



To: Newton School Committee
From: Anna Nolin, Superintendent
Re: Private School Interviews and Listening Sessions
Date: Written January 27, 2025 and revised through the FY25 school year, presented to School Committee, May 5, 2025

Who/How

Adaptive Online Interview

In spring 2024, the superintendent utilized social media platforms and email contacts from the student information system to invite community members to participate in an AI-driven ThoughtExchange Adaptive online interview, aimed at gathering feedback on their experiences within the district.

The interview sought to understand the conditions that made them leave, or reasons they never matriculated.

There were 208 respondents to the interview/survey tool, and of the respondents, 195 contributed unique thoughts. However, only 13 took the option provided by ThoughtExchange, to read and rate/connect with the thoughts of others.

In addition to the online interview, the superintendent conducted two focus groups, one with a Jewish parent group of 8 parents, mostly Orthodox, and one with a group of Palestinian parents on two separate occasions (each group had between 8-15 parents).

Additionally, the superintendent conducted interviews with parents of students who have either left the district or graduated (55 total), and the reason they chose to send younger children to private schools in recent years.

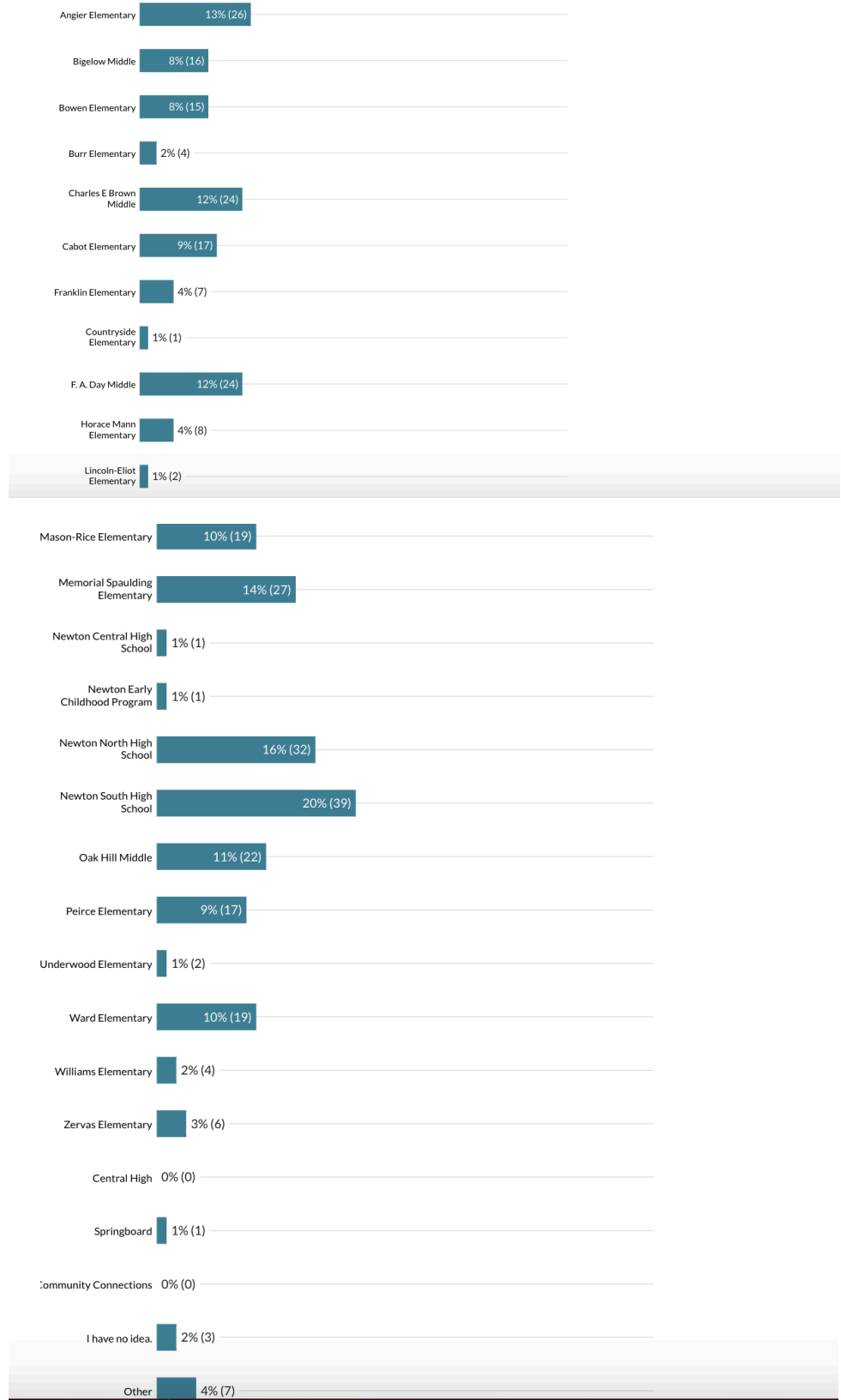
Results of survey and online interviews

Multiple select

Q1 What building/school are you connected to/were you connected to?

Answered: 195

Not answered: 13



When

The interviews and focus groups were conducted largely in the spring of the 2023-2024 school year. However, the 55 interviews and small group meetings happened across the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 school years.

Questions Asked

The interview asked participants what aspects of Newton Public Schools they would like to keep, change, or revise, focusing on what might have inspired them and their families to either attend or remain in the district. Participants were encouraged to share personal stories and experiences to provide deeper insight into their perspectives and inform the school system's ongoing development. Additionally, they were asked to provide further details on what could potentially encourage them to return to Newton Public Schools. Lastly, participants were asked to rate Newton Public Schools on a Likert scale, indicating how likely they were to recommend the district to a friend or colleague.

Summary

The participants expressed a variety of concerns and suggestions regarding the Newton Public School (NPS) system. The primary issues revolved around the need for a more challenging curriculum for advanced students, dissatisfaction with the handling of special education needs, concerns about class sizes, and the impact of the school's response to COVID-19.

Summary of Main Thoughts (All Thoughts included in Appendix Below)

The responses highlight several concerns with the Newton Public Schools. Many parents feel that the limited access to teachers, large class sizes, and lack of individualized attention hinder their children's education. There is a call for more challenging and differentiated programs, especially for gifted and twice-exceptional students. Parents also express dissatisfaction with the handling of special education needs, mental health support, and the overall quality of education. Some parents have moved their children to private schools for better academic rigor, smaller class sizes, and more supportive environments. There are also criticisms of the school's handling of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. Finally, there are groups of parents who simply indicate that private school is what their families have done for generations and public school was not a consideration, and others who feel they must send their children to religious schools for safety and values-alignment reasons.

Categories

Academic Rigor and Support for Advanced Students: Many participants felt that the curriculum was not challenging enough, particularly for advanced students. They

suggested more rigorous academic programs, more AP courses, and more opportunities for students to be challenged according to their abilities. The sentiment was that the current system does not adequately cater to students who are ahead of their grade level or have high intelligence.

Special Education Needs: There were concerns about the handling of special education needs, particularly for students with dyslexia and other learning differences. Participants felt that these students were not getting the attention and support they needed. They suggested more resources and better support systems for these students.

Class Sizes and Teacher Support: Participants expressed dissatisfaction with large class sizes, feeling that it hindered individual attention and effective learning. They suggested smaller class sizes and better teacher support. There were also concerns about teacher responsiveness and availability.

Response to COVID-19: The school's response to COVID-19 was a significant concern for many participants. They felt that the transition to online learning was not handled well and that the school was not proactive in ensuring students' educational needs were met during this period.

Special Education

Participants frequently mentioned the need for better support for students with disabilities, including those with autism and dyslexia. Many parents expressed frustration with the lack of social supports and the continuous bullying their children faced. There were also concerns about the effectiveness of the special education programs, with some parents feeling that the resources allocated were not yielding positive results. The perception is that the current system is fundamentally flawed and needs significant improvement. Overall, parents want an environment where neurodiverse students can feel safe and receive appropriate instruction.

Class Size

Class size was a major concern for many participants, with several noting that large class sizes hinder individual attention and support for students. Parents of children with anxiety or those needing extra support felt that their children were not getting the necessary help in large classrooms. The issue of having an insufficient number of teachers and substitutes was also highlighted, indicating a need for more staff to manage the student population effectively. The perception is that smaller class sizes would lead to better educational outcomes and more personalized attention for each student. This concern was particularly pronounced in the context of recovery from COVID-19 disruptions.

Participants frequently mentioned concerns about large class sizes, which they believe negatively impact the quality of education. Smaller class sizes are perceived to provide more personalized attention and better support for students, especially those with additional needs. Many parents feel that their children are overlooked in larger classes, leading to disengagement and lack of academic progress. The desire for smaller class sizes is linked to the belief that it would improve teacher-student interactions and overall learning outcomes. This category reflects a strong preference for more manageable class sizes to enhance educational experiences.

Advanced Learners

There were numerous mentions of the lack of support for advanced learners, with parents expressing that their gifted children were bored and unchallenged. The absence of differentiated learning and enrichment opportunities was a common theme, leading some parents to move their children to private schools. The perception is that the current system does not cater to the needs of high-achieving students, resulting in a lack of motivation and engagement. Parents want more programs and resources to support advanced learners and keep them intellectually stimulated. This issue is seen as critical for maintaining academic excellence and preventing talented students from falling through the cracks.

Academic Rigor

Many responses indicate a concern about the lack of academic rigor in the current curriculum. Parents feel that their children are not being sufficiently challenged, leading to boredom and underachievement. There is a call for more advanced coursework and differentiated learning opportunities to cater to high-achieving students. The perception is that the current system does not adequately push students to reach their full potential. This category underscores the need for a more challenging and stimulating academic environment to keep students engaged and motivated.

Curriculum and Instruction

Participants expressed concerns about the curriculum and instructional methods, with some feeling that the focus on equity and social issues detracts from core academic subjects. There were calls for a more traditional curriculum, with an emphasis on math, science, and other fundamental subjects. The perception is that the current approach does not adequately prepare students for higher education or the workforce. Parents also mentioned the need for more rigorous and challenging coursework, particularly for advanced students. The desire for a balanced curriculum that includes both academic rigor and social-emotional learning was evident.

Curriculum Content

Concerns about the content of the curriculum are prevalent, with many parents feeling that it is not challenging enough for bright students. There is a desire for more rigorous and differentiated instruction, particularly in subjects like math and reading. Some participants also express dissatisfaction with the grading system, preferring traditional letter grades over the current number system. The perception is that the curriculum does not adequately prepare students for higher education or competitive environments. This category highlights the need for a more robust and effective curriculum that meets the diverse needs of students.

Teacher and Administration

There were several mentions of dissatisfaction with teachers and administrators, with some parents feeling that educators were not responsive or effective. Issues such as lack of communication, perceived bias, and inadequate support for students were highlighted. The perception shared was that the quality of teaching and administration needs improvement to better support student learning and well-being.

Some participants suggested the need for a fair evaluation system for teachers and better training for administrators. Overall, there is a desire for more accountability and transparency in the education system.

Teacher Support

There is a significant emphasis on the need for better support for teachers, including higher salaries for aides and more resources for social-emotional support. Participants believe that well-supported teachers are crucial for maintaining high-quality education and ensuring student success. The perception is that budget constraints often prioritize financial considerations over the needs of teachers and students. Improved teacher support is seen as a way to enhance teacher retention and satisfaction, which in turn benefits the entire educational community. This category highlights the importance of investing in teacher support to create a positive learning environment.

DEI Initiatives

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives are a contentious topic among participants. Some feel that the current focus on race and sexual orientation oversimplifies diversity and overlooks other important aspects. There is a perception that DEI efforts may introduce new biases and create an environment of intolerance. Participants call for a more balanced and inclusive approach to DEI that addresses a broader range of diversity issues especially religion, disability, and on all races. This

category reflects the need for a more nuanced and comprehensive DEI strategy that fosters genuine inclusivity and respect for all perspectives.

Private School is Part of Family History

Several parents indicated that their family means have allowed them to choose private school and its networks and opportunities over the public schools for generations and they never considered public schools for that reason. Some of these families did indicate, however, that they continue to follow how the Newton Public Schools program goes as they know their property values continue to be linked to how well the public schools function. The levels of connection they had within their neighborhoods (a variety of experiences were shared) dictated what they knew about the performance of the schools.

Religious Choice

Those families who chose private schools for religious reasons indicated they chose it for one or both of the following reasons.

- **Safety:** families cited worries about student safety as a reason to go to religious private school. In the schools they chose, they indicated there was actual hired security at the school and/or they had less worry about microaggressions against their children which degraded the overall feeling of safety (both physical and emotional) on a daily basis. A handful of families indicated that their children had experienced verbal name calling and sometimes physical aggression and they worried about more.
- **Values alignment:** linked to safety but with a slightly different bent, these families also indicated the need to create cultural/religious safety around their family values. They felt a school centered around their religious beliefs guarded against teachings that may not have been aligned with their belief systems and they perceived the public schools as teaching in a manner that ran counter to those beliefs.

Common Grounds and Differences

This analysis allows us to see themes connecting participants and dividing them within the category of most agreement for feedback—around the need for additional student support and support available to all students as part of a regular education program and a special education program (continuum of support for struggling students, students perceived as “in the middle” and overlooked, and advanced students).

Side A

Lack of Special Education Support

Many parents expressed concerns about the inadequate support for children with special needs in Newton Public Schools (NPS). They highlighted that children with learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, were not receiving the necessary attention and resources, leading to academic struggles and unmet potential. Some parents opted for private schools where their children received more tailored support.

Common ground

Need for Improved Student Support

Both sides agree on the necessity for better support systems for students, whether through more special education resources or smaller class sizes. There is a shared understanding that enhancing support for all students, particularly those with unique needs, is crucial for their academic and personal development. This common ground highlights the importance of addressing these issues to improve the overall quality of education in NPS.

Side B

Large Class Sizes

Another significant concern was the large class sizes in NPS, which parents felt hindered personalized attention and effective learning. They noted that teachers were overwhelmed, leading to insufficient support for both general and special education students. This issue was cited as a reason for transferring children to private schools with smaller class sizes and more individualized attention.

Areas for Additional Exploration

The following areas were also mentioned frequently within the interviews as areas that interfered with student development and learning under the area of “need for improved student support.” When a parent indicated they felt the school did not provide enough support, the follow-up question “could you talk about what you think the reason that support is not provided might be?” and the following answers rose as a pattern:

- **Teacher Absenteeism and Union Influence:** There were several mentions of teacher absenteeism and the influence of teacher unions on school decisions. The COVID learning conditions/delays in instruction/reopening and the recent teachers’ strike were cited as symbols of why adequate support was not provided to students.
- **Cultural and Social Issues:** Some participants raised concerns about cultural and social issues, including instances of antisemitism and the handling of diversity and inclusion initiatives. These parents cited that the handling of these social issues, in their estimation, detracted from the core academic mission of the schools and impacted their child’s experience.
- **Communication and Engagement with Parents:** Several participants expressed dissatisfaction with the level of communication and engagement with parents from schools and/or the district. This could be an area to explore further to understand how parent-teacher communication could be improved.

- Does anyone notice what my child needs/who my child is as a learner? Many parents wondered if their child’s needs were known to the schools and if they were, they did not know it in ways that would build confidence. When asked what those ways would have been, they indicated a desire for more frequent updates on test results or methods of tracking student progress. They also expressed the need for grades that were meaningful and clearly explained, as well as more consistent communication regarding available supports and enrichment opportunities for their child on a regular basis. A strong desire for information about whether a child was “at grade level or higher” was shared by many. Those whose children had documented learning needs also wanted more sharing.

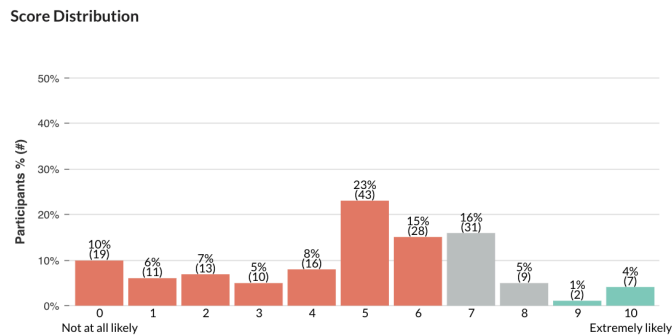
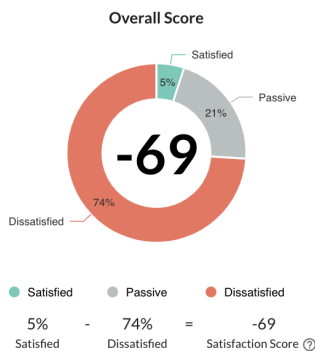
Overall Satisfaction of Private School Families

In general, with exceptions for those who always choose private schools as a family tradition, or those who sought religious-based schools, it should be noted that these families have already left NPS and were willing and motivated to share their experience/do this interview or focus groups because they were extremely unhappy with the schools and the overall satisfaction scores below reflect those conditions.

Satisfaction Score ⓘ

Q2 How likely are you to recommend us to a friend or colleague?

Answered: 189
Not answered: 19 ⓘ



Appendix

Raw Automated Interview/Survey Data is listed below for full transparency. (edited only to remove identifying information). Individual Interviews and focus groups were themed by hand from a handwritten transcript. Please note: for the automated interview, if the parent comment was extremely long or unfocused, the comment was cut off for reporting the raw data export, but was included in the themeing / generation of follow up automated questions. Those responses written by families/caregivers are unedited for spelling and grammar. Sometimes people did not finish responses and they are left as is.

A true commitment to children with 504s and IEPs

Importance:

I had three children in the Newton district. Our child who was neuro-typical had a wonderful experience. Our children who are bright but atypical were weeded out at a very young age.

Follow up:

Help your staff and children become more informed on sensory needs of children. Stronger communication and partnership with parent/caregiver involvement in the schooling of special education and/or children on 504s and IEPs. Start a program for gifted and 2 E children.

Important Values:

Education, Support, Inclusion, Respect, Individuality, Equality, Excellence

Absence of engagement of advanced students

Importance:

Advanced learners, some are gifted kids, are bored and discouraged to continue into more advanced inquiry. Lack of programs for supporting advanced learners.

Follow up:

Not at this point

Actually have kids engaged in academics for the entire school day. My student had 90 to 180 minutes off several times per week due to a teacher not being in and was at home asleep or wandering around Newtonville in a private school. This does not happen. You are in school in an academic setting all

Importance:

To keep kids learning consistent and kids engaged

Follow up:

Give better class English choices read quality literature like classics

Important Values:

Individuality, Accountability, Responsibility, Respect

Add more intramural (noncompetitive) sports

Importance:

Students who do not have a great talent for sport and would not make the varsity teams should still have an opportunity to play.

Follow up:

Add more intramural sports

Important Values:

Challenge, Education, Responsibility, Individuality, Excellence, Support, Accountability

Additional extracurricular activities. Would be ok to charge for some of them.

Importance:

It's important that parents can work a full day and it's important that kids can access sports or other activities via school

Follow up:

No. If you can afford private school, our impression that it is a better product - at least for middle school

Important Values:

Challenge, Engagement, Excellence, Education

Advanced curriculum for students who are not challenged by the current level of teaching

Importance:

My older child was bored and complained about having to find more advanced assignments. That said my younger child was happy with the workload. It all depends on the kid

Follow up:

Unfortunately not at this point. Older one will be done with high school next year and even though I wanted to keep the younger child in public school as a family we decided that it will be better if they both attend private. Also the decision had a lot to do with how the pandemic was handled by NPS

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Engagement, Responsibility, Respect, Inclusion, Individuality, Equality, Excellence, Support

Allow Ana Nolin to reign in school bureaucracy and bring back higher academic standards. Listen to parents who insist on that. Reduce influence of teacher unions who had proven to be anti-children during Covid.

Importance:

Teacher union leadership demonstrated contempt towards children during Covid

Follow up:

Reduce indoctrination. Bring back leveling and advanced subjects.

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Excellence, Accountability

At least half of the teachers in AP courses are unprepared to teach a course of that level as evidenced in lecture and homework errors.

Importance:

There is a significant disparity between a school grade for the AP courses and grades obtained by students during the AP exams. To me it indicates significant issues with the quality of the teachers.

Follow up:

no

Important Values:

Challenge, Individuality, Engagement, Education, Support

At the elementary school level, I appreciate the lack of pressure put on the children and the lack of focus on grades.

Importance:

Too often children form

Follow up:

Schools are not set up for observant Jewish families. For example, across the elementary schools MCAS is normally given over the Passover holidays on days where children are not permitted to write or type. In high school, PSATs are given on Saturdays. There are no SAT or ACT Sunday options.

Important Values:

Excellence, Education, Support, Inclusion

At the high school level it seems very difficult to play a sport. Can you have more opportunities outside of JV and V? Intramural options.

Importance:

Sports are very important for social and emotional reasons.

Follow up:

Provide more sports and activities for all levels.

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Engagement, Inclusion

At the high school, I thought that the class leveling was set up to give any student who really wants to try the opportunity to take any AP class they would like. It is great that children who are motivated are not restricted and encouraged to try and not told they are not capable.

Importance:

In some school systems, the students are pigeon holed and tracked. They are not given the opportunity to change and grow, and expose themselves to different levels of rigor. I like that in Newton [sic] schools it is more fluid. I like that kids on IEPs are told they can reach the highest levels.

Follow up:

I have a child in the Achieve program at Angier elementary school. His homeschool was originally Mason Rice and he was switched out. The middle

school counterpart program feeds into Oak Hill and not Brown. It is meant to make these kids switch schools again and make new friends again.

Important Values:

Excellence, Education, Support, Inclusion

Back when my eldest was at school, there were numerous swastikas around. The school's solution was optional antisemitism awareness sessions. My kid was the only one who attended! It's disappointing. Those who draw such symbols are unlikely to join these optional sessions!

Importance:

Jewish students should not have their religion marginalized. You can bet that if someone wrote racist graffiti, the response would not be "voluntary programming." Jewish students and families need to feel supported at public school.

Follow up:

Introduce better education about Judaism--including 9th grade world history including Jewish ancient history, not just Holocaust education. Read "People Love Dead Jews" by Dara Horn for ideas. You should teach about Jewish culture and religion and peoplehood, not just Jewish hate.

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Challenge

Be faster/more responsive to individual student's struggles, especially at the High School level.

Importance:

My children would have had better experiences at North if timely mental health/academic support resources had been available to them. This was not the case.

Follow up:

My youngest is a Senior at Nobles. There is no doubt he received an education more suited to him at Nobles. He has been supported and educated at the same time, and will go to an elite college as a student/athlete in the fall. No, no-one is going back to Newton schools.

Better mental health support so children do not feel like the lone mental health providers for their friends. My child felt the burden of trying to keep a friend from committing suicide and neither the childn'.

Importance:

My child's friend desperately needed mental health support that the parents either would or could not provide. The school counselor did her best but was overwhelmed. It fell to the children to provide support for their friend, and this was not appropriate or reasonable.

Follow up:

N

Important Values:

Education, Support, Challenge, Respect, Individuality

Better response to Covid-19 with ideas about how best to keep kids in school.

Importance:

I didn't mention on-line learning. My point is that we left NPS because of the poor response to the covid-19 pandemic. I do not feel like online learning is important. It's important for kids to be in school and to have teachers dedicated to making that a priority.

Follow up:

Smaller class sizes, more funding, appropriate resources for teachers to support their classrooms.

Important Values:

Education, Support

Better SpED services.

Importance:

Need to have science-based reading instruction

Follow up:

Hire a specialist in dyscalculia - math disability

Important Values:

Accountability, Respect

Bring back AP Russian.

Importance:

Students should have the opportunity to scale the highest level of a subject they have been learning for years.

Follow up:

Bring back AP Russian

Important Values:

Challenge, Education, Responsibility, Individuality, Excellence, Support, Accountability

Bring back awards for newton north high school students.

Importance:

Book awards and the like are very helpful for high school students to put on college applications. Newton north has done away with most of these awards in the name of equity. This makes it harder for my student to distinguish themselves on college applications

Follow up:

Bring back book awards and the like

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Support

Bring back Honor Curriculum for Middle School and HS Students

Importance:

It is important to segregate students of varying abilities, especially in Mathematics, so that slower students are not intimidated by a difficult curriculum and honors students are not bored by an unchallenging curriculum.

Follow up:

Better administration at Elementary School Level.

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Individuality

Bring back textbooks for math (and other) classes in high school.

Importance:

Textbooks are important so that kids can review previous material and take it with them without their computer. It also enables parents to review material with their kids. Material is always immediately at hand in a comprehensive and organized format.

Follow up:

Bring back textbooks for math (and other subjects).

Important Values:

Challenge, Education, Responsibility, Individuality, Excellence, Support, Accountability

Celebrate the Holidays to get kids doing creative activities and involved in school pride etc. Example - Halloween and Christmas Fests. A dedicated Gym Teacher. More after school enrichment programs, example Chess, Coding, Math Club, Lego Building.

Importance:

To help kids grow and get a more rounded education and to help them learn other strategies to focus and learn in different ways

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Education, Support, Responsibility, Equality, Challenge, Engagement, Excellence, Attention, Adaptability, Motivation

Change curriculum, stop teaching to the lowest common denominator.

Offered actual gifted program

Importance:

My children tested (through very expensive and also not willing to be done by nps testing confirmed) as gifted. They were bored to tears in nps. My son was correcting papers for his teacher in 3rd grade. There was nothing to do.

Follow up:

Classes are overloaded. Smart kids without behavioral issues get zero attention. Needs to be the opposite.

Important Values:

Accountability, Education, Challenge, Excellence

change: curriculum to teach to advanced and gifted kids

Importance:

My kids were tested and were determined to be "gifted" through rigorous testing- they were bored in nps and it was an awful fit- teachers only teach to the lowest common denominator.

Follow up:

No, it will take too long for you to make anything better and you won't get rid of the huge # of really bad teachers

Important Values:

Excellence, Accountability

Children benefit from homework and challenges. Let's prioritize employing seasoned educators who keep their personal political beliefs out of the classroom.

Importance:

Teachers are everything and you have horrible teachers

Follow up:

Allowing kids to fail, fight, lose, win, have opinions that differ and still

Class size

Importance:

It is more personalized to learn in a small classroom

Follow up:

Probably no

Important Values:

Education, Support, Challenge, Equality, Responsibility, Inclusion, Engagement, Attention

Class size

Importance:

More focused attention to children and learning.

Follow up:

More support.

Important Values:

Education, Support, Challenge, Engagement, Individuality

Class Size and Curriculum Support for Disabled Students

Importance:

A more balanced conversation. Both political sides are not represented

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Education

Class size and support for gifted students

Importance:

My son is gifted and feels bored at school academically

Follow up:

Probably no

Important Values:

Education, Support, Challenge, Equality, Responsibility, Inclusion, Engagement, Attention

Class sizes are too big! My son's inclusion class has 25 kids!

Importance:

It is hard for each and every kid to get all the support and attention they need with such huge class sizes. Over April break, there were only 12 kids out of 25 in class. The teachers kept telling the kids how nice it was that every kid got a chance to speak and participate!

Follow up:

Switch the Achieve similar program to Brown.

Important Values:

Excellence, Education, Support, Inclusion

Class sizes need to be smaller. My daughter does well with supports in the classroom and personal interaction with teachers. Yes, she accessed her teachers outside of the classroom very frequently. She always felt behind otherwise during actual class time.

Importance:

If you are not at the very bottom of the class, you do not get supports. My daughter is an enthusiastic learner, but needed more personal interaction with her teachers.

Follow up:

Sorry, no. She is much happier in private school and is on her second art class already (unable to get into any at NNHS for 2 years despite being req to graduate)!!!! Her classes are more challenging, but she is doing well because she can actually get help and ask questions.

Important Values:

Education, Support, Respect, Excellence

Class sizes seem a bit big. Also, there seems to be some behavior challenges at the middle school, along with frequent instances of racially based instances among the kids.

Importance:

My child has been in classrooms where the teacher had no control over the class and this made for a difficult learning experience.

Follow up:

Reduce class sizes, provide leveling.

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Engagement, Inclusion

Class sizes too large, arts and other “extras” felt limited, curriculum felt stale

Class sizes, sports and recess in middle school.

Importance:

We think having structured breaks or recess for kids to move around, socialize and play sports during the day is very important to improve focus, learning and well-being. I see Oak Hill school kids walking around parking lot and it makes me sad that this is what they get for breaks.

Follow up:

Smaller class sizes and responsible, motivated teachers who care to engage students.

Important Values:

Support, Engagement, Accountability

Classes were too big at the time. My daughter's teacher at Angier ignored her due to large class size. Building at the time was completely unsafe. I am now concerned with the reduction of academic standards and grade inflation. getting an A for showing up, minimal homework, etc are not acceptable

Importance:

Class sizes in early elementary are very important. Especially if your child is an introvert. They are ignored so teachers can handle behavior problems. At the high school level, it is very important to ensure students understand the material.

Follow up:

no

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Accountability, Respect, Responsibility

Competent leadership, challenging and competitive curriculum

Importance:

The lack of supervision and leadership led to a lawless environment where bullying was tolerated and strong students were held back by lack of rules and consequences.

Follow up:

Certainly not after recent events

Important Values:

Challenge, Responsibility, Excellence, Education

Consider reimbursing the tax money per student to those who have left the district. If the 4000 kids in private school returned, it might be overwhelming. It seems fair to have a tax reimbursement, given the significant amount we're paying for private school students.

Importance:

because it is a huge win for nps to have 4000 kids less and still get paid for those kids- totally unfair

Follow up:

no, it was a horrible experience

Important Values:

Excellence, Accountability

Create a free speech and civil discourse agreement. Train teachers on how to teach critical thinking. Place emphasis on building a culture that recognizes we have more in common with each other rather than teaching that we are divided by immutable characteristics

Importance:

The Newton community is very angry and divided. We were once a connected and vibrant community

Follow up:

Hire better administrators

Important Values:

Potential, Education

Create a welcome committee for new families

Importance:

Being new to the Newton community we did not have established elementary or middle school contacts to rely upon and we were hesitant to send our son to such a large school with no pre-existing social relationships

Follow up:

One of our two son's has a language-based learning disability and he was not allotted enough learning support.

Important Values:

Excellence, Education, Support

Curriculum - I'm not an expert on how to educate children and I put trust in professional educators

Importance:

When my son moved from an independent school to Zervas in 3rd grade, he dropped from 90th percentile to 55th in math in 5th and didn't really seem to enjoy it anymore. In his 2nd year Fessenden (7th) he moved to honors math and is now in honors geometry at Rivers in 9th grade. Investigations is poor

Follow up:

As far as curriculum goes, I don't want to be an expert in how to educate my children. I want to trust that the school is making the right choices. At this point I have confidence in the independent schools my children are attending. Given my prior experience at Zervas, I don't have that confidence

Important Values:

Movement, Differentiation

Deal with racist events at school better

Importance:

Are you kidding? Equity is incredibly important and Angier did a terrible job dealing with the anti Asian racist incident in the spring of 2021

Follow up:

speech services for our son were not adequate. He did speech and “graduated” with no improvement. We felt that he was pushed out. We put him in private speech therapy where he made significant improvements.

Important Values:

Education, Engagement, Respect, Challenge, Inclusion, Support

definitely support for high-academic learners. Our kids were really bored academically, but we kept them in NPS because they were great neighborhood schools and loved the social/play aspects. During COVID, all that went out the window, and all that was left was middle of the road academics.

Importance:

Because we have two highly intelligent students who were bored at NPS academically. So why would we send them to school to be bored...

Follow up:

offer differentiated learning or an academic challenge for quick learners, especially in middle school! We'd consider NPS for high school, but not for middle...

Important Values:

Excellence, Challenge, Inclusion

Demonstrate you have the best outcomes

Differential learning that supports students who are ahead from early grades and not just supports students that are behind

Importance:

Our only experience with Newton Public saw us coming from Europe (a school system where children attend K at age 4) and after completing a year there, knowing how to read, write words (dictation was a thing for K), not recognizing this and meeting child at their level was a very poor choice

Follow up:

I don't think so.

Important Values:

Equality, Individuality, Excellence, Challenge, Education, Respect, Engagement

Differentiated learning benefits all students. A challenge with some educational systems is the tendency to perceive bias in many aspects, which can potentially hinder overall learning. It's disheartening to frequently hear statements like, 'Advanced classes are biased,' or 'Homework is biased.'

Importance:

The notion of "Equity" is silly. We want to educate all children to the fullest extent possible. Of course, NPS should be fair and not discriminate. There was never a problem with this. The school committee wasted a lot of time trying to manage PTO fundraising, over small amounts of money.

Follow up:

My daughter is a senior. So, no. If she were younger, if you provided an education that covered math, like the Russian School of Math, had more intensive teacher feedback on grammar and writing, perhaps.

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Responsibility, Excellence, Engagement, Accountability

Do you want my honest thoughts or not?

Importance:

Because it is hard to send my kids back to a school system where trust in teachers has been lost

Follow up:

We left after the Pandemic, looking for schools which could provide an in person, relatively normal school environment. My youngest son was about to start Kindergarten then. When we heard Kindergarten would take place online we immediately searched for private schools. NPS didn't prioritize kids

Important Values:

Support, Engagement, Accountability

During our son's middle school years, we got a lot of emails from his teachers expressing their concerns. It felt like they were pointing fingers at us for his actions. He's a good kid, never mean or harmful, just struggled with his assignments. This was a factor in our decision to move on.

Importance:

Stronger parent teacher relationships are key to a successful school.

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Education, Respect, Support, Safety

Earlier grade class differentiation for high achieving students based on their skills and aptitude.

Importance:

Our older child became less engaged with school because he was given a high volume of not very challenging work rather than being directed to more in depth or challenging academic work.

Follow up:

Offer high achieving students better curriculum at younger ages.

Important Values:

Education, Accountability, Support, Responsibility, Challenge, Engagement

Encourage accelerated tracks for students of higher IQ or abilities as they may get bored and distracted if not challenged. Having an even playing field on the basis of equality does not work in the field of education.

Importance:

A teacher or curriculum needs to be adaptable to meet the student where they are at. If it can be adjusted for the lower end of the spectrum, it should be adjusted for the higher end of the spectrum too

Follow up:

Better counselor- student ratio

Important Values:

Education, Attention, Challenge, Movement, Trust, Potential, Support

Equity is really important but NPS doesn't have the money/resources to implement it well. Classes should be leveled and extra resources should be given to underrepresented groups so that all can rise to the top. Because NPS doesn't have any money for this, they cut the higher level classes.

Importance:

-

Follow up:

I don't think so

Important Values:

Education, Support, Challenge, Respect, Individuality

Facilities, such as springboard, are great to have. It may help to consider alternative, experiential learning methodologies in these programs. It would be less stressful and more engaging. And important life skills would be taught as a result. Eg hands on innovation/project learning

Importance:

My child was in springboard. Many kids there are creative and smart but lack engagement. It would make them interested in learning, create trusting bonds and help teachers engage. Places like NuVu will come teach your teachers

Follow up:

No my eldest child is a senior

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Individuality, Engagement, Respect, Inclusion, Excellence

Fire the union

Importance:

Covid- union prevented school. School just closed for over two weeks and Mercedes and Audis and Teslas parked outside my house so the rich teachers could attend the protest to get healthcare with a \$400 deductible. Bankrupting our city. Shame on you

Follow up:

Nope

Important Values:

Education

Focus on academic excellence.

Importance:

No, I'm not really interested in how many ideas you've received on this topic. I just want the schools to focus on academic excellence. They've lost that focus over the years. Kids who are ahead of their grade level are pretty well left to their own devices.

Follow up:

Focus on academic excellence. Provide accurate benchmark assessments. Share information with families. Right now, teachers and administrators don't meaningfully engage with families.

Important Values:

Education, Engagement, Support, Accountability, Challenge, Excellence

Focus on academics, not ideology

Importance:

Academics is one of the pillars of child success in the future.

Follow up:

Maybe. We would consider coming back if:

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Excellence, Accountability

Focus on excellence in education, particularly English and Math.

Importance:

Students need to be skilled at reading and math. This is the main reason why parents send their children to school

Follow up:

No. My daughter is now a senior. She is dyslexic. At NPS she was not challenged enough. NPS' solution to deal with her dyslexia, starting in grade school, was to put her in a group with other special needs kids, and treat them all the same--less rigor, less work. That is not the solution.

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Responsibility, Excellence, Engagement, Accountability

For the past many years, we've felt that the district was protecting teachers & budget, not children. We have two kids on IEPs (one for dyslexia and one for SE challenges).

Importance:

Stop treating misbehaviors as willful noncompliance and instead show humanity/curiosity. Don't start with "what's wrong with you?" and instead ask "what might've happened to you?"

Follow up:

Unlikely. For our child in private school, the autonomy of the teachers and the way they've maintained elevated academic expectations despite the years of

Covid loss, has proven that we are in the right place. We feel confident that Anna Nolan will get the district righted, but it will take too long

Important Values:

Accountability, Excellence, Education

free

Importance:

no, i was talking about free of charge

Follow up:

(1) lesser focus on DEI and stop teaching critical race theory and making everything to be about oppressor and oppressed; (2) stop anti-semitism and biased history lessons; (3) focus on academics, AP classes, tracks/levels for advanced abilities.

Important Values:

Education

From what we have heard from families in the system class sizes are fairly large. When our daughter was entering kindergarten she was dealing with anxiety and we were concerned she wouldn't get the support she needed in a large classroom

Importance:

It is difficult for children to learn if there aren't enough teachers to give them the support they need (especially if they may need some extra support)

Follow up:

It would take a pretty serious turnaround. Our friends who have kids in NPS or have taken them out of NPS to attend the private school we're at describe not enough teachers, subs, or stability in class situations. It sounds as if the recovery from covid issues was never completed

Important Values:

Responsibility, Support, Education, Equality, Inclusion

Fundraising should not be spread across the schools city wide. Ward is one of the oldest and under-resourced schools. The parents raised a lot of money to support various school specific initiatives only to have the money reallocated to other schools.¹

Importance:

Nothing to add.

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Accountability, Excellence

¹ Note: the district does not re-distribute fundraising to other schools in the manner noted above. The district equity policy, however, equalizes what can be spent at each school and on what. Each school keeps its own fundraised funds.

Get political activism and subjective ideologies out of the classroom

Importance:

Students are being told what to think versus being taught how to think. Students should be able to think critically and to openly discuss various perspectives without intimidation

Follow up:

Pledge to honor viewpoint diversity, civil discourse, political neutrality. Guarantee that high school teachers will have better attendance. Get rid of the DEI department

Important Values:

Potential, Education

Get rid of February break and those silly half days - what a waste of resources and time. While they are supposed to be PD days, teachers often talked of personal plans they had on half days and it didn't involve PD.

Importance:

The kids and teachers want to enjoy the short summers of New England. It's a disservice to them to eat into this with Feb break. Half days present challenges for working parents in terms of child care and rides.

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Accountability, Responsibility, Challenge, Engagement

Go back to basics and focus on actual education of Math, science, history, English, etc and not indoctrination of young children and other agendas.

Importance:

Because over the years since my children first started in the public school system in Newton the standard of education deteriorated.

Follow up:

Not at this time

Important Values:

Education, Support, Responsibility, Attention

Gone back to in-person school in September 2020 (as our private school did),.

Importance:

Online learning is a pale shadow of in-person learning. The school district and/or the teacher's union did not prioritize the well-being and educational needs of the students during the pandemic. Private schools in the area demonstrated that return to school could be done thoughtfully and safely.

Follow up:

Dissolve the teacher's union (NTA). The union robs parents of all agency in their own public district during the most critical times such as COVID and the strike. They have repeatedly demonstrated that students' well-being comes last.

Important Values:

Challenge, Education, Responsibility, Individuality, Excellence, Support, Accountability

Great feedback for Mason Rice - fantastic staff, including Special Education. Really great teacher and administration. Highly recommend and are very happy with them.

Importance:

Because my son has an IEP and is a Special Education student

Follow up:

He is in Mason Rice and will remain there assuming things continue as they are.

Wanted to acknowledge the staff, and say thank you to Ms. Pratt, Ms.

Rosenthal, Ms. Cooney and the others. Great school, our son is thriving - very happy.

Important Values:

Responsibility, Education, Respect

Had a child in K in Mason Rice when Covid hit. The remote school was awful. Other kids in private school and were doing a much better job, couldn't compare. I jumped ship with that child and exited him from Mason Rice. Especially when private school was going to be in person the next year.

Importance:

Covid was awful for the district

Follow up:

Remove political agendas from school. Critically review your curricula about the middle east and the anti-Israel lens. Address antisemitism in schools head on and educate students in an honest and even-handed way about the facts.

Important Values:

Engagement, Differentiation, Education

Hey, just want to distinguish between our great experience with one place (Mason Rice) and our terrible, unsafe experience with another place (Newton South) that had a lot of hate incidents and clear antisemitism.

Importance:

Because my daughter and other Jewish students face hate crimes at Newton South on a regular basis. Examples: recurring swastika's are called "graffiti" and are condemned as "school vandalism", being told that Hitler was a "good guy" in class, having Nazi anthem played to Jewish sophomore at lunch²

Follow up:

Firmly discipline & have a zero tolerance policy for antisemitism at Newton South), and not tolerate hate and discrimination which they face on a daily

² This information was shared with administration and no one had heard of this incident and had they been told there would have been a serious response; one administrator recalled an incident 17 years prior that matched this information.

basis, and is sometimes even taught in classes (!). We're shocked that our kids are going through this in the US in 2024, not Germany 1934.

Important Values:

Responsibility, Education, Respect

High achieving students are limited from reaching their full potential in Newton South, there is no opportunity to take advanced math earlier, even if students qualify,[Building leaders] serve as an obstacle in advancing students rather than a resource. Utterly unhelpful.

Importance:

ability to keep students interested and motivated in learning via teaching them appropriate level of material is paramount. Newton South is not interested in that whatsoever, prefers cookie cutter approach one course fits all.

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Challenge, Individuality, Engagement, Education, Support

honors classes should have more capable teachers able to help kids who are struggling

Importance:

With large class size in honors math and little support from the teacher my son was unable to achieve his potential in math

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Engagement, Support, Education, Excellence, Potential, Challenge

I am concerned about the emotional needs of our students and they toll it is taking on public schools. I think that the special education laws and requirements means that resources are flowing away from mainstream children to those with higher needs.

Importance:

The cost and requirements of students with learning and emotional challenges are a huge burden on a school system that is already underfunded. I think that there needs to be a very hard look at the amount of money that is required. We should also fund honors classes and high achieving students too

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Responsibility, Education, Excellence

I am just stating a fact. I will not restate it. My son was bullied. The school handled it well, however.

Importance:

I want my kids to feel safe at school.

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Support

I did not think that my children got enough individual time to focus on their strengths.

Importance:

Kids that need more help or more push do not receive it

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Education, Responsibility, Safety, Engagement, Support, Challenge, Accountability

I don't know. We never attended public school. My son does go there once a week for special education, which we really appreciate it. We had great encounter with public school support staff.

Importance:

I think Newton public school has a wonderful program to support special ed kids. I just don't know how they support kids are ahead.

Follow up:

My kids have their friends at private schools. If they can meet local kids and build that friendship, it would be an easier transition.

Important Values:

Safety, Education, Responsibility

I don't like masks

I don't think Newton handles special education inclusion well. Throughout elementary school, I personally witnessed and my children reported so many occasions of classroom evacuations, wildly inappropriate behavior, and loss of learning. Some students need more services before being classroom ready

Importance:

While I believe in supporting students with learning and/or behavioral challenges, I think Newton is too quick to put kids in regular classrooms. It has a significant negative impact on the classroom, on the teaching, and can be dangerous to other kids.

Follow up:

We are already through elementary school where this was a major challenge. It's less of an issue at middle/high school.

Important Values:

Challenge, Excellence, Education

I felt the class size was too big and my kid was lost in the crowd when my first child was attending a Newton high school. It was often only when he had a problem or issue in class when I heard from the teachers. there were too many kids for the teachers to make a personal connection with everyone.

Importance:

My impression of the Newton high school was that there are a lot of support and resources for students in trouble. My kid was invisible when he did not have any difficulty.

Follow up:

After sending my first child through Newton Public schools, I am sending my second child to a private high school and I can't be happier. The class size is smaller and the teachers make personal and individual connection with all the students.

Important Values:

Motivation, Education, Responsibility, Attention, Engagement

I had never even thought of private schools before moving to Newton. After sending my children to Newton public schools I found myself forced to look into this option. The school was inadequate on all fronts. Almost zero teaching of math, superficial and non rigorous teaching of reading and writing.

Importance:

Without a good math foundation children will be at a disadvantage for life. It is absurd that everyone in my children's classes was sending the kids to RSM. The school should provide outstanding mathematical teaching without families needing to look for private instruction elsewhere.

Follow up:

Cut out of the school system all teaching based on ideologies and focus on enhancing academics.

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Challenge, Engagement

I have no experience in the elementary school or middle school, and when I had previously looked into the public schools, they don't give you an option to come in and tour the school. Without the opportunity to see firsthand what the school would be like I was uninterested in sending my children

Importance:

When so many students go to private school in Newton and they let you see what their school day looks like what would be the harm in allowing parents to come in and see the public schools. Unless you have something that you're afraid to share

Follow up:

If we have economic concerns about sending our kids to private school, then we will send our kids to the public school

Important Values:

Education, Support, Excellence

I left the Newton Public schools because they were not responsive enough to my child's learning needs, and also because they were not responsive enough in their communication with me (the parent).

Importance:

Teachers and administrators take too long to reply to parents and don't feel sufficiently accountable to meet student needs.

Follow up:

No

I like how social emotional needs are supported. However, there is always room for improvement.

Importance:

Teaching kids how to regulate themselves and how to react to stressful situations is a must as it sets your brain for success for the academic learning

Follow up:

Probably, not.

Important Values:

Education, Support, Challenge, Equality, Responsibility, Inclusion, Engagement, Attention

I never imagined that I would send my child to private school. We moved to Newton in 2018 because of the schools and I attend public school in MA in the 1980s. I thought people that paid money to live in communities like Newton and then send their children to private school were crazy.

Importance:

I am not sure what you mean. We left Newton schools because of COVID and the power that the unions had on decisions for our children as well as the constraints of state government in what can be taught. I am a hard core democrat and always vote blue, but I think that we are putting adults needs #1

Follow up:

Not anymore. The private school system is a better fit for my child. They have so much support, prioritize academics, sports and arts creating a more well-rounded experience. They have to put students and parents first because we are directly paying the bills.

Important Values:

Responsibility, Education, Excellence

I reckon there's a lot of help for students with disabilities. As someone with dyslexia, I get it, but sometimes families rely too much on schools and keep

their kids in the system longer than necessary, which uses up funds and resources.

Importance:

Because children with special needs are taking away too many resources from the school. Gifted and talented programs are a thing from the past and we need all students (not just the bottom 20%) to be progressing forward. I am tired of hearing families are moving to our district for services. Enough.

Follow up:

yes

Important Values:

Responsibility, Equality, Challenge

I think kids need more math, science, writing, history, art, gym and less social/emotional support. These things build self confidence, knowledge is power.

Importance:

I have a daughter who is meeting and exceeding expectations. It is time to bring back more challenging course work. Kids want to learn.

Follow up:

I don't think you can bring my son back, he has a great community at his new school. He is academically challenged, encouraged to try new things like Speech team - his teacher was at the competition with the kids at 8AM on a Sunday. The teachers have made connections with him that he didn't get @NPS

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Respect, Challenge, Support, Responsibility, Accountability

I think that 'fairness' means that we teach to the lowest common denominator as opposed to lifting all students up. I was very frustrated during COVID. Few classes with video because "some students" didn't have high speed internet. Can't we find a way to provide instead of removing from all?

Importance:

Newton did online learning/COVID poorly. It is a large district and so it is hard to manage so many different priorities. So many parents I talk to in Newton were extremely frustrated with how the schools managed COVID. I just think it was hard and I had the resources to make a different choice

Follow up:

Not now

Important Values:

Responsibility, Education, Excellence

I thought the overall experience in NPS was OK for my kids. Some teachers were strong and committed and others seemed not to be. I thought the overall response to COVID was overly conservative and deprived the kids of

key learning and social experiences. The school was minimally responsive to input

Importance:

I thought the online learning opportunities were weak overall. The kids were out of school for too long for COVID and NPS did not seem motivated to get kids back in school.

Follow up:

Probably not at this point. My kids have gotten used to the smaller classes and more individual attention. Differentiation by skill level in middle school has also been a plus as well the enhanced scope of extracurriculars.

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Attention, Responsiveness

I would have preferred an actual grading system instead of the number system. It seemed like it was really a system where 90% met expectations, and 10% were the kids that needed additional help. I had no idea how my children were actually doing other than feedback from the teachers at conferences.

Importance:

When we left Peirce to go to a catholic school, my children were definitely behind in math and reading. I had to hire a tutor to catch my children up. Also, we found that with one of our children, she ended up being extremely motivated by percentage grades and how that translated into A's.

Follow up:

Unfortunately, at this point we have had such a better experience in our private school(s) that we would not return to NPS.

Important Values:

Responsibility, Individuality, Support, Respect, Accountability, Challenge, Engagement, Education

I'd be afraid to send my children to NPS because of teachers espousing anti-Israel and anti-Semitic propaganda.

I'm really worried about the sheer volume of progressive ideas being pushed on all students and their families.

Importance:

This is a false statement. I am a lifelong resident of Newton. Several people have voiced the same concern (unfortunately many are afraid to share in a public forum for fear of being "shamed" by those that support immense progressive agendas).

Follow up:

Get back to what made Newton such an amazing

Important Values:

Education, Responsibility, Respect, Safety, Challenge, Support, Excellence, Equality, Individuality

If a student is playing a varsity sport, several varsity sports in fact, why is the emphasis on electives centered around PE?? I get the health classes, etc. However, my daughter could not get into an elective, because they wouldn't move her PE which was in the middle of the year. Zero flexibility

Importance:

For student athletes, there should be some flexibility to take electives that will help to make them better well rounded. My daughter could not get into any art class her first 2 years at NNHS. Part of the reason was because her PE classes fell in the middle of the year. We received zero help.

Follow up:

Sorry, no. We can deal with a lot of things, but admin staff [name omitted] refusing to communicate and help is a no go for us. Her counselor was on maternity leave and we felt like we were annoying everyone just to get into an art class. There was zero help offered.

Important Values:

Education, Support, Respect, Excellence

If you don't want my opinion, don't ask

Importance:

Focusing on always being politically correct, and social issues, takes away from education. I'm not suggesting you're not sensitive to the people people that need that, but it doesn't need to be cluttering up my child's education

Follow up:

I don't understand why both my kids hate school. I loved going to school! Neither of them like to learn, and I think it's weird. They aren't comfortable and I think maybe it's because the focus is off

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Responsibility, Motivation, Excellence

Improve support for students with special needs especially language skills, social skills, slow processing speed and emotional dysregulation.

Importance:

My child failed to access education due to special needs

Follow up:

Yes better programs for my child's special needs

Important Values:

Support, Individuality, Education

In elementary school, there are a lot of children who have special needs who aren't getting enough help. These kids need more attention from special ed teachers but instead take up gen ed teacher's attention. The rest of the kids either teach themselves, sit doing nothing, or are running wild.

Importance:

My child wasn't getting the attention they needed

Follow up:

More teachers, less children per classroom and get more special ed teacher for children who need them

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Support

In elementary school, there needs to be a rigorous and transparent focus on executive function. This would include homework and projects that are specifically defined to develop executive function, and to engage families in helping students to develop the learning tools needed to be successful.

Importance:

Our son suffered in middle school and is still suffering in high school because his lack of executive function was not identified early on due to no requirements to develop or apply it in elementary school.

Follow up:

I would need to believe that there are significant changes in the later-elementary curriculum. We believe that the high schools are not a great place for students without a huge amount of internal drive--no one is going to look out for those kids. You would have to convince me otherwise.

Important Values:

Education, Accountability, Engagement, Responsibility

In person classes the year after Covid began

Importance:

There was tremendous learning loss with online learning, no homework and few assessments

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Engagement, Support, Education, Excellence, Potential, Challenge

In the high school teachers have been taking many days off and the kids are not in class as often as they should be.

Importance:

I have heard many complaints from friends that their kids spend a lot of time in the cafeteria when teachers are absent which affects their learning. I understand there is no money for substitutes and no people to fill the spots, even if money was available. This is a problem.

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Support

increase the academic rigor of Day Middle School

Importance:

after sending all 6 of our kids to Peirce, it was Day that resulted in our leaving NPS - our 2 oldest kids went there for 6th grade and were supremely bored. there was little to no differentiation in learning in 6th grade

Follow up:

no

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Challenge

Increase the number of high school counselors. Unless your child (or parent) is extremely pushy there is no way to get time with a counselor. Even if a counselor saw one different student every day they could not see all the students under their care, let alone form a bond

Importance:

My eldest child (and we) knew very little about the US college process. We could not afford costly college counseling at that time. My child did not go to college as a result of the confusion and lack of info

Follow up:

No my youngest child is a senior

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Individuality, Engagement, Respect, Inclusion, Excellence

Innovation is good, but too much innovation makes it feel like our kids are guinea pigs. We wanted a more traditional curriculum more similar to our own high school experience.

Importance:

Newton is a leader, and I think some of the big changes have been guided by clear research, for example, changing the high school start time. However other changes are more controversial with research on both sides and it's not clear teachers have bought in (e.g. mixed levels in math/science)

Follow up:

Our younger child may stay. I strongly encourage you to consider the option of a true Algebra 1 course for 8th grade. I also think there is way too much open space on many high school schedules.

Important Values:

Challenge, Excellence, Education

Intentional gas lighting of parents in IEP meetings. Intentional suppression of teachers' insights. One educator expressed privately her fear of sharing her observations about a student's potential LBLD due to intimidation tactics. There seems to be a systemic bias to not acknowledge LDs. Shameful.

Importance:

Newton treats parents horribly in the IEP process. NPS prefers to not see a disability bc if they see it they know by law they must offer services. Better not to acknowledge and buy time and save NPS dollars. Meanwhile student falls further behind and suffer irreparable emotional trauma.

Follow up:

Doubtful. The system pits parents of students with disabilities against parents of neurotypical students. The kids and parents with kids with disabilities are portrayed as greedy and asking for an unfair share of resources. If my kid gets a ramp for his wheelchair then your kid can't get violin.

Important Values:

Accountability, Responsibility, Equality, Inclusion, Respect

Introduce and support appropriate instruction for students with dyslexia

Importance:

Because Newton is failing students with dyslexia- badly. The expectation is these students will always be behind and not achieve above grade level- regardless of ability. The dyslexic students are suffering and set up to fail which deprives them of happiness and a chance to reach their potential.

Follow up:

Unlikely

Important Values:

Accountability, Responsibility, Equality, Inclusion, Respect

Invest in resources for children on the other end of the bell curve, those who need more rigorous and challenging curricula than the average. Please stop pandering, as an administration, to the average. My kids were bored out of their minds and there was nothing the teachers could do to help.

Importance:

Because my kids literally experienced mental health crises from the administration's refusal to address properly their learning needs. I was so fed up with the principals' lack of concern for their needs that I pulled both of them out of the system. Shame on you all.

Follow up:

Not a fxxxxing chance. I have PTSD from trying, and failing, for eight full years to advocate for my kids in your pathetic system. The teachers are great; the administration is an embarrassment.

Important Values:

Trust, Education, Support

It doesn't feel like students are put first in the Newton schools.

Importance:

My decision to send my children to private school was fueled by the way that Covid was handled in the Newton schools. Kids in independent schools were back in person far earlier than kids in Newton schools were. In addition, the teacher strike, validated my decision to send my children to private.

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Education, Attention, Engagement

It feels like there's a lot of tension at Day. It seems like there's a need for more trust between teachers and students. Let's believe in the best!

Importance:

Kids will respond to the tone and conditions a teacher creates, if they lead with optimism, students will follow. If there is anger or frustration kids will also respond to that.

Follow up:

My two younger kids are still at NPS, Elementary experience has been excellent. It is unlikely we will bring our oldest back as I have heard horror stories about North. My daughter is on a great team at Day right now, but we she needs more challenging work. Raise the bar for the kids who want it!

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Respect, Challenge, Support, Responsibility, Accountability

It seemed like the special ed staff, even the bosses, weren't really into their work or particularly good at it. It felt like they were doing the bare minimum instead of really helping the kids. So, we might not suggest these schools for most special ed students.

Importance:

Start anew from the top. I am sure that they are some effective and caring special educators; however, their motivation is hindered by administration that seems interested in doing the least amount of work possible, rather than in satisfying the needs of students.

Follow up:

Too late now. Our children have aged out.

Important Values:

Responsibility, Adaptability, Engagement

It was really shocking to be assumed as a METCO student just because of being a minority! I didn't even know what METCO was, but it's not cool for [school personnel] to guess someone's not from Newton based on their skin color! Treat students as individuals not different based on their location

Importance:

Our short stint at Bowen we had very negative experiences with staff assuming we were from inner Boston when we live walking distance to Bowen.

Follow up:

No, don't think so.

Important Values:

Equality, Individuality, Excellence, Challenge, Education, Respect, Engagement

I've been pretty disappointed that my son, who is exceptionally gifted, has differentiate himself at the high school level. He was at a private school before hand, because the public school could not differentiate his learning and at the private school he could be learning another language

Importance:

My son is falling through the cracks, due to being gifted and has ADHD, he is currently at south where it appears that his education has halted and he is just a unexceptional student

Follow up:

To be clear, my son is in the Newton Public schools. Before high school we had sent all our children to Schachter. And I'm beginning to believe that the high school is inadequate as well

Important Values:

Education, Support, Excellence

Keep class sizes manageable. In elementary school, class sizes should not exceed 20 students per class.

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Individuality

Keep class sizes manageable. In elementary school, class sizes should not exceed 20 students per class.

Importance:

Because young children learn better in smaller classrooms.

Follow up:

No, my son is a junior in HS

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Individuality

keep important programs like Understanding our Differences!

Importance:

because we know that we won't get differentiated learning in public schools, which is fine. However, it just so happens that we have two academically advanced kiddos, so the "other" programs are really important to us. Programs like UoD help teach kids empathy and understanding & they matter to us

Follow up:

if you could offer more challenging academics to keep faster learners engaged, or do the 'soft' skills better like play and keeping important programs like UoD. Also, we were a COVID departure and I think NPS did a horrendous job compared with peer districts when it came to COVID.

Important Values:

Excellence, Challenge, Inclusion

Kids from first generation immigrant families need support

Kids who don't meet IEP criteria but need additional help may not feel comfortable at this school. My child had a tough experience here, feeling like they were labeled as 'trouble' by their kindergarten teacher and the principal

Importance:

Diversity of the student body even if a child does not qualify for IEPs should be important to NPS

Follow up:

Improve the quality of education. At this point, my child is thriving in private school. We were considering bringing my child back to public school for high school, but the prolonged strike has caused us to continue down the private school route. My older son (in NPS) is not getting much education

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Excellence, Individuality

Lack of competitive curriculum and grades

Importance:

The things that the NPS students my childrens' ages are learning are well behind what independent schools are teaching

Follow up:

Not at this point. The covid response + the recent strike have shown that NPS is not a system we feel would provide an education comparable to that which we could get elsewhere in this area

Important Values:

Challenge, Responsibility, Excellence, Education

lack of differentiation in math in elementary school

Importance:

students advanced in math were not being challenged at Cabot elementary school. no resources for teachers to differentiate curriculum for these kids. tons of support for kids below grade level.

Follow up:

no

Important Values:

Education

Less focus on grades, high pressure to be in AP classes, focus on LEARNING AND ENGAGING, not testing

Importance:

Students need to be engaged in what they are learning.

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Education, Support, Attention, LessPressure

Let's encourage more responsible spending and prioritize local students, including those with disabilities. Perhaps we could consider a residency requirement before providing full-time assistance. This could help manage the influx from around the state and country.

Importance:

By limiting support for disabled students / difficult learners, we can ensure the middle 80% of students can improve. When my kids were in NPS teachers didn't have time to help them, because they were "doing fine" and teachers were distracted by the "difficult kids" all the time.

Follow up:

Show separation between students who want to learn and those that are troubled and need support - separate learning programs, leveled classes at middle school

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Prioritization, Differentiation

Let's focus more on education and learning rather than overemphasizing 'equity', which sometimes seems to overshadow the importance of teaching. Increase homework. Level classrooms. More cumulative exams. Smaller class sizes for AP and honors (not just CP) classes.

Importance:

I have seen at NPS that "equity" is code for masking a political agenda that is anti-excellence and anti education. NPS forgot that its primary duty is to educate.

Follow up:

Reintroduce class rankings. That one move would show that NPS takes grades seriously.

Important Values:

Education, Excellence

Let's lessen the sway of the teachers union. It appears they prioritize more time off for teachers. Our kids had extended school breaks post-pandemic compared to others. They also took an unauthorized two-week break.

Importance:

Our daughter spent almost 2 years at home during the pandemic, once school resumed she had numerous teachers cancel classes. This caused us to retrieve her almost as soon as she arrived on campus. She transferred schools and repeated a grade in order to recapture lost education and knowledge.

Follow up:

no

Important Values:

Education, Responsibility

Let's prioritize quality education again. Many relocated here for the top-notch schools. However, it seemed like the focus shifted to simplifying the curriculum excessively, leading us to enroll our children in BB&N, despite our initial intentions.

Importance:

The purpose of education is to prepare kids to reach their potential. If you don't focus on excellence, you are not doing that.

Follow up:

Not at this point. I was shocked how much stronger BB&N was than Bigelow and Newton North. However, if the Newton schools had focused on excellence we would not have left.

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Responsibility, Challenge, Engagement, Support

Let's reintroduce honors and AP levels to maintain class standards

Importance:

Every student deserves a competitive curriculum based on their level comfort and experience

Follow up:

Only for high school. We are not interested in having an elementary or middle school student inundated with sexual identification at such an early age.

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Excellence, Respect, Support, Responsibility, Engagement, Accountability

Let's replace ineffective, opinionated, educators and administrators with a fair evaluation system for teachers.

Importance:

The depth and range of curriculum is lacking in nps. Private schools work diligently to adjust curriculum and incorporate as much as they can. Nps only teaches a very set amount each year. There is no advancement to the next year because the teachers are not allowed to.

Follow up:

No, it's too late. It is very difficult to afford private school for 2 kids and we had no choice. It was a horrible experience, tried to stick it out in elementary due to the financial burden, but it was detrimental so we had to find a better solution. My kids were forced to self teach. Want ta

Important Values:

Accountability, Education, Challenge, Excellence

Let's take care of our existing buildings. It is excessive to spend so much on new school buildings while the old ones are left to deteriorate. Ward School wasn't even cleaned before the school year started and remained unclean throughout.

Importance:

Because it is a waste of taxpayer dollars to spend more than is necessary on shiny new schools and unfair to students in rundown school buildings.

Follow up:

No. We moved to Newton for the schools and are now paying a lot of money for private schools because the Newton educational environment limited our children's ability to learn. There were constant disruptions in the first grade including physical violence against the teacher and other students.

Important Values:
Accountability, Excellence

Level the classrooms so kids are being taught at their level. When you make every class the same, you are only serving a narrow swath of kids who match the level. Those who are above are bored. Those who are below are frustrated. This leads to misbehavior and distractions.

Importance:

Meeting kids where they are is important. Because there is very little differentiation, the Newton curriculum often is leveled closer to the least academically capable students. This is unfair to all of the kids not at whatever level was chosen, because they learn less and are bored/frustrated.

Follow up:

Offer many levels to better match the diversity of student capabilities.

Important Values:

Education, Responsibility, Attention, Motivation, Challenge, Respect

Leveling classes in high school is asking too much of a single teacher. Children who need more help aren't getting it and children who want more challenging instruction are getting bored. It's not good for anyone

Importance:

Children deserve to get the kind of instruction they need

Follow up:

Get rid of class leveling

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Support

limit class sizes

Importance:

we had a big variety of class sizes during our NPS years - and the large ones were unruly

Follow up:

no

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Challenge

Longer recess/more outdoor time

Importance:

All children need plenty of fresh air, daylight and the opportunity to move. Especially children who have attention or sensory issues or anxiety.

Follow up:

Giving my child the accommodations that were recommended by his medical team would be a good start, but I also want to see more outdoor time and a longer time to eat food.

Important Values:

Education, Support, Challenge, Individuality

Lower the class sizes.

Importance:

Teachers at Brown didn't have a handle on our three boys' abilities, personalities, or motivations. One teacher even came to our oldest son's conference with the wrong student in mind. She hadn't prepared for our meeting and rather than taking responsibility, she blamed work load.

Follow up:

No. The NPS response to COVID confirmed that NPS is no longer on the cutting edge of American public education. With such taxes high, the Union fighting the community, and presence of over five top tier schools of education within a few miles churning out new and innovative grads, NPS has failed us

Important Values:

Engagement, Responsibility, Support, Inclusion, Challenge, Accountability, Excellence

Make the curriculum more challenging from elementary on for students who are more advanced.

Importance:

A curriculum that provides the opportunity for more rigor or challenge will benefit all. It's not beneficial for all to learn at the same level as all students have different learning needs.

Follow up:

Focus more on academics, reduce class sizes and provide more rigorous education from elementary level. Focus less on equity and social emotional, sexual identification and remove politics. We left NPS specifically because of all these issues.

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Excellence, Respect, Support, Responsibility, Engagement, Accountability

Math and science need improvement

Importance:

A more rigorous curriculum with opportunities to learn more for motivated students

Follow up:

The handling of the Palestine-Israel current events uncovered glaring deficiency in the training of principals and teachers. We have children in private schools that continue to feel that they belong and safe, and kids in public school in Newton who feel alienated and unsafe, bullied and belittled.

Important Values:

Inclusion, Excellence, Support, Challenge

Mental health support is very important for children, especially after covid. Our private school has a full time counselor who works with the children on a regular basis and also helps to deal with individual cases where extra help is needed.

Importance:

Children have more mental health and emotional issues than they did before covid and it has also become more obvious that children need support for their mental health in order to grow as whole people. This should be part of a school's mission

Follow up:

Not at this time

Important Values:

Responsibility, Support, Education, Equality, Inclusion

Middle and high schools are inundated by tobacco and marijuana products, nothing is done about it. Antisemitism is present by routine swastikas graffiti. No action from the school except a formulaic emails.

Importance:

the answer is obvious if the school environment is not safe no effective learning could take place

Follow up:

no

Important Values:

Challenge, Individuality, Engagement, Education, Support

Middle school teachers do not maintain timely input to Aspen, thus leaving parents guessing what work was accomplished, emails are not answered in the timely fashion, teachers lack interest in success of the students.

Importance:

Teacher's engagement with students and families is fundamental for student's success, Brown and Newton south teaching staff is severely lacking in both

Follow up:

Not at this point.

Important Values:

Challenge, Individuality, Engagement, Education, Support

More

Importance:

More attention for kids who are excelling. More opportunities for them to keep learning vs feeling like they are being held

Follow up:

differentiation between kids learning at different paces. Our daughter kept feeling like she was being held back by the kids who were struggling to learn. She was the one who asked to be switched to private school.

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Excellence, Individuality, Responsibility

More ability to level courses/ challenge kids in middle school. Our child ended up doing a lot of outside work (two RSM classes, other community Ed classes, online classes) to find additional challenges

Importance:

It is important for our child to feel challenged to stay interested in school. In her new school, this year she is taking college chemistry, precalculus, Japanese, jazz history in addition to many other classes and activities, with 3-4 hours of homework per night.

Follow up:

We're still there with our son who absolutely loves it. But don't think our daughter will return- she enjoys the small class sizes (8-12 kids,) high challenge classes (will be in BC calculus during her sophomore year, can take more advanced math classes after that), and sports/clubs/boarding life.

Important Values:

Challenge, Excellence, Individuality, Engagement

More AP courses should be offered and students performance monitored for discrepancies between a course grade and AP grade.

Importance:

That is the main reason students go to school: to obtain a quality education

Follow up:

no

Important Values:

Challenge, Individuality, Engagement, Education, Support

More attention to the needs of bright gifted students

Importance:

My daughter's needs to be challenged were overlooked in favor of other students who required more of the teachers' time and attention.

Follow up:

No. My daughter is a senior in high school

Important Values:

Differentiation, Challenge, Attention

More effective dyslexia programing

Importance:

I have two children with dyslexia. My older son was a late diagnosis and I did not feel the programs at the school were adequately supporting him.

Follow up:

Not at this point. He has thrived in a smaller learning environment with more attention and support.

Important Values:

Education, Respect, Support, Inclusion

More focus on writing and spelling in elementary and middle school

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Excellence, Individuality, Responsibility

More focus on writing and spelling in elementary and middle school

Importance:

Being able to write well and also ensuring proper spelling is a very important skill to have. Our experience for our child in the NPSs was not what we had hoped in this area. Now that she is in a private high school, we see her making improvements but she was not in the same spot as her peers.

Follow up:

Smaller class sizes, more teacher attention and availability.

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Excellence, Individuality, Responsibility

More learning that involves gross motor and movement. My son struggled in 3-5 at Zervas as academic "learning" is done sitting still. PE was routinely cancelled due to other higher pri

Importance:

My last answer was submitted before it had been completed. In his first year at Fessenden (6th), my son shared "I have to use my focus to keep my body still, I have nothing left for the teacher." He was allowed to stand in class, sit in a wiggly chair and nearly all work involved movement.

Follow up:

We will consider public school again when our younger son, now in 2nd grade at Fessenden is older. At this point he's thriving, enthusiastic about learning, and gets lots of physical activity which strengthens his ability to learn & excitement to be at school. Older son will be at Rivers thru 12th.

Important Values:

Movement, Differentiation

More proactive

Importance:

I just feel like my daughter got "lost in the cracks"

Follow up:

no

Important Values:

Support, Challenge

More support for high achieving students.

Importance:

All children deserve personalized attention. The high achievers are often left to fend for themselves.

Follow up:

Recognize high achieving students.

Important Values:

Challenge, Excellence, Respect, Individuality, Inclusion

More support for special education students

More teachers who are enabled to provide intellectually stimulating work or work that advances at the student's pace. It seems that a child is not challenged the modus operandi is to provide MORE boring work

Importance:

This happened to my child and is one of the reasons we left

Follow up:

No my youngest child is a senior

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Individuality, Engagement, Respect, Inclusion, Excellence

More technology in every subject every grade.

Importance:

We moved here out of State. When we arrived our children went from a school that had computers for every child to use in every class and every subject to schools who had none. It felt like they were going backwards.

Follow up:

Stop weeding 2E children out. Listen to parents, past teachers, therapists and doctors when designing 504s and IEPs. We tried 2 years in a row to get the resources our youngest child needed to access his education and were met with a wall of resistance. That is not a battle our child has time for.

Important Values:

Education, Support, Inclusion, Respect, Individuality, Equality, Excellence

My child has dyslexia. I had to pay for private school to get them the help they needed

Importance:

Your criteria for services for dyslexia is terrible. I was told to let my child fail in order to qualify for services. I used my own resources to make sure they did not.

Follow up:

Provide adequate services for kids with dyslexia

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Support

My child learned in school about the concept of numerous genders and the idea of changing your sex. There was also an incident where they were corrected for not using someone's preferred pronouns. Parents should be informed ahead of time and shown a curriculum if these topics are to be taught.

Importance:

These concepts are too advanced for Elementary school aged children. Also the teachers do not take special training for this and there is no set curriculum or guideline and nothing is shared with the parents. Children become confused and whatever the purpose is of this type of teaching is lost.

Follow up:

No, After overhearing the conversation between xxx central office admin and xxx central office admin when they thought they had hung up the phone. Personal feelings aside, they were wildly unprofessional they should have been fired. It was made clear to me that they did not care about the opinion of the parents.

Important Values:

Education

My children had good experiences at Angier. Good teachers and a nice community. It was the middle school, Brown, that was problematic. The quality of teaching went way down. My daughter had a xx teacher who also taught XXX - she told us she "was learning with the kids."

Importance:

I was sharing an experience not an idea. I don't think this AI is working great. :)

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Education, Engagement, Accountability

My children were strong students who didn't need individualized instruction. It felt like they were floating by, not challenged to push themselves or really given consistent opportunities to stretch themselves. They always hit benchmarks and didn't cause problems so they were pretty much ignored.

Importance:

Newton is a community of highly educated people who invest outside school hours to supplement what they feel is missing in the schools. It seems like the focus is on getting everyone to benchmark- which I fully support, but the higher students do not get opportunities to excel.

Follow up:

No. the difference in the level of instruction and access to teachers is not even close.

Important Values:

Education, Respect, Support, Inclusion

My daughter has had a great experience at Memorial Spaulding. My youngest has high functioning ASD and he's doing amazing at the private school where he attends preK. We just don't want to move him given how well he is doing, but it will be a year by year decision.

Importance:

It's really about the nuanced support he gets at his current school. NPS offers great support too, but what he has is working so we don't want to mess it up. Follow up:

not right now, but we know its a great option if/when his current school is no longer a good fit. Our daughter will remain--again she is having a great experience at MS.

My daughter is autistic and I heard very mediocre to disappointing things about both the quality and consistency of services

My daughter was stuck in work groups where the other kids were just not motivated to participate or work on the projects. There were always kids who caused distraction and trouble which did not work well to create a good learning environment

Importance:

I feel that there was so much potential to go deeper on the topics that were covered in school. If the motivated kids could group up to take on an extra stretch of creating a presentation that would be relevant for others, maybe their skills and interest to learn would have been nourished

Follow up:

better student support for 'normal' children

Important Values:

Education, Attention, Challenge, Movement, Trust, Potential, Support

My family moved to Newton for the public schools. We were incredibly disappointed with the experience and interaction that we had at Ward school for my three children.

Importance:

All three of my children have some form of learning difference or learning challenge, and we found Newton public schools to be combative and more focused on their own liability management than addressing the needs of our children. My son has dyslexia, and it was embarrassing. The way we were treated

Follow up:

We are considering moving one of my children back to Newton Public schools, but we have concerns about how his needs would be met. It's unfortunate that a community such as Newton has such a hostile administration towards special-needs children.

Important Values:

Support

My kid, who doesn't meet IEP criteria but needs additional help, didn't get the support they needed from their school. They've started to believe they're 'trouble' due to comments from their kindergarten teacher and head of school.

Importance:

Diversity of the student body (even diversity you can't see - neuro diversity for a kid like mine who doesn't quite qualify for an IEP but could have used additional support and understanding from the school) should matter

Follow up:

Not for that child

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Excellence, Individuality

My kids have challenges, and the format of teaching/learning did not work for them. They are also heavily into the arts, and those programs were cut back more and more over time.

Importance:

I know this is difficult, but project-based learning is really important.

Follow up:

At this point, no. We chose a progressive school with a module-based system which worked great for my kids

Important Values:

Support, Engagement, Challenge, Inclusion

My son could not attend NNHS because his sports schedule would not allow him to adhere to the attendance policy. I wish there was a hybrid or dual enrollment option with an approved virtual school.

Importance:

He could have had the typical senior year traditions with friends he had gone to school with since elementary school.

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Education, Responsibility, Equality, Respect, Support, Engagement

My son is a strong math student and received additional enrichment prior to COVID but this was never put back into place, even after the acute COVID period, due to lack of resources.

Importance:

I think in general that it is nice for students to be challenged. My son in particular was able to "hide" in NPS as long as he performed at an acceptable level and was well-behaved.

Follow up:

Probably not

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Attention, Responsiveness

N/A

Importance:

No

Follow up:
No

Need a gifted and talented program associated with the school.

Importance:

That students in the higher 10% of classes should also be attended to and nurtured. We feel the school tries to teach to the median but provided restraints often goes down from there.

Follow up:

Yes. If the high school can continue keeping their advance / honor course offerings and work on their class size that would be great. I have also heard that if a teacher is out they simply don't have class - no sub available? I can not validate this but this seems very odd.

Important Values:

Responsibility, Equality, Challenge

Need improvement in special education

Importance:

My son didn't get adequate support for his academics which kept him three years behind. We are still putting lots of effort at home and privately to catch him up to his peers.

Follow up:

Probably no

Important Values:

Education, Support, Challenge, Equality, Responsibility, Inclusion, Engagement, Attention

Need more college counselors

Importance:

Every parent with resources hires independent college counselors. This is because Newton North has only 3 college counselors. That is not enough for a class of 550 students.

Follow up:

Hire more college counselors

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Support

Newton elementary schools do not optimize kids health. Recess and lunch are squeezed down to nothing. Lunches are junk food. This is a suburb of working parents many of whom live here to shorten their commutes and the afterschool programming is inadequate.

Importance:

Healthy food and sufficient active time are critical to kids growth and mental health. It seems like NPS is trying to shorten the minutes spent in school to the

bare minimum possible within the boundary of the law, and this is not in the kids best interest or in the interest of families.

Follow up:

My kids are no longer in elementary school but as a taxpayer I think its important that all of our city's children are healthy and active and that parents are able to work without paying a fortune for unstructured afterschool care.

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Inclusion, Accountability, Challenge

Newton has lacked challenging coursework for intellectually advanced kids at every level.

Importance:

My kids were bored in elementary school. We thought it would get better in middle school but it got worse, so we went private. It is important to me that my kids love learning and are interested in the things that they are working on in school.

Follow up:

I think a more rigorous curriculum would bring more people back. Parents should not feel like they need Russian math etc to make sure their kids learn math properly. Advanced classes should be offered. Afterschool could also provide additional educational enrichment.

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Inclusion, Accountability, Challenge

Newton is focused on bringing up poor performing students up to the average, which is of course critically important. However, there is no attention given to children who perform above average and who need to be challenged. One of my children was in tears from boredom. on a regular basis.

Importance:

Students who are not challenged appropriately (at their level) get bored and start to hate school and learning. Also, the lack of leveling for math in the middle schools, in particular, does not make any sense and is a big reason why people leave.

Follow up:

For our family, the only option to come back is for high school (kids are in 6th and 8th now). We would only come back if there are substitute teachers, and guarantee that our children get get the honors/advanced classes they want to take.

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Respect, Support

Newton needs to figure out how to separate out disruptive students so that the rights of the disruptive students do not trump those of all the other

students who are trying to learn. Students were left to work in hallways while disruptive students were managed in the classroom.

Importance:

Because children should enjoy going to school and be able to sit at their desks and go to "specials" without having them cancelled due to a few disruptive and violent children. Communication between the school and the parents was non-existent. Issues only came to light because of parent volunteers

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Accountability, Excellence

Newton North was not the correct environment for our daughter. Ideally we did want to send her to NN (following in her brother's footsteps) but the school and class sizes were just too big. She thrives on building close relationships with her teachers and that is just not possible at NN.

Importance:

sorry - this AI is not doing it for me.....

Follow up:

Its too late. She's a senior at high school. I'd recommend NN for robust kids. Any special needs and I'm skeptical.

Important Values:

Education, Support, Inclusion, Excellence

No. Swastikas and other hate symbols (KKK, anti-asian symbols, etc) should be eliminated and people who do them should be arrested.

Importance:

Newton pays lip-service to the idea of equality, equity, and interfaith/interracial/interreligious dialogue but doesn't prosecute or change anything when hate incidents occur.

Follow up:

Nope

Important Values:

Respect, Support

None

Importance:

-

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Education, Support, Challenge, Engagement

None

Importance:

N/a

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Education, Support, Attention, Less Pressure

not as many free blocks

Importance:

kids should be studying and learning, not wasting time in so many free block

Follow up:

(1) stop teaching everything from the lense of oppressor and oppressed, lesser focus on DEI and more focus on MERIT; (2) stop anti-semitism and biased history classes; (3) focus on academics, on AP classes, track levels for advanced students.

Important Values:

Education

NPS does not have faculty advisory system where kids go into smaller groups every week. Also, there is no emphasis on any competitive sports outside of baseball and maybe basketball. We are interested in fencing, squash, crew, and others.

Importance:

Children need to develop both physically, academically, and mentally.

Follow up:

Offer fencing tournaments. Be more present and engaged with the community

Important Values:

Challenge, Attention, Engagement, Motivation, Excellence

NPS does not provide sufficient challenge to students with more knowledge or interest in specific area like math or writing. The curriculum is designed to make sure the children who need support to reach average but there is no focus on children who need more challenge and advanced training.

Importance:

My son thrives outside of NPS and is highly engaged in extracurricular activities and his current private school. There is constant homework and testing.

Follow up:

Highly unlikely. Newton North High School did not reach out at all to give us a tour and explain why we should consider it as an option in 9th grade. The recent strike, paired with the less than perfect COVID response that we experienced affirmed our desire to seek education elsewhere.

Important Values:

Challenge, Attention, Engagement, Motivation, Excellence

NPS has great people (teachers, admin, counselors) but feels very under-resourced, especially at the middle and early high school levels.

Teachers and counselors are overburdened, no subs for high school sometimes means only 1 or 2 classes meet, little to no academic challenge overall.

Importance:

All the people are trying hard but NPS just needs more money.

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Education, Support, Challenge, Respect, Individuality

NPS seems to do a great job supporting those students at the top of the learning scale and the bottom of the learning scale, but fails to be able to inspire and develop those in the middle. Resources seem to go to the ends and the middle is forgotten. I suppose the squeaky wheels get the grease.

Importance:

My boys are good readers who are well-mannered, well-adjusted, appreciated by adults, and curious learners. By the time they left Brown, they were uninspired and had lost any curiosity that was nurtured at Angier.

Follow up:

NO.

Important Values:

Engagement, Responsibility, Support, Inclusion, Challenge, Accountability, Excellence

Offer levels for classes, especially math, so the kids at the top of the class can be challenged. These kids suffer for the benefit of the kids at the bottom of the class.

Importance:

My kids were bored at school

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Support

On DEI: My spouse and I come from families that have experienced discrimination. We have a mixed race child. We're the first in our families to go to college. Yet we find the school's uni-dimensional approach to teaching about diversity to be troubling.

Importance:

No.

Follow up:

Not after this politically correct lecture through your survey.

Important Values:

Education, Engagement, Support, Accountability, Challenge, Excellence

Opportunities to play varsity sports for the school. With so many students it's very difficult for even great athletes to get a spot on the team.

Importance:

I wanted my children to have the experience of playing for their schools varsity sports team.

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Education, Attention, Engagement

Our daughter graduated in 2022. Her experience academically seemed different than his in regard to the math program. It is our understanding that this curriculum has changed.

Importance:

Our daughter was challenged by the Honors class in 9th grade and followed that path to Calculus. He chose to take Honors history instead of Honors math- his Accelerated math class seemed levels below the Honors one- he had a %104 at one time?

Follow up:

not at this time

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Excellence, Responsibility, Accountability, Individuality, Respect, Support, Equality, Inclusion

Our first experience with zoom school

Our kid needed more tailored support in his IEP at school. He started losing interest and it felt like the staff saw him as an issue, not a child who needed a unique approach.

Importance:

It's important because the schools are supposed to work for all their students and that wasn't our experience.

Follow up:

Our son is thriving in his private school setting. He has transformed from a disengaged student to a highly engaged student. He was suffering from low academic self-esteem and now feels really good about his abilities. I wish he attended NPS but I couldn't risk it for him now.

Important Values:

Education, Respect, Support, Safety

Our older 2 attended NSHS. 2 of their teachers had significant issues & then retired. During that last year at NSHS, their teaching was bad and our kids' education was adversely affected. Also, during the pandemic year, the Honors 10th grade English class taught only 2 books and 1 graphic novel.

Importance:

You need excellent, dedicated teachers for a great educational experience

Follow up:

You should have guidelines for teaching different classes. No teacher should get away with teaching only 3 books in a year of Honors English, even during a pandemic. Teachers who are under stress/ready to retire should be monitored and supported to make sure they are effective.

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Challenge

Our older children who went to NSHS and were allowed to place into appropriate advanced math classes for their level. You stopped allowing that. She went to private school and took AP Calculus and AP Physics as a freshman and got 5's on both. 9th grade math would have been a waste of her time.

Importance:

With the changes in leveling at South, our middle child did not get adequately challenged and was bored in class. Our youngest, even more advanced, would have been beside herself sitting through math classes 4 levels below her ability. You need to meet kids where they are.

Follow up:

You can reintroduce advanced classes, esp in math and science, for appropriate students. My youngest is in 11th grade now, so it's a bit late, but my oldest two went to NSHS and we would not have gone elsewhere for our youngest if you had still allowed advanced math classes for advanced students.

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Challenge

Our oldest child had class leveling. Our middle child was in unlevelled classes. In these classes, she was not given adequate challenge because the teacher was too busy teaching so many levels. In one class, she was criticized for already knowing the material.

Importance:

It is a fallacy that it is more equitable to have mixed classes. If many of the advanced students leave the school for private school, then that is worse for equity, not better. Our students deserve an education that is right for them, not for someone else.

Follow up:

Reinstitute leveled classes so that students get the challenges they need to learn

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Challenge

Our son attended Bigelow and Newton North and then went on to Tufts. My main complaint about the NPS system was that Bigelow has no outdoor

space for kids to blow off steam during recess. In this day of obesity and mental health issues I find this staggering. There is a park across the street.

Importance:

For the reasons I've stated - obesity and mental health. There is a public park across the street from Bigelow - why can't some arrangement be made to make that accessible to school kids during break time.

Follow up:

Our daughter attended Ward. She had previously been diagnosed as dyslexic and had an IEP. When looking at Bigelow for her we found that the services available were not what she needed and we decided to send her to The Carroll School which was by far the best move. She subsequently went on to CHCH

Important Values:

Education, Support, Inclusion, Excellence

Our son left for a more competitive athletic program.

Importance:

He had an opportunity to play more competitively.

Follow up:

not really

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Excellence, Responsibility, Accountability, Individuality, Respect, Support, Equality, Inclusion

Parents should be able to view the curriculum and be told ahead of time if topics will be controversial or shocking to young students, and/or be sexual in nature. Books and material in the library or classroom that discuss any kind of sexuality should be shown to parents ahead of time.

Importance:

Ultimately, the parents are the ones who are raising their children and should be the ones to teach them about sexuality. Teachers should work with the parents on difficult subjects not hide things from them. Kids should be learning basic curriculum in school (Math, Science, English, History).

Follow up:

NO, in fact even in this very interview YOU changed one of my answers because you did not like it! How can I trust someone who does that? Clearly NPS has its own agenda and I am THRILLED to be done with it.³

Important Values:

Education

³ Note: this response was flagged by the Thought Exchange AI as extreme and laced with profane language and the AI asked the person to rephrase the response to focus on the ideas. The text was not revised. The superintendent did flag this for the ThoughtExchange company and they indicated the AI responds in that way when the language gets in the way of the actual feedback being given. The AI is not perfect and, therefore, the flagging by an individual, in this case, the superintendent, is required.

Pay more attention to children at or above grade level. I was told that since my children were performing at grade level, resources had to be diverted to those performing below. They wouldn't even give my kids books to read at their level, only at what someone had determined was "grade level."

Importance:

My kids weren't being taught at their level. School was boring and a waste of time. They didn't know how to work hard.

Follow up:

Meet each kid where they are at, regardless of where they are when compared to some arbitrary level.

Important Values:

Education, Responsibility, Attention, Motivation, Challenge, Respect

Pervasive bullying in memorial sapulding

Please allow for kids to sign up for more electives. My daughter tried to get into an art class.....ANY art class for her freshman and sophomore year, but she did not get anything. She is interested in art, but it is also a requirement to graduate, so this was extremely frustrating to us.

Importance:

I didn't write about extracurriculars, but about electives. We attempted to get help from [school administrator] and she said that she would not discuss any electives and referred my daughter to her counselor. Her counselor was on maternity leave and a new counselor was there who couldn't help- very frustrat

Follow up:

no, not at this point. There was ZERO communication when we tried to get help. It felt like a brick wall with people who were overwhelmed and weren't even sympathetic or kind. Honest and open dialogue and someone who was willing to help us would have been great.

Important Values:

Education, Support, Respect, Excellence

Program for twice exceptional kids

Importance:

Highly intelligent students with some support needs are not well served by the curred sped progra

Follow up:

My child is a junior already. It would have to be very individualized.

Important Values:

Support, Respect, Individuality, Engagement, Inclusion, Equality

Provide challenging learning opportunities for gifted, 2E or learners who learn differently

Importance:

In two very separate situations I had to move my kids to private school because they were being woefully underserved and languishing

Follow up:

My youngest child is a senior so no

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Individuality, Engagement, Respect, Inclusion, Excellence

Provide more meaningful assessments to families. The assessments we received for our child could have been written for any child. They're non-specific and seem to be written by some sort of drop-down menu. They provide little confidence that teachers spend any time getting to know students.

Importance:

If you can't measure what my child is doing, and provide a meaningful assessment, then how can I have any confidence that you know what students need? How can you know what's working to reach students? Our current school gave us a 12-page term report! (Bowen class sizes are smaller, by the way).

Follow up:

Provide an assurance of real periodic assessments, not some feel good vanilla form. Despite larger class sizes at our current school than we had at Bowen, they care enough to really engage and partner with families, sharing useful, constructive feedback. I understand my child's progress.

Important Values:

Education, Engagement, Support, Accountability, Challenge, Excellence

Provide social supports for students with disabilities/neurodiversity. My son is on the autism spectrum and was provided significant educational supports but essentially no social supports. Despite the risk of bullying noted in his IEP, no controls were provided and he was bullied continuously.

Importance:

My son has a disability and his experience illustrated the weaknesses of the NPS approach to special education supports. The school system clearly puts significant resources toward this area but the results are fundamentally flawed.

Follow up:

Yes, if NPS could provide an environment in which neurodiverse students could both be instructed and feel safe despite their challenges navigating social norms.

Important Values:

Respect, Inclusion, Support, Education

Quality of education

Importance:

I attribute this to the inability to maintain some strong long-standing teachers, who were replaced with unqualified and inexperienced teachers. For two years

(1st and 2nd grade), my daughter had first year teachers who left after 1 year of teaching

Follow up:

Probably not. The education difference is remarkable

Important Values:

Education, Inclusion, Support, Engagement, Challenge, Equality

Reallocate resources to include children "in the middle".

Importance:

Children who don't require additional support seem to be ignored.

Follow up:

Change the mindset around who needs attention. I understand its hard to pay attention to all kids especially those who don't have extra support needs but I guess this goes back to smaller class room sizes.

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Engagement, Inclusion

Reason #5. School uniforms. These are under-rated. Uniforms make it easy for parents to know what to dress their kids in for the day, remove 'competition' between students and create a level playing field by removing the stigma of wearing cheap or expensive clothes, or the latest trends

Importance:

I did on the last screen. Here is my next reason: the actual teaching. Teaching, the curriculum, additional support, support for highly intelligent students was superb in the private school we sent our kids to. Both of my children at least 1 grade level ahead versus public school students.

Follow up:

Smaller class sizes. Less 'teaching to the average' this brings down the more intelligent students and restricts their learning path. Class room assistants to support the teacher with those that need it so the teacher can continue with the class and raise the benchmark learning level.

Important Values:

Education, Support, Responsibility, Equality, Challenge, Engagement, Excellence, Attention, Adaptability, Motivation

Redesign anti-racist curriculum to emphasize tolerance rather than oppression.

Importance:

I believe the schools should emphasize pluralism.

Follow up:

Put more emphasis on academoc excellence.

Important Values:

Challenge, Excellence, Respect, Individuality, Inclusion

Refund tax dollars to families with kids in private schools.

Importance:

Private school is expensive we are not using nps which means we shouldn't pay for it. Nps could not support our children

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Accountability, Education, Challenge, Excellence

Revise: better support and differentiated learning for gifted students starting in sixth grade

Importance:

My child is not being challenged at school

Follow up:

Not for my child in public school since their siblings go to public school and I feel like they are not being challenged. It's too late given their social ties to convince them to attend private.

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Excellence, Individuality

Revise: support for gifted students. There is no specialized support for students who show academic promise and we need to supplement with programs like RSM and other tutors

Importance:

Just like IEPs, gifted students should get specialized support from the school system to maximize their potential

Follow up:

Better quality education and guarantee that there will be no prolonged strikes that degrade education quality

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Excellence, Individuality

School principal and staff need to proactively protect and support victims NOT the bullies in the school

Importance:

Our daughter was being bullied by 3 boys in the school known for their bad behavior and although we engaged with the Principal and his staff to address the situation their solution was to blame the victims and protect the bullies. We had to move our daughter to a private school to feel safe.

Follow up:

Fire the principal and his staff, make explicit the consequences to bullies and enforce them in a way that makes victims feel safe and supported.

Important Values:

Accountability, Support, Education

Science curriculum at high school does not match up with math offerings. Simply put - teaching physics to freshmen who have not learned algebra is a waste of time. They're not learning the physics properly and it's really stressful for the kids who don't have the math.

Importance:

As a scientist, I understand why teaching physics, then chemistry, then biology makes sense, but from an educational perspective, without the math background there simply isn't much to do in physics. Teaching Algebra 1 in 8th grade would improve this problem significantly.

Follow up:

Revisit science and math curriculum. Understand the prerequisites for properly learning physics. If you're not going to offer algebra 1 in 8th, then change science to offer a different 9th grade course.

Important Values:

Challenge, Excellence, Education

Short days

Smaller class sizes

Importance:

Class sizes have gotten so large at NPS that they require teachers aides, allowing teachers to shirk their responsibilities on others. In addition, large class sizes make it challenging to have discussions.

Follow up:

NPS insists to teaching to the lowest level in a grade or class while prohibiting leveled classes. This means that none of the students are getting the education they need. We need to recognize that leveling allows for all to succeed.

Important Values:

Responsibility, Education, Individuality

Smaller class sizes

Importance:

Class sizes of 25-28 students of diverse educational needs are too large.

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Differentiation, Challenge, Attention

Smaller class sizes

Importance:

Individualized learning opportunities

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Education, Attention, Engagement

Smaller class sizes

Importance:

My daughter suffered a concussion and the large class sizes and noisy hallways at NNHS were difficult for her to navigate

Follow up:

She transferred back a couple of weeks ago.

Important Values:

Education, Accessibility, Support

Smaller classes in the high school. Our daughter graduated from North in 2022 and she had 30+ kids in many of her AP/honor classes. We were worried that our son would just be able to "coast" if he were to stay in the public schools- he had attended both Ward and Bigelow for reference.

Importance:

Smaller class size means more attention from teachers and less opportunity to fall through the cracks. Our son was reaching the point at Bigelow where he was content to let the more vocal students in his classes dominate discussions etc. We wanted him to have the chance to be "a smart kid"

Follow up:

We are strongly debating bringing him back for his senior year. He misses his friends and would like to have the typical high school experience for at least one year. If we could be assured class size is smaller and the honors and ACP classes will be separated, that would help our decision

Important Values:

Education, Individuality, Support, Respect, Accountability, Responsibility

Smaller classes, more personal connections between students and teachers, more attention to the kids who are in the middle

Importance:

Smaller class sizes allow students to get the attention they need, and allow for valuable discussions and peer and teacher interactions. Teachers can get to know students individually and this helps make sure students are on track, and allows them to be challenged on ways that are appropriate

Follow up:

Not at this point. I have one in college and a junior in high school

Important Values:

Education, Support, Attention, LessPressure

Someone questioned if our kids knew they weren't "real" brothers suggesting might be the reason for their academic struggles - Despite external tests showing som child gifted but lowest in his class (per teacher) they said it wasn't enough. Teacher told in IEP not to speak.

Importance:

The high intelligence kids will do fine. The kids with disabilities need resources. I had no enrichment and I went on to succeed. Smart kids without disabilities will succeed. Red herring.

Follow up:

Doubtful

Important Values:

Accountability, Responsibility, Equality, Inclusion, Respect

Special education. Parents should not have to fight for support services for in particular when the neuropsych has made recommendations. Empathy would also be appreciated. Often times teachers feel unsupported because they work directly with kids with disabilities and don't have enough support.

Importance:

My children have been directly impacted in negative ways. It feels like it's all money - support services are being cut all over the place. There is secrecy and nothing is a team effort. We need to collaborate and work together with respect. I'd like to see team meetings restructured and reframed

Follow up:

My oldest will probably go to North next year. He no longer needs support services so we feel comfortable. The schools could be proactive in identifying special needs and working with parents. If this was the case we would consider coming back. Instead our kids are left on their own until they fail

Important Values:

Responsibility, Education, Support, Respect, Accountability, Inclusion

Stop teaching to the middle. Let kids rise to their potential. My kids were bored and didn't know why they had to keep repeating lessons/skills they had already mastered.

Importance:

Many kids in Newton are gifted and deserve a higher level of education

Follow up:

Stand up to the teachers union. They promote mediocrity. A string of alphabet soup of online degrees does not make you a good teacher or merit a pay raise.

Rising up tiers should be based on performance & parent input.

Important Values:

Challenge, Excellence, Education

Stronger academics and programs for gifted children.

Importance:

Newton public schools do not differentiate in elementary and middle schools.

For gifted kids curriculum is not challenging and they get bored which leads to many unnecessary issues.

Follow up:

Special classrooms for gifted kids in elementary and middle schools just like they do for special needs students.

Important Values:

Challenge, Education, Respect, Equality

Students with IEPs are all treated as if they are intellectually challenged. They are taught together irrespective of their needs/challenges. I wish the school had more funding and could 'stream' their IEP students to groups children with like disabilities.

Importance:

My child did not want to go to school, became sullen, was bullied/teased because of this.

Follow up:

No my youngest child is a senior

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Individuality, Engagement, Respect, Inclusion, Excellence

Support for high intelligence children - more challenging curriculum especially in Elementary.

Importance:

One of my children has complained of being bored at school for years. He is someone who loves to learn and used to love school and now he doesn't like school at all which is disappointing.

Follow up:

Challenge the children who need to be challenged. Have classes that are levelled. This should happen in middle school at a minimum.

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Engagement, Inclusion

Support for High-Intelligence Students Class Size and Curriculum

Importance:

finished

Follow up:

no

Important Values:

Responsibility, Equality, Challenge

Support for high-intelligent students

Importance:

The biggest concern is around motivating the kids to shoot for higher achievements. There seems to be a general acceptance of mediocrity.

Follow up:

It would be helpful to get the stats on Newton students performance relative to other high achieving schools.

Important Values:

Education, Inclusion, Support, Engagement, Challenge, Equality

Support for learners who have enthusiasm and interest to go beyond. My child was told a number of times variations of "No" when she tried to share her interest. E.g. was interested in trying cursive writing, told she can't do that. Interested in multiplication, told "we're just doing addition".

Importance:

Lack of support has SEVERE negative effects on child's confidence. It's really heartbreaking to see a child think they did something wrong by being interested in something or trying to share that interest. My child's confidence blossomed at a school that supports enthusiasm for learning.

Follow up:

Yes. I would love to come back since we moved here "for the schools". I need the schools to build my child's confidence up rather than knock it down. Short of streaming, a change in attitude where wanting to do more is not actively discouraged would be a small but important step

Support for mild issues such as mild adhd

Importance:

Not every student can learn from lectures and worksheets

Follow up:

I'm not sure - smaller classes and varied teaching styles

Important Values:

Support, Challenge, Potential, Attention, Accessibility, Responsiveness, Differentiation

Support for students with learning differences who are meeting grade level but not potential. Aka high intelligence student with

Important Values:

Support, Challenge, Potential, Attention, Accessibility, Responsiveness, Differentiation

Support for students with learning differences who are meeting grade level but not potential. Aka high intelligence student with

Importance:

It seems as if the bar is - are you meeting grade level and not potential. I have a child with adhd and high intelligence and she was not able to access the curriculum but because she is smart she was meeting grade level so no one noticed that she wasn't learning.

Follow up:

For my current child I'm not sure but for my second you could add leveling in at the middle school level (or even younger)

Important Values:

Support, Challenge, Potential, Attention, Accessibility, Responsiveness, Differentiation

Teacher actually teach. Math English and other subject. Teacher to the high and not the lowest

Importance:

Competitive curriculum is NOT at the NPS. That is why we left. We value education

Follow up:

Get new teachers

Teachers access was limited to 20 min parent teacher conferences. They are rushed, & limited in depth. Further, the ability to meet with teachers outside of regular school hours was nearly impossible bc of union rules about working past 4PM. Teachers rarely respond to emails from parents.

Importance:

This isn't about support as much as it is work ethic. The teachers are told they don't need to work past a certain time, and they don't. However, when a parent needs to reach a teacher about an important issue, and they don't respond via email for 3 weeks, that's unacceptable.

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Accountability, Responsibility, Challenge, Engagement

Teachers are often given too much deference, which can sometimes tip the balance against other stakeholders. Parents have been excluded from NPS decisions. But education involves everyone - admin, teachers, parents, and students - and everyone's input is needed for success.

Importance:

Parents are a key stakeholder in their child's education - teachers and admin rely on them to carry out the school's mission - yet they have no voice. For too long in NPS, parents have been marginalized in education.

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Responsibility, Education, Individuality

Terrible morals

Test children for reading disabilities at pre-K screening. Utilize SCIENTIFIC BASED Reading curriculum.

Importance:

Yes, my son has a reading based learning disability that was not diagnosed until he was in 3rd grade. Because he was "meeting the benchmark", he was not

eligible for an IEP Plan. He was stuck in the Lucy Hawkins “just Right” reading program for mainstream readers. This doesn’t work for Dyslexia!!

Follow up:

Use Scientific Based Reading Programs

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Individuality

The academics are another concern.. my kids were learning the multiplication at the end of 1st grade.. my neighbors kids were learning to add and subtract numbers less than 20. A number of parents in our neighborhood felt the public schools were not pushing their kids academically..

Importance:

I need to end this conversation and get back to work now

Follow up:

not right now, I need to leave to get to work

Important Values:

Education, Equality

The amount of time and curriculum need serious review. Our daughter spent a reduced amount of time on fundamental and critical skills, such as writing, grammar, history, science, and math. During her time at NSHS she read 3 classics, and learned chemistry in our basement.

Importance:

Our daughter is now prepared for secondary school. College would have been incredibly challenging with out that knowledge. I believe that NSHS students are lagging and will continue to see a reduction in scores due to the current curriculum, leaving them ill-prepared.

Follow up:

No. Our daughter is graduating and attending Colby College in the fall.

Important Values:

Education, Responsibility

The content of the curriculum was not very challenging if you had a reasonably bright child. Groupings for math and reading don't occur until grade 2 or 3, and even then, when content was completed by our child, she has weeks of doing nothing until the rest of group caught up.

Importance:

Opportunities were missed in elementary school to support high IQ kids. They were left to color, organize the teacher's drawers, help in the art room to fill time while other students were catching up. Our child could have easily been grouped in the next grade level for math or reading.

Follow up:

Absolutely not. The quality of her education outside has been far superior to her experience in Newton. Her school goes much deeper in content compared

to her peers at North & South. Access to teachers, too, surpasses our experience. They aren't "timed out" by union rules.

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Accountability, Responsibility, Challenge, Engagement

The fact that the day finishes at 12:30 on Wednesday makes it very difficult for working parents.

Importance:

Working parents cannot pick up children at 12:30 every week, and after school spots are lacking and extremely expensive. Other towns do not have this weekly short day.

Follow up:

Extend the day to make it feasible for working parents

The focus on fairness might unintentionally disadvantage the very children it aims to assist. They understand the concept of treating everyone equally. Instead of lecturing them, our generation should focus on educating them.

Importance:

I think when you "communicate" to kids that are minorities that they can only compete if you reduce homework or reduce tracking, you are putting something horrible in their head. All kids need to be inspired to compete and be the best they can be. Everyone deserves that. No kid should be patronized

Follow up:

No.

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Responsibility, Challenge, Engagement, Support

[elected official] also lied to me and told me that all of this type teaching was because of DESI. Then I contacted DESI and they told me this was not true. There had been no communication with NPS regarding what I mentioned and there were no instructions about this type of curriculum.

Importance:

The school board, teachers and Superintendent should be working WITH the parents . NOT lying, keeping secrets, or hiding information. When Mr. xx told the xx class he was Bi-Sexual he also told them not to tell anyone. when I asked to see the Curriculum I was told there was not one.

Follow up:

No. I am trying to convince others to leave. NPS are horrible. My son has learned so much more in such a short time at private school it is unbelievable. I never knew how much I was missing academically, even if you put my other thoughts aside. The overall education has gone way down hill.

Important Values:

Education

The huge size of the public high school is intimidating. It is less convincing that my kid would get individualized attention as much in the public school system.

Importance:

I want my child to fully develop into who she is, given all the support that suits her individuality. It is more important that just "good grades".

Follow up:

We haven't rule it out completely.

Important Values:

Individuality

The influence of unions seems quite strong. The strike was surprising. We were at a function and someone was continuously praising their union. As professionals not part of a union, we were taken aback and felt reassured about our choice to exit.

Importance:

students first, strikes are illegal. working families work 12 months a year and cannot cover 11 days of absences without a cost

Follow up:

no. my son is a senior and my daughter is in college.

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Accountability, Respect, Responsibility

The lack of challenge available for grades 6-9 is a real problem for kids' mental health. When my kid was bored, idle in class and had little to no homework, there was so much time for him to dwell upon many minor interpersonal matters.

Importance:

My kids are so much happier when there is a lot of interesting material covered in class and they are feeling productive.

Follow up:

They're set on different paths now, so I don't think so.

Important Values:

Education, Support, Challenge, Respect, Individuality

The level of the curriculum in class should not be lowered to meet the lowest common denominator among the students. Children who are doing well and not struggling are not challenged or learning anything new. This makes it feel like they are limited by having to do work they already know.

Importance:

My child likes to learn, enjoys math and reading, yet the math and reading/spelling she does at school is too simple for her. She doesn't take Russian math or any other tutoring, yet her math homework is done within 5 minutes. Her reading/spelling work is likewise overly simple.

Follow up:

The academic level of the class curriculum needs to be more challenging.
Important Values:
Education, Challenge

The most important reason we went to a private middle school after graduation from the public elementary school as COVID. When the public school was on zoom for a year, the private school stayed open. There was no certainty at the time, we thought moving would give us a better chance to be in school

Importance:

It was our major reason.

Follow up:

We have not ruled out going to public high school. However the 2-week strike recently did push us away a bit.

Important Values:

Individuality

The reading curriculum and approach to teaching reading was problematic. This is being addressed now.

Importance:

My son needed phonics- they were ready to do an IEP. They had very outdated ideas on reading instruction.

Follow up:

probably not now.

Important Values:

Challenge, Engagement, Excellence

The reading curriculum in the grade schools should all be modeled after the inclusion program offered at Angier School (2014). The reading curriculum should be based on Cognitive Science, not theory.

Importance:

Our daughter is dyslexic and struggled until we were able to move her to Angier. All of the Newton schools should be teaching reading curriculum based on science and phonics not just Angier. Listen to the pod cast "sold a story" - it is 100% Newton's issue with the reading curriculum.

Follow up:

no

Important Values:

Education, Responsibility

The reason we are hesitating to return for high school is the stories we are hearing about teacher absenteeism and a lack of substitute teachers and general lack of opportunity for high achieving kids to challenge themselves academically. The coursework available at private school is more rigorous.

Importance:

Kids are losing a lot of learning time and this seems like a solvable problem.

Follow up:

Improve the rigor of the coursework for advanced kids in high school, and recruit permanent subs

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Inclusion, Accountability, Challenge

The school's DEI initiatives seem to swap one bias for another, focusing mainly on race and sexual orientation. This oversimplifies diversity, overlooking its many aspects.

Importance:

Why is this bot lecturing me on why I should reframe my feedback????? Do you want to hear it or not? And why is it asking leading questions and making value judgements about what I write? This is illustrative of the issue I'm raising.⁴

Follow up:

Please address the intolerance inherent in your approach to teaching DEI, starting with this smart bot survery. You're just going to turn off parents. And it's impossible to provide you with meaningful input when it's being summarized and characterized, and when you limit how much I can write.

Important Values:

Education, Engagement, Support, Accountability, Challenge, Excellence

The strike highlighted the advantages of private schooling. Our child in private school wasn't affected, unlike 2 in public. We believe the strike might have conveyed a message that it's acceptable to break the law for personal gain. This led us to consider private schooling for HS next year.

Importance:

Because our kids that are still in NPS were impacted very severely by the strike, missing 2 weeks of classes with no advanced prep.

Follow up:

The strike happened and will likely not happen for a good few years. The key and main driver for us taking another kid out of NPS is the egregious antisemitic and hate filled environment at Newton South HS.

Important Values:

Responsibility, Education, Respect

The strike really hit us hard... considering private schools now

Importance:

I stand with the school board...

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Education

⁴ Same issue as noted in prior footnote; interview chatbot asked parent to rephrase for clarity of feedback.

The teachers need more support. Pay aides better salaries - figure out how to make this happen even w the budget situation. More social-emotional support at the middle and high schools. Again it seems like budget wins over kids and teachers. A more thorough response to anti-Jewish hate.

Importance:

The quality of education and teacher retention and satisfaction will be higher this benefits everyone.

Follow up:

Same as my earlier answer

Important Values:

Responsibility, Education, Support, Respect, Accountability, Inclusion

The teachers should not discuss their personal sexual preferences with the students. Mr. xx told a classroom full of 7 year old children that he was bi-sexual. this was the first of many of these types of experiences that caused me to take my child out of Williams Elementary School.

Importance:

the Personal Sexual conduct, preference, desires, actions, of a teacher should not be discussed in school. especially when the parents are not informed (I found out this happened because my son told me). Also, elementary school aged children are too young for this topic.

Follow up:

No. When I shared my thoughts with [administration] on a phone conversation, they thought they hung up but I overheard them swearing and calling me names. [administrator] said " what the FU*K was that?" And [administrator] Said " I don't have time for this Sh*t. Then they shared insults about me

Important Values:

Education

The team sports were excellent in my opinion. My daughter got great experience and mentoring from the field hockey and track coaches.

Importance:

Learning to juggle sports and rigorous education prepares kids for life, team work and the working world.

Follow up:

No. The quality has dropped too far to take my kids out of public school. My daughter (incorrectly) thought my wife was saying we might return her to Newton North from BB&N and she burst into tears and said "my friends all hate it there. They are not learning anything."

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Responsibility, Challenge, Engagement, Support

The time spent on social justice topics in early grades is too much compared to time spent on academics.

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The Ward school building was in disrepair during the year my son went there

Importance:

There was a leak in the other kindergarten classroom which meant my son's classroom had even more children in it. This was a distraction from learning.

Follow up:

Not anymore. We left six years ago due to lack of attention for my son, crumbling classroom and a kindergarten teacher who was lackluster.

Important Values:

Engagement, Accountability

There are too many children and not enough staff: classes were too large; administrators ignored and mishandled academic and social emotional struggles of our child because they are responsible for too many children.

Importance:

Well meaning educational professionals struggled because too much was asked of them and as a result our child suffered.

Follow up:

Smaller classes and smaller work loads for guidance counselors so that children who do not make their challenges know by acting out are not ignored.

Important Values:

Education, Accountability, Support, Responsibility, Challenge, Engagement

There is a respect for the school and fellow peers that is positive at private school. The relationships between students are much healthier and they encourage each other to be their best, rather than cutting each other down, as we experienced at NPS.

Importance:

At NPS my son was made to feel bad about sharing his ideas with the class. His peers ridiculed him for speaking up and the teacher did not intervene. It took a year of small class sizes at his new school for him to feel comfortable participating freely.

Follow up:

The whole culture would need to change.

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Excellence, Responsibility, Respect, Engagement

There needs to be more transparency about the disciplinary issues in the middle school--I have heard that really bad things are happening and as a result, I would not want to send my socially awkward child there because I don't think he would be protected.

Importance:

Middle school is a critical age and also a time when children can be quite cruel to each other. I would want to feel comfortable that my child would be safe.

Follow up:

for middle school, unlikely...the class sizes and school sizes are too large and the behavior issues too significant. For high school, we'd want to be sure that we wouldn't hear "he's doing great, here's a B". All children should be encouraged to excel.

Important Values:

Education, Accountability, Engagement, Responsibility

There seemed to be some unfair tactics at play at a certain place. One individual was using the support system to her advantage in a not-so-cool way. The support system there didn't seem to be very effective. A few kids decided to leave due to dissatisfaction with the situation.

Importance:

I left NPS because the education at middle school was not good and the administration was bad at handling problem kids

Follow up:

No. My kids are happy. There is kindness and zero tolerance for bullying. where they are

Important Values:

Education, Engagement, Accountability

There should be full teams at Day, no exceptions

Importance:

When I say full teams I mean the academic teams not the sports teams. Each student should have access to the same experience.

Follow up:

I would love to see my children academically challenged, my oldest who we moved to private school was meeting expectations, a quiet kid, didn't make any trouble or need special ed, he didn't stand out, just teachers didn't put any effort to engage him, they didn't show any care.

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Respect, Challenge, Support, Responsibility, Accountability

There should be more counselors to advise the students and the families on the process of college application.

Importance:

I was not talking about the so emotional support. I am talking about the college application process.

Follow up:

We had a chance to talk to someone who works in the admissions office at a school. We were told that there is a stark difference between the recommendation letters from the private school teachers and the public school

teachers. public school recommendations tend to be generic. That makes a big diff

Important Values:

Motivation, Education, Responsibility, Attention, Engagement

There were many reasons we left public school system. But one of the most important to us was that Covid mitigations were very poor in the school (non-existent basically) and we have several people in the family who were and are at risk of complications (including our son).

Importance:

Having a safe environment that does not threaten our family's wellbeing in (surprisingly) important to us.

Follow up:

Nothing changed at NPS, so no

Important Values:

Safety, Education, Challenge

There were not enough enrichment opportunities for our kids. They were bright but were held from continuing to excel by guidelines and a lack of enrichment materials.

Importance:

I want my children to love learning and my son told me that in 5th grade he learned on some days, and other kids learned on other days, depending on their level of comprehension. There needs to be more opportunity for those students that have strong abilities to keep them engaged.

Follow up:

Strong connections with teachers, small class sizes, advanced classes, better club opportunities in the middle school, more sports opportunities through school.

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Excellence, Responsibility, Respect, Engagement

There's a lot of focus on teaching kids progressive concepts. It's surprising to see what's being taught to young students. My little one often comes home puzzled. As a faith-based family, we wish teachers would consult us on the curriculum.

Importance:

We are religious

Follow up:

Probably no

Important Values:

Education, Support, Challenge, Equality, Responsibility, Inclusion, Engagement, Attention

This is a strange interview form. I would've thought you'd ask the question of why someone is no longer in the district as context for any ideas. My son attends landmark school through a settlement agreement due to severe dyslexia and failure to progress at NPS.

Importance:

My idea is that you improve Cora reading instruction and intervene earlier with students rather than waiting for complete failure. The school district light Newton, with the resources of Newton should be able to support all students.

Follow up:

Dramatic improvement in ability, support children with dyslexia

Important Values:

Inclusion, Individuality, Excellence, Engagement

To allow diversity of ideas and other peoples perspectives

Importance:

Teachers/admin don't want to hear other perspectives

Follow up:

Take down mural of drag queens at NN. Have you Googled them? Not a stellar bunch. Perhaps put up some Presidents or war hero's.

Important Values:

Individuality, Accountability, Responsibility, Respect

Tracking for math - would like more challenges for strong math students

Importance:

Our son needed additional challenge - he was bored in math

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Challenge, Engagement, Excellence, Education

very positive experience with two older children at NPS, but had to send our youngest to Carroll so she could receive an appropriate education given she is dyslexic

Importance:

NPS struggles to teach children with dyslexia and in general the way reading is taught is not optimal for many children

Follow up:

not at this point

Important Values:

Education, Support, Challenge, Engagement, Adaptability

Walking to elementary school and NOT messing up neighborhoods with buffer zones! I understand the complexity of fluctuating enrollment but having a community of kids around us going to the SAME elementary school

from our street was the literal reason we moved to Newton. It's critical to maintain.

Importance:

For all students, having a sense of community is critical. Part of this for younger kids is walking with their friends and caregivers to their school, and then gradually gaining the independence to perhaps walk alone. It's an old school suburban ideal that we can continue to prioritize in Newton.

Follow up:

Not to middle school, no. Perhaps to high school.

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Equality

We are looking forward to our son attending the Newton Public Schools when he's old enough.

Importance:

We're very interested in our son getting the best education possible, and we believe public schools offer advantages that private schools do not.

Follow up:

Just wait a couple of years.

Important Values:

Education, Engagement, Excellence, Individuality, Responsibility

We choose a private school that was known for its academic rigor and diverse faculty. As parents of mixed race children (I'm caucasian, my wife is from Ghana), we wanted our kids to be exposed to faculty that looked like them and were reflective of the community at large.

Importance:

Boys of color are often disproportionately disciplined compared to other groups, which can contribute to them falling behind in the early school years. We wanted our boys to really enjoy and love school, and not fall behind because of issues related to race and implicit biases.

Follow up:

It's not enough to talk about diversity and inclusion, but it should be reflected in the hiring and promotion of teachers.

Important Values:

Education, Equality

We chose JCDS because we were specifically looking for Jewish education for our children. We think very highly of Newton Public Schools and, if for some reason JCDS was no longer a good fit for our kids, we would send them to NPS. We will seriously consider NNHS for high school.

Importance:

We chose to live in Newton so that we would have the option of sending our kids to the public schools, so, even though they are not enrolled now in

elementary school, being in the district is still important to us for future possibilities in education.

Follow up:

Not at the moment

Important Values:

Excellence, Inclusion, Education, Challenge

We enrolled our oldest son in a competitive exam school because he was not being sufficiently challenged; we noticed it when he was in 5th grade at Ward and it continued at Bigelow in 6th grade.

Importance:

I do not have an idea

Follow up:

probably not

Important Values:

Excellence, Education, Respect, Challenge

We felt that our son was not being challenged and there were many disruptions in the classroom. Because he was doing fine he did not get any attention.

Importance:

I felt that it impacted the class environment for teachers and students.

Follow up:

not at this point.

Important Values:

Challenge, Engagement, Excellence

We had a wonderful experience with our teacher who gave our daughter support and educational guidance. We did not see that with the other teachers

Importance:

Teacher support of the child is so helpful to the parents and if any extra help is needed.

Follow up:

If it's possible to reduce the ratio of students to teachers

Important Values:

Education, Support, Challenge, Engagement

We had some wonderful teachers throughout our 10 years at Angier however I noticed a worrisome trend with teacher morale and engagement. Teachers who taught my eldest child and then taught my younger child four years later, were not the same -- they seemed discontent and unhappy and the kids noticed

Importance:

Teachers are the backbone of the education system. Without their full engagement, students suffer.

Follow up:

We started looking at NPS for our eldest to, currently in 11th and 9th grades. The current state of the High School offering left much to be desired. Huge class sizes. Difficult to get electives. When teachers are absent, no subs, students have WAY too much free/unstructured time in their day.

Important Values:

Engagement, Challenge, Attention, Education

We need more inclusive sports opportunities. My kid, an 8th grader, didn't make the soccer team, which was a big blow considering they've been playing since pre-school and their skills are on par with the rest of the team. They cut 3 people which didn't seem necessary since most kids were on teams

Importance:

This is important because it helps children make friends and be part of team. My child felt very isolated and struggled socially.

Follow up:

Find a way to bring back more activities and out of school opportunities. Also, my child was always paired with "difficult children" because she was well behaved which made for a less than ideal experience. This was told to me during teacher conferences.

Important Values:

Education, Challenge, Engagement, Inclusion

We never sent our kids to Bowen and there were some key reasons. 1). Inability of school to decide when, if and how to re-open following Covid.

Importance:

Reason #2. When Bowen eventually decided to re-open kids were not in school each day for the whole day. In a family unit with 2 full time working parents this was not workable for us. We were not available to home-school our kids.

Follow up:

Reason #3. We don't believe online learning is adequate for children, especially for younger children. They need the in-person experience & monitoring. Reason #4. We wanted our children educated in a school that provided religious studies of some sort.

Important Values:

Education, Support, Responsibility, Equality, Challenge, Engagement, Excellence, Attention, Adaptability, Motivation

We never used the school system since we moved to Newton. Our daughter does a remote program with a private school and it has been great this way for her. We've been watching the strike unfolding and we felt we were in a much better spot, that didn't inspire us to ever send our kid to NPS.

Importance:

The quality of the curriculum and the ability to control what is been learned is important. Also, the program allows her to go as fast as she wants. The

flexibility is amazing and they provide extracurricular activities and elective classes. Even remote she feels she « belongs » to her school.

Follow up:

No.... The public school would never be as personalized as she is getting it at the moment.

Important Values:

Education, Challenge

We opted for Jewish day schools so it was nothing against NPS. We do have a child with ADHD and anxiety and we found the Newton public schools great to work with on creating an IEP for our child.

Importance:

Providing good services to kids with learning disabilities is one of NPS's strengths and a major draw.

Follow up:

If the Jewish day schools couldn't have accommodated our child we would have sent him to NPS.

Important Values:

Inclusion, Support

We plan to send our children to Newton public schools

We were very disappointed with how long school was virtual during the pandemic. This was very harmful to our child and made our child more interested in private schools.

Importance:

My child has a significant IEP and didn't learn anything online.

Follow up:

No

Important Values:

Support, Individuality, Education

We weren't happy about frequent class cancellations and teachers not being responsive.

Importance:

I needed teacher support for my son when he needed help. His English teacher would. It even respond to my emails.

Follow up:

Classes are big, there are fewer teachers and teacher absentiism issue needs to be resolved.

We would not have pulled our daughter out of NPS if you had paid more attention to the science showing that kids were safer in school and kept the kids in person during COVID. We took our daughter out to attend a private school that was in person every day of the pandemic.

Importance:

As a taxpayer I expect our city and school system to make decisions in the best interest of the kids and that seems to be getting lost.

Follow up:

In elementary school kids should have more time outside during the day, and longer lunch and recess. School lunches should be healthy and not include processed junk food. Afterschool should accommodate all working parents and be more structured. All grades should challenge gifted kids.

Important Values:

Education, Excellence, Inclusion, Accountability, Challenge

We're considering taking another one of our 3 kids out of NPS, due to the frequent anti-semitic incidents they're experiencing at Newton South high school with no protection from administration (some weak lip service, but almost quiet consent).

Importance:

Because my daughter has been verbally attacked in multiple instances (holocaust jokes, slurs, etc) & made to feel very unsafe like many of her Jewish peers, with no protection from administration. Some staff have been a part of this with anti-semitic material being taught & published in school paper

Follow up:

Uphold the statutory mandate to provide a safe learning environment for all students - including Jews

Important Values:

Responsibility, Education, Respect

When I mentioned my son was avoiding school after a month of Kindergarten, I was told 'don't worry, your child is okay.' But they weren't. He started off excited, but within a month, he was despondent. Traumatized because they struggled with the lessons. NPS didn't intervene. He suffered

Importance:

Because it is unacceptable to hurt children and blame students who are neurodivergent. "He could do better if he tried harder". Do you work on his sight words with him? Email

Follow up:

Doubtful

Important Values:

Accountability, Responsibility, Equality, Inclusion, Respect

With our other child, we've seen progress on how the school supports disabilities. Over the past 3 years, they've been able to better balance the "too easy"/ "too hard" challenge of adapting curriculum to his needs. Is a tough balance but they really make an effort.

Importance:

It is important to challenge our son and help him progress, while not overwhelming him/giving him problems he's not prepared for (for example physics without having been exposed to the math yet.)

Follow up:

We are there

Important Values:

Challenge, Excellence, Individuality, Engagement

Would like to work with teaching staff who feel appreciated.

Importance:

My child had a terrible experience during COVID from staff that was challenged.

Follow up:

More attention to facilities (bathrooms and water fountains) and how they impact kids and learning

Important Values:

Education, Support, Challenge, Engagement, Individuality

Yes, the principal at XXX middle school where our son went is a great role model and example for all to aspire to. He clearly set the bar on the acceptable values in the school, held both students and teachers accountable and ensured they were upheld.

Importance:

Our son felt safe and supported even when incidents occurred. He felt the principal and his staff were on top of it.

Follow up:

find more principals like this one

Important Values:

Accountability, Support, Education

Your AI bot asked me to frame this more respect1. Enhance principal training to better identify and support high-achieving students. 2. Consider leadership changes. 3. Reinforce. 4. Reinforce. 5. Prioritize resources for gifted students at all schools, not just select ones. Can you sense my urgency?

Importance:

Your administration did harm to my children. I'm angry. Full of rage. I'm embarrassed to say they attended the Newton Public Schools. I've lost all confidence in the administration. I don't believe you're capable of repairing my trust. The teachers were fine. The administration was an embarrassment.

Follow up:

Not a chance.

Important Values:

Trust, Education, Support