	405	14%	277	10%	2,800
2004-05	1,890	1,894	74%	70	3%	356	14%	232	9%	2,552
2005-06	1,760	1,535	74%	41	2%	306	15%	181	9%	2,063
2006-07	1,816	1,425	72%	32	2%	309	16%	225	11%	1,991
2007-08	1,837	1,395	70%	31	2%	365	18%	213	11%	2,004
2008-09	1,806	1,449	76%	22	1%	306	16%	142	7%	1,919
2009-10	1,962	1,358	74%	40	2%	287	16%	153	8%	1,838
2010-11	1,976	1,385	74%	27	1%	291	15%	176	9%	1,879
2011-12	2,132	1,630	74%	61	3%	288	13%	221	10%	2,200
2012-13	2,117	1,690	70%	65	3%	376	16%	284	12%	2,415
2013-14	2,105	1,686	71%	71	3%	327	14%	277	12%	2,361

- 1.) The transportation ridership and bus pass information includes private school students.
- 2.) The FY15 School Committee Approved Budget eliminates the elementary school bus fee. From 2005-06 to 2010-11, the elementary bus fee was free for students living over 1 mile from school.

Parking

A student parking fee has been in place for several years at Newton South, with an increase and subsequent decreases in the fee as shown in Table 9. There are 165 parking spaces available for rent at South, with first preference given to students who are seniors; partial year passes for a prorated fee are also issued at the discretion of the principal or his designee. The percentage of parking spaces rented in 2013-14 increased by 9%, likely as a result of the School Committee vote to decrease the fee by \$50 commencing in 2013-14.

Table 9: High School Parking

High School Parking	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Parking Fee	\$360	\$360	\$360	\$360	\$360	\$360	\$400	\$400	\$360	\$360	\$310
Number of Parking Spaces Available*	South=165; North=50	165	165	165	165	165	165	165	165	165	165
Number of Parking Spaces Rented	184	154	156	156	154	148	127	127	131	139	153
Percent of Parking Spaces Rented	86%	94%	95%	95%	93%	90%	77%	77%	79%	84%	93%
Revenue	\$66,240	\$55,562	\$56,160	\$56,160	\$55,310	\$53,366	\$50,918	\$50,900	\$47,080	\$50,140	\$47,430

*Newton North had 50 parking spaces available through 2003-04; of the total revenue of \$66,240, North contributed \$12,240.

APPENDIX A: FEE COMPARISON CHART (2013-14)

City/Town	High School Athletics	Middle School Athletics	Elementary School Music	Student Activities	Full Day Kindergarten/Preschool	Bus (Indiv./Cap)	Parking
Arlington	\$100-\$300 Football - \$500, Gymnastics \$600 Hockey \$700		\$435 for lessons			\$270 / \$370	
Belmont	\$450 1st sport, \$300 2nd \$150 3rd	covered under student activity fee	Grades 3-5 Instrumental Music \$250	\$150 Middle school \$100 High school \$275 HS Performing Groups	Kindergarden \$2,900	\$575	
Brookline	\$300 per sport	\$85 - \$100			Pre-K \$3,460-\$8,955		
Framingham	\$225 per sport / \$900 cap					\$270 / \$540	\$75-\$125 per year
Lexington	\$325 1st sport, \$300 2nd sport , 3rd sport free	\$75-\$150 per sport		club by club basis	Pre K \$3,240 -\$4,860	\$300	\$300 per year
Natick	\$150/\$450 cap	\$150/\$450 cap	\$175 -\$190 per year	\$50 High School and Middle School	Pre K \$2,470-\$5,800	\$150/\$300	
Needham	\$285 / \$1,140 cap \$50 surcharge for swimming \$250 surcharge for Hockey/Skiing		\$100 per year		Pre K \$2,925-\$3,900	\$390/\$790	\$30 per year
Newton	\$300/sport; \$900 family cap (\$400/Hockey / Football)	\$160/ \$480 cap	\$150/year Instrumental \$150/year Ensembles	\$60 middle school \$150 HS Drama	Pre-K \$4,731-\$6,851	\$310/\$620	\$310 per year
Watertown	\$200 per year	\$100 per year		\$50 middle school \$25 high school	Pre K \$7,000	\$300/\$475	
Wayland	\$250 per sport	\$100 per sport	\$150 per year		Kindergarten - \$4,000 per year Pre 1/2 day \$4,204-\$6,768 full day \$8,872-\$13,915	\$230/\$600	\$220 per year
Wellesley	\$250 per sport	\$150 per sport	\$437.50 per semester	\$150 middle school \$150 high school	Pre K \$2,450-\$6,500	\$521/\$1,142	\$150/\$250 per year
Weston			Private fee based music lessons (\$30/half hour)		Pre-K \$7,700 (20 Hrs)		
Weymouth	\$200/sport (\$250 Football/ \$400 Hockey)		\$17 per 1/2 hour lesson		Kindergarten - \$350 per month	\$235/\$590	\$100 per year
Winchester	\$290/\$950 cap		\$350 per year		Kindergarten - \$995	\$630/\$1100	