

Choose 2 Connect



2023-2024

Student & Family Handbook

Revised February 2024

Newton Board of Education

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individually and according to law.**

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Welcome and Introduction

This handbook has been developed in an effort to effectively communicate general information, rules, regulations, and policies established at Choose 2 Connect (C2C). Rules published in this handbook are subject to change as needed to ensure continued compliance with federal, state, or local regulations. Not all rules of behavior can be written and inserted in a guidebook; however, we expect students to follow the rules and policies contained in this handbook. We hope you will find this handbook helpful and that you will keep it accessible for reference purposes throughout the school year and summer. Have a great school year!

Mission

Choose 2 Connect empowers students with engaging learning experiences, fostering a love for learning and helping each child discover their unique potential.

Vision

Guided by the principles of collaboration, creativity, and community engagement, C2C aims to provide a rich tapestry of academic support, diverse enrichment activities, and social-emotional development opportunities. We are dedicated to nurturing well-rounded individuals who not only excel academically but also develop the critical skills and values necessary for success in an ever-evolving global society.

We foster academic excellence, creativity, and social-emotional growth through a diverse range of engaging activities in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Physical Education, STEAM, and Social Emotional Learning (SEL). Guided by quarterly themes, our program encourages educators to develop cross-curricular lessons, sparking curiosity and collaborative exploration. Through strong partnerships with students, parents, teachers, and the community, C2C is committed to providing a dynamic and supportive environment that equips students with the skills and enthusiasm needed for a successful future in the 21st century.

Through a blend of interactive programs, personalized learning experiences, and mentorship, C2C aspires to inspire curiosity, resilience, and a sense of belonging in each student. By fostering a positive and inclusive atmosphere, we aim to instill the confidence and motivation needed to navigate challenges, embrace diversity, and contribute meaningfully to both local and global communities.

Goals

- To provide high-quality education and enrichment programs that will enable students to improve academic achievement and promote positive behavior and appropriate social interaction with peers and adults.
- To establish collaborative relationships that offer opportunities for literacy and related educational activities to the families of participating students.
- To measure participants' progress and program effectiveness through monitoring and evaluating.

C2C Core Values

1. **Everyone belongs here.**
 - a. I will be aware of my words, actions, and how others see me to make everyone feel welcome.
2. **Everyone is worthy of respect and compassion.**
 - a. I practice conscious, active, empathetic listening.
 - b. I treat others the way they want to be treated.
3. **Everyone works together to achieve.**
 - a. I practice putting others' needs before my own.
 - b. I commit to being fair to others by doing my own share, asking for help when I do not understand, following directions, and encouraging others.
4. **Everyone strives to see how someone else sees the world, *especially* when we do not agree.**
 - a. I can agree to disagree.
 - b. I'm quick to say "Excuse me," "Please," "Thank you," "You're Welcome," or "I'm Sorry."

Importance of Family Involvement

It's super important for families to be part of the C2C because it helps students do better in school. When families are involved, everyone works together to make sure students have what they need to learn and grow. Talking to C2C staff and being part of your child's learning journey helps everyone understand how they're doing in school. We view families as teammates, supporting students in and out of the classroom. This teamwork makes learning more fun and helps students remember what they learn. So, when families get involved, it makes C2C even better, helping students succeed!

Program Information

Program Schedule

<u>Merriam</u>	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
2:30 - 2:50	Snack	Snack	Snack	Snack	Snack
2:50-3:45	Physical Activity	Physical Activity	Physical Activity	Physical Activity	Physical Activity Free Choice
3:45-4:15	STAR Hour Gorillas Pandas Cheetahs Orcas Cobras	STAR Hour Gorillas Pandas Cheetahs Orcas Cobras	STAR Hour Gorillas Pandas Cheetahs Orcas Cobras	STAR Hour Gorillas Pandas Cheetahs Orcas Cobras	
4:15-4:45	Club Day	Art	SEL	STEAM	STEAM
4:45-5:15	Technology and/or Physical Activity	Technology and/or Physical Activity	Technology and/or Physical Activity	Technology and/or Physical Activity	Technology and/or Physical Activity
5:15-5:30	Dismissal	Dismissal	Dismissal	Dismissal	Dismissal

<u>Halsted</u>	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
2:40 - 2:50	Snack	Snack	Snack	Snack	Snack
2:50-3:45	STEAM Clubs FBLA: Monday to Thursday till 4:30 pm	STEAM Clubs FBLA: Monday to Thursday till 4:30 pm	STEAM Clubs FBLA: Monday to Thursday till 4:30 pm	STEAM Clubs FBLA: Monday to Thursday till 4:30 pm	Physical Activity Free Choice
3:45-4:15	STAR Hour	STAR Hour	STAR Hour	STAR Hour	STEAM Free Choice
4:15-5:15	Physical Activity	Physical Activity	Physical Activity	Physical Activity	
5:15-5:30	Dismissal	Dismissal	Dismissal	Dismissal	Dismissal

Operating Hours and Days

- The Choose 2 Connect After-School Program operates on weekdays, Monday through Friday.
 - Program hours at Merriam Elementary School are from 2:30 pm to 5:30 pm.
 - Program hours at Halsted Middle School are from 2:45 pm to 5:45 pm.
- Holidays and Closures:
 - The program will be closed on school holidays, professional development days, and other scheduled closures. Parents will be notified of these dates in advance.

Attendance Policy

Attendance and Punctuality:

“Research shows that good afterschool programs can not only improve academic performance but also influence school-day attendance, even when most don’t appear to make it an intentional goal. They accomplish this by:

- Providing socialization and peer attention in a supervised venue.
- Re-establishing the link between effort and results—first in a non-school activity.
- Engaging students in challenging activities that help them develop persistence, a trait critical to later success in school and life.
- Providing consistent contact with caring, stable adults.
- Increasing the sense of belonging at school. ¹

¹ Attendance Works. “How Good Afterschool Programs Improve School-Day ...” *Institute of Education Sciences*, ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/west/relwestFiles/pdf/508_Afterschool_Attendance_Works.pdf. Accessed 6 Mar. 2024.

Choose 2 Connect Attendance Policy

If your child is enrolled in the Choose 2 Connect (C2C) program, he/she is expected to attend on the days the parent/guardian indicated on the enrollment forms.

In order for students to benefit from the 21st Century After School Program, regular and consistent attendance is required. Regular and consistent attendance is defined as attending, on average, three of the five scheduled days every week, unless ill or other unavoidable conflict. Research done on 21st CCLC programs indicate that students who attend regularly experience much more academic and behavioral benefits than those whose attendance is irregular.

Program participants are expected to attend for a minimum of one (1) hour each program day, unless there are unavoidable scheduling conflicts or emergencies.

Please coordinate with the child's school to ensure you have completed Request for Supervision at Dismissal Time From School per Board Policy 8601 **if you want your child monitored between regular school dismissal and C2C's start time.**

Students that are marked absent from the school day will not be allowed to attend C2C that day.

Students that are dismissed from school early for an appointment, such as a dental or doctor visit, may return to C2C with a parent or guardian drop off by 3:00 pm.

Merriam Students are expected to report to the gym at dismissal time. Their homeroom teacher will alert them to any changes.

Halsted students must check in to C2C in the cafeteria by the time the C2C bells ring at **2:45 pm** unless they are registered for an afterschool activity such as Student Council or Play.

- **If your child is late to Halsted C2C:**
 - **First Time:** Warning by the Site Coordinator, Email to Family
 - **Second Time:** Family Phone Call
 - **Third Time:** Will have to walk home or be picked up; cannot enter C2C.

Once a child is enrolled, attendance will be monitored daily during each meeting period (up to four a day). If your child does not attend C2C their absence will be recorded.

Consequences for Excessive Absences:

- *Early Intervention:*
 - The program staff will conduct early intervention measures for participants with recurring absences. This may include meetings with parents/guardians to identify and address underlying issues.
- *Attendance Review:*

- Participants with chronic attendance issues will undergo an attendance review process. This may involve a meeting with parents/guardians, program staff, and other relevant stakeholders to discuss potential solutions and interventions.
- *Program Disenrollment:*
 - If attendance issues persist and efforts to address the problem are unsuccessful, the program reserves the right to disenroll participants to make room for others who can benefit from the program.
- *Appeals Process:*
 - Participants or their parents/guardians have the right to appeal disenrollment decisions. The appeals process will involve a review by program leadership and may include a meeting with the concerned parties.

Please contact community@newtonnj.org or (973) 383-7440 ext. 2501 with any questions or concerns.

Food Policy

- Snacks will be provided to all students during their first activity.
- Any snacks brought from home must be NUT FREE and will only be allowed during the snack period.
- We encourage all students to bring a reusable water bottle labeled with their name.
 - Please contact us if your child is in need of a reusable water bottle, and we will provide them with a bottle if we have a ready supply. *Please note that as the year progresses the supply will be limited.*

Early Dismissal and Inclement Weather Policy

The C2C Afterschool Program will not operate on days when the school has an early dismissal including planned half days and may close for inclement weather even if school was in session.

1. Communication Channels:
 - a. In the event of inclement weather that may lead to the closure of our afterschool program, information will be communicated through the following channels:
 - i. Email: Families will receive an email notification from Choose 2 Connect with details about the closure.
 - ii. Text Messages: We will send out SMS alerts to the primary contact numbers provided during registration.
 - iii. Website: Updates will be posted on the Newton Public Schools Website (www.newtonnj.org) in the "News" or "Announcements" section.
2. Timely Notification:
 - a. Every effort will be made to notify families of any program closures as early as possible. However, please note that sometimes weather conditions may change rapidly, and decisions may need to be made on short notice.

3. Make-up Days:
 - a. In the event of a program closure due to inclement weather, we will make every effort to schedule make-up days to ensure that students do not miss out on planned activities and learning experiences.
4. Emergency Contacts:
 - a. Please ensure that your emergency contact information is up-to-date in our records. If there are any changes to your contact details, notify the program at community@newtonnj.org or call (973) 383-7440 x 2501
5. Student Pick-up Procedures:
 - a. If weather conditions worsen during program hours and an early closure is necessary, parents/guardians will be notified, and we kindly request prompt pick-up of your child to ensure their safety.
 - b. **Busing:** According to the Newton Publics School Board of Education Policy 8600: “When the schools of this district are closed for inclement weather or other conditions, no transportation will be provided for students enrolled in any public, nonpublic, charter school, and/or renaissance school.”

Program Staff and Roles

All C2C staff are required to be employees of the Newton Public Schools. They must complete a Criminal History Check, Employment Verification, and Reference Check before they can begin working at C2C.

Program Director:

Elysia Carballo, Director of Community Schools

ecaraballo@newtonnj.org

(973) 383-7440 ext. 2232

1. Oversees the entire 21st CCLC program.
2. Responsible for program planning, implementation, and evaluation.
3. Coordinates with stakeholders, including schools, families, and community partners.
4. Establishes and maintains partnerships with local organizations.
5. Coordinates resources and services provided by community partners.
6. Provide training and professional development for program staff.
7. Keep staff updated on best practices and new educational initiatives.
8. Manages the program budget.
9. Ensures financial accountability and compliance.
10. Connects families in need of services to Community Organizations

Administrative Assistant:

Martha Conlon, Administrative Assistant to the Director of Community Schools

mconlon@newtonnj.org

(973) 383-7440 ext. 2500

1. Facilitates communication and involvement of parents and families

2. Organizes family events, workshops, and activities
3. Maintains the C2C bus roster and waiting list
4. Oversees C2C student registration
5. Manages the clerical aspect of all field trips including but not limited to generating the permission slip, communicating to families about the trip, collecting any money due, and recording all permission slips received.
6. Connects families in need of services to Community Organizations

Site Coordinators:

Merriam Avenue Elementary School

Alison Stiehl, astiehl@newtonnj.org, (973) 383-7202 ext. 1500

Judy Cooper, jcooper@newtonnj.org, (973) 382-7202 ext. 1

Halsted Middle School

Kathy Bottoni, kbottoni@newtonnj.org, (973) 383-7440 ext. 2500

Judy Harland, jharland@newtonnj.org, (973) 383-7440 ext. 2500

- a. One for each program site.
 - i. **Please contact the Site Coordinator at your child's school for C2C questions, concerns, or to ask for academic support for your child.**
- b. Responsible for day-to-day operations at their respective sites.
 - i. Including but not limited to:
 1. Staff Schedules
 2. Family Communication
 3. Daily Lesson Plans
 4. Student Conduct Concerns
 5. Emergency Plans
- c. Coordinates with teachers, support staff, and community partners.
- d. Recruits, trains, and manages volunteers.
 - i. Coordinates their involvement in program activities.

Teaching Staff:

Please contact your child's Site Coordinator to communicate with C2C Facilitators and paraprofessionals

1. Includes certified teachers, sub-certified teachers, paraprofessionals, and subject-specific instructors.
2. Provides academic support and enrichment activities.
3. Implements lesson plans aligned with program goals.

Support Staff:

1. School Nurse as needed to maintain a safe environment for students with chronic medical conditions

2. Data Manager responsible for the accurate recording of all C2C attendance for all activities during the school year and the summer. Assist in program logistics, data management, and communication.

Local Level Evaluator:

Management and Evaluation Services (M&E)

- Designs and implements program assessments and evaluations.
- Collects and analyzes data to measure program effectiveness.
- Will conduct student interviews and family focus groups throughout the year

Communication Channels

1. **Email:** C2C sends regular updates, newsletters, and reminders via email
2. **Phone Calls:** C2C will make personal phone calls to parents/guardians to convey important information or to discuss individual student progress.
3. **Text Messages:** To send quick updates, reminders, or alerts to families
4. **Monthly Family Events:** C2C hosts regular monthly parent meetings or workshops to provide information about the program, share student achievements, and address any concerns or questions parents may have.
5. **Parent-Teacher Conferences:** C2C provides opportunities for one-on-one meetings between parents and program staff to discuss student progress, goals, and any areas of concern.
6. **Social Media:** C2C utilizes Halsted and Merriam Elementary's social media platforms to share program updates, highlight student achievements, and engage with families.
7. **Newsletters:** C2C news and information appears in the Fall and Spring Brave News and in our own Winter and Summer Newsletters. Each includes updates on program activities, upcoming events, and resources for families.
8. **Flyers/Handouts:** Your child will frequently come home with C2C flyers or handouts with program information and upcoming events. We will also distribute flyers at C2C pick up locations.
9. **Website:** C2C maintains a program website where families can find information about the program, staff, schedule, and upcoming events. <https://c2cnewton.weebly.com/>
10. **Surveys:** We send two family surveys a year. We value feedback from families about their experiences with the program and areas for improvement. Please see your email for these survey opportunities.
11. **Multilingual Resources:** We work to ensure that all materials are offered in Spanish. We also strive to send out emails and texts in a families chosen language in the PowerSchool parent portal.

Student Enrollment and Participation

Family Registration Procedures

Registration Options

1. Online
 - a. Go to the [C2C website](#).
 - b. This can also be found by going to www.newtonnj.org and clicking on Community Schools.
2. Paper Registration is available in the Main Offices of Merriam and Halsted
3. Important Terms
 - a. *A **designated escort** is a parent, guardian, or student in 5th-12th grades appointed by the student's parent or guardian during C2C registration.*
 - b. **Dismissal Options**
 - i. Walking, ***only for grades 5-8***, at designated dismissal time. There will be no crossing guards after 3:30 pm.
 1. **Walk** at 3:30 pm, 4:30 pm, or 5:15 pm.
 - a. Students will only be allowed to walk at the time(s) you choose.
 - ii. Pick up begins at 3:00 pm. Please bring your photo ID with you to the front door of the school. *Students will not be signed out to anyone not listed on the sign out sheet.*
 1. *Merriam*: Main Office Vestibule
 2. *Halsted*: Visitors Entrance
 - iii. Busing will be **limited to 51 students**. Students that are registered for the bus, but **do not use it, will be removed after two weeks of non-use**.
 1. Students will be assigned to a bus stop that is closest to their home address.
 2. C2C buses will begin dropping students off at approximately 5:30 pm. Please be at the bus stop at least 5 minutes prior.
 3. 3rd and 4th grade students will not be released from the bus **without a designated escort**.
 - a. **If a designated escort is not present at the bus stop**, your child will be returned to Merriam Avenue School and must be picked up. Phone calls will be made to parents/guardians and/or emergency contacts to pick the student up.
 - b. You may give your child permission to walk from the bus stop to your home by completing the form below and returning it to C2C. Your child will be unsupervised upon being dropped off, and there are no crossing guards after 3:30 pm.
 - c. [Merriam Bus Walking Form](#)

Merriam Registration

1. Please select the days you would like your child to attend. Your child's homeroom teacher will only send them to C2C on the days you have picked. Otherwise, your child will be dismissed with their class at the end of the day.
2. **Dismissal Option for Merriam include:**
 - a. Pick up by a designated escort.
 - b. Ride the bus.
 - i. Merriam students must be met by a designated escort unless this [form is completed and returned](#) to C2C.

Halsted Registration

1. Halsted students must check in to C2C in the cafeteria by the time the C2C bells ring at 2:45 pm unless they are registered for an afterschool activity such as Student Council or Play.
 - a. Students at Halsted have permission to leave the building at school dismissal **unless you have marked that they must be picked up at dismissal from the main office in the PowerSchool Parent Portal.**
 - b. **If your child is late to Halsted C2C:**
 - i. **First Time:** Warning by the Site Coordinator, Email to Family
 - ii. **Second Time:** Family Phone Call
 - iii. **Third Time:** Will have to walk home or be picked up; cannot enter C2C.
2. *Dismissal Option for Halsted include*
 - a. **Walk** from C2C at 3:30 pm, 4:30 pm, or 5:15 pm.
 - b. **Pick up** by a designated escort.
 - c. **Ride the bus**

Enrollment Procedures

Please allow at least 3 to 5 school days to be contacted by C2C confirming your child has been registered. You will receive an email confirming their registration and providing you with a start date. *Your child cannot start C2C until you receive this date.*

If you choose Bus Dismissal, you will also be notified via email if your child has a spot on the bus and the best bus stop.

Days Attending: Merriam

When you enroll your child please be sure to make sure you mark all the days you expect them to attend. This is especially important for Merriam students because your child's homeroom teacher will dismiss them with their class on the days you marked as NOT attending C2C.

We understand plans change, if your child will not be attending Merriam C2C please send a note to your child's homeroom teacher.

If you need to adjust the days your child attends please contact us at community@newtonnj.org or at (973) 383-7440 ext. 2501.

Students at Halsted have permission to attend all days of C2C and will not be excluded from any days unless a family request is sent to the Halsted Site Coordinator or the Administrative Assistant to the Director of Community Schools.

Grouping Students

1. Merriam
 - i. Students will be grouped into five mixed grade level groups. Groups will be changed quarterly depending on the needs of the group.
 - a. Gorillas
 - b. Pandas
 - c. Cheetahs
 - d. Orcas
 - e. Cobras
2. Halsted
 - i. Students will be grouped based on their club choices or by interest.
 - ii. STAR hour groups will be by grade level when possible.

Transportation Information

C2C conforms to all Newton Public Schools District Policies for Student Transportation.

We provide transportation with a C2C late run bus daily at approximately 5:30 pm. We will provide a trained bus aide when possible. The bus driver is provided a list of students, their bus stop, and if they require a designated escort to dismiss from the bus.

Bus stops are approved by the Newton Board of Education annually, usually in August. Families can request bus stops be added to the bus for the next school year.

Busing will be **limited to 51 students**. Students that are registered for the bus, but **do not use it, will be removed after two weeks of non-use**.

1. Students will be assigned to a bus stop that is closest to their home address.
2. C2C buses will begin dropping students off at approximately 5:30 pm. Please be at the bus stop at least 5 minutes prior.
3. 3rd and 4th grade students will not be released from the bus **without a designated escort**.
 - i. **If a designated escort is not present at the bus stop**, your child will be returned to Merriam Avenue School and must be picked up. Phone calls will be made to parents/guardians and/or emergency contacts to pick the student up.
 - ii. You may give your child permission to walk from the bus stop to your home by completing the form below and returning it to C2C. Your child will be unsupervised upon being dropped off, and there are no crossing guards after 3:30 pm.

Pick Up Procedures from C2C

For families picking up students from the Choose 2 Connect (C2C) the following procedures must be followed.

1. **Registration for Pickup:** All individuals authorized to pick up students must be listed at the time of registration. This ensures that the program has a record of who is allowed to pick up the child.
2. **Photo Identification:** The first few times an authorized individual comes to pick up a student, they must present a valid photo identification. This is required until the C2C gatekeeper recognizes the individual and can verify their identity without needing ID presentation.
3. **Authorized Individuals Only:** Students will only be released to individuals who have been pre-identified by the parent or guardian during the registration process. If someone who is not listed attempts to pick up a student, they will not be allowed to do so until further verification and authorization are obtained from the parent or guardian.
4. **Pick up Hours:** The C2C afterschool program runs from school dismissal until 5:30pm. The first pick up will not happen until 3:00 pm. Prior to that students are in snack and the transition to their first activity. We ask that you plan to pick up no later than 5:30pm.

Policy for Pickups After 5:30 PM

Parents or guardians who anticipate being late must notify the program as soon as possible.

- **Immediate Notification:** If a parent or guardian knows in advance that they will be late for pickup, they should call the school at the appropriate extension as soon as they are aware of the delay. This can be done by calling the school; for Merriam Avenue School, dial extension 1500, and for Halsted School, dial extension 2500.
 - **Authorized Alternate Pickup:** If the parent or guardian is going to be late, they are encouraged to arrange for another authorized individual listed at the time of registration to pick up the child. This individual must also present a valid photo ID if not yet recognized by the C2C gatekeeper.
 - **Communication with Child:** The program staff will inform the child about the delay and reassure them if necessary, to minimize anxiety or worry.
- **Repeated Late Pickups:** Consistent late pickups may result in a review of the child's enrollment in the program. The program aims to support families, but also needs to ensure that staff can end their duties at the scheduled time.

Academic Support

The Newton Public Schools' 21st CCLC Afterschool program, C2C, is committed to providing comprehensive academic support to enhance student learning and achievement. The following sections outline the academic support services available to students and their families through the C2C program.

Homework Assistance

Homework assistance is a key component of the C2C program, designed to help students complete their homework assignments with the support of qualified staff. This service aims to:

- Provide a structured environment where students can focus on homework tasks.
- Offer guidance and clarification on homework instructions and content.

- Encourage good study habits and time management skills.
- Foster a sense of responsibility and independence in completing schoolwork.

Homework assistance is available during designated hours and is supervised by educators who are familiar with the curriculum and school expectations. C2C staff communicate with the daytime teachers to support students.

- 7th and 8th grade C2C students can attend a specialized homework room Monday through Thursday in Mrs. Perrier’s classroom.
- These students are able to report to her room for check immediately after the dismissal bell rings.
- Students can sign up with Mrs. Perrier or make a request with their content teacher in Math or English Language Arts

Tutoring Services

The C2C program offers tutoring services to address individual learning needs and to support mastery of academic content. Tutoring services include:

- Tutor Me available for Halsted students online at no cost to students or families
- Assistance from certified instructors with expertise in the subject matter.
- Classroom teachers can request tutoring for their individual students; C2C staff provide regular feedback to the student, teachers, and the parent regarding the progress.
- Blair Academy’s Language Club collaborates with C2C staff at Halsted to provide math and language arts games and activities on Wednesdays throughout the school year. Students can sign up for this enrichment program as part of the regular club schedule.

Tutoring sessions are scheduled in advance and are designed to complement classroom instruction, reinforce learning, and build confidence in students' abilities.

Educational Resources and Materials

To support the academic growth of students, the C2C program provides access to a variety of educational resources and materials, including:

- Workbooks and supplementary materials aligned with school curricula.
- Technology resources such as computers, educational software, film equipment, and internet access.
- Library resources, including books and research databases.
- Manipulatives and hands-on learning tools for experiential learning opportunities.
- Art supplies for multiple modalities including paint, drawing, and design.

These resources are available to students during program hours and are selected to enrich the learning experience and support diverse learning styles.

Progress Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring student progress is essential to the success of the C2C program. Progress monitoring and reporting involve:

- Access to all daytime data including iReady diagnostics, current class grades, and NJSLA scores to track student performance and identify areas for improvement.
- Data-driven decision-making to tailor instruction and support to student needs, especially in the Summer Enrichment when grouping students.
- Transparent communication with parents and guardians about student progress through parent-teacher conferences.
- Collaboration with school-day teachers to ensure consistency and alignment with classroom objectives.

The C2C program is dedicated to providing a supportive learning environment that fosters academic success and lifelong learning skills. Through these academic support services, the program strives to meet the educational needs of all students and to engage families in the learning process.

Enrichment Activities

The Choose 2 Connect (C2C) afterschool program at Newton Public Schools offers a diverse range of enrichment activities designed to complement the academic curriculum and foster holistic development. These activities provide students with opportunities to explore new interests, develop skills, and engage with the community in meaningful ways.

Extracurricular Programs and Clubs

C2C offers a variety of extracurricular programs and clubs tailored to different age groups and interests. These programs are designed to enhance students' learning experiences beyond the traditional classroom setting and to cultivate skills in various domains including arts, sciences, sports, and leadership.

Merriam Avenue School Clubs

Includes a range of clubs such as art, music, coding, and science clubs. These clubs encourage creativity, problem-solving, and teamwork among younger students. The following clubs are also available by signing up with the teacher. Students enrolled in these activities check-in for C2C snacks and then proceed to their club. When the club ends they can return to the next C2C activity.

- Chorus and Band available with Mr. Stocker
- Art Club with Mrs. Thruston
- SNAP Healthy Cooking for Kids
 - Registration is sent home with eligible students at least twice a year
- The Earth Keepers with Mrs. Nilsen
- Chess Club with Mrs. Nilsen

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Halsted Middle School Clubs

Focuses on more advanced activities including coding, Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), environmental club, and Esports. These programs aim to deepen knowledge and skills in specific areas, promoting critical thinking and communication.

- **Future Business Leaders of America Middle School (FBLA Middle School):** Provides an opportunity for members to explore a range of career skills as well as project-based learning experiences tied to a Business Education Program. In FBLA Middle School, members will identify problems and solutions to begin developing business skills. By the end of their FBLA Middle School experience every member will show the ability to be an effective team member, understand career paths and gain knowledge to pursue different paths, learn about relationships and how to maintain them, and deepen their knowledge of personal strengths.
- **Environmental Club** members work closely with the Wallkill Watershed Management Group to maintain the on campus rain garden and plan town clean-ups. Students will also lead Halsted's Food Waste efforts during the lunch period.
- **Esports** is available in two formats. In the Fall, students rotate through Esports Club and gain skills and have positive social interactions. Beginning in February, students can try out for the Esports team. Those that make the team will compete in local competitions with other schools.

Guest Speakers

C2C enriches its curriculum by inviting guest speakers that expose students to a wide array of topics and career paths. These sessions are intended to inspire students and provide them with insights into real-world applications of their studies.

- **Career Exploration Workshops:** Professionals from various fields such as technology, healthcare, arts, and business are invited to discuss their career paths and the education required in their professions.

Field Trips and Educational Excursions

Field trips are integral to the C2C program, offering students experiential learning opportunities that enhance their understanding of the curriculum and broaden their horizons. We encourage all families to complete the annual permission slip to participate in any walking trips and in town bus trips that leave school grounds. C2C will announce all walking trips to families at least one week in advance to confirm your child's participation. Please see the C2C website for access to all field trip forms.

Local Educational Trips

Visits to the McGuire Technical Education Center, the Sussex County Historical Museum, the Dennis Library, Sterling Hill Mine Museum, Project Self Sufficiency, local farms, and SCUMA help students connect their classroom learning with the world around them. These trips may be walking field trips.

Nature and Environmental Excursions

Visits to local parks including Kittatinny State Park, Pine Street Park, Memory Park, Lakota Wolf Preserve, and walking trips to the Sussex Branch Rail Trail. Visits to nonlocal environmental centers such as Sandy Hook National Park, Pocono Environmental Education Center (PEEC), and Turtle Back Zoo may also occur.

STEAM Outings

Visits include places like Liberty Science Center, Longo Planetarium, and the Buehler Challenger Space Center.

These enrichment activities are designed to support the academic and personal growth of students in the C2C program, ensuring a well-rounded educational experience that prepares them for future success.

Special Events and Celebrations

The C2C program also incorporates special events and celebrations throughout the year to foster community spirit and celebrate student achievements. These include:

- **End of the Year Barbecue:** A fun and festive event to celebrate the accomplishments of all students in the C2C program. This outdoor gathering features food, games, and activities for students and their families, providing an opportunity for the community to come together and mark the end of the academic year.
- **Combined Field Days:** An annual event that brings together students from different grades for a day of outdoor sports and activities. This event promotes teamwork, physical fitness, and healthy competition among students.
- **4th Grade Moving Up Day:** A special ceremony to honor 4th-grade students as they transition from elementary to middle school. This event includes speeches, awards, and a presentation of certificates, recognizing the hard work and progress of students as they move on to the next phase of their education.

These special events and celebrations are an integral part of the C2C program, creating memorable experiences for students and strengthening the sense of community within the program.

Behavior Expectations

The C2C afterschool program is dedicated to creating a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for all students. To achieve this, we have established clear behavior expectations that align with our district's values and policies. These expectations are designed to foster a positive learning atmosphere and ensure the well-being of every member of our community.

Code of Conduct: C2C Expectations

The C2C program adheres to a comprehensive Code of Conduct that outlines the expected behaviors of students while participating in the program. This code emphasizes respect, responsibility, and kindness towards others.

Students are expected to:

- Recognize that everyone belongs at C2C.
- Treat everyone as worthy of respect and compassion.
- Work together to achieve.
- Strive to see how someone else sees the world, especially when we do not agree.

By adhering to these principles, students contribute to a positive and productive afterschool environment.

Code of Conduct: Bus Expectations

Bus Expectations
Remain seated with your seatbelt buckled.
Keep your hands, feet, and objects to yourself.
Indoor voices only, shouting distracts the driver.
Food and drinks must remain in a student's backpack.
Listen to the bus driver.

Anti-Bullying Policies

In alignment with Newton Public Schools' commitment to a safe and respectful learning environment, the C2C program strictly enforces anti-bullying policies. Bullying, in any form, including cyberbullying, is not tolerated. Our policies are designed to prevent bullying behaviors and ensure that all students feel safe and supported. The program incorporates:

- Education on the dynamics of bullying and online safety through Kid Grit Curriculum for middle school students, and specific cyberbullying prevention lessons for grades 5th-8th.
- Procedures for reporting and responding to incidents of bullying, harassment, and intimidation ensuring that all complaints are taken seriously and addressed promptly
 - All HIB incidents reported will follow the directive of the Newton Board of Education Harassment, Intimidation, or Bullying Policy, No. 5512
- Training for staff on recognizing and intervening in bullying situations, fostering an environment where students are encouraged to report concerns.

Positive Behavior Reinforcement

The C2C program believes in reinforcing positive behavior through recognition and rewards.

Positive behavior reinforcement strategies include:

- Verbal praise and acknowledgment for positive actions and attitudes.
- Opportunities for students to take on leadership roles or responsibilities as a reward for positive behavior.

- Recognition of positive behavior through awards or certificates during program events.

These strategies aim to motivate students to maintain positive behavior and contribute to a supportive and encouraging program atmosphere.

Consequences for Misbehavior

While we focus on positive reinforcement, it is also necessary to have clear consequences for misbehavior to maintain a safe and respectful environment. Consequences are designed to be fair, appropriate, and consistent, taking into consideration the nature of the misbehavior and the student's history.

Consequences are implemented with the goal of teaching students the impact of their actions and helping them learn from their mistakes.

<u>Levels of Response for Violations for both Merriam and Halsted</u>
<p>Level 1: Check in with a C2C teacher or aide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Examples include calling out, using unkind words, cursing, putting down another student, not following directions, arguing, or excluding others ● Inappropriate use of a cell phone may result in the phone being held till a family member can pick it up.
<p>Level 2: Break from the activity for <u>no more than 10 minutes or a seat change</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● After a check-in with a teacher or aide and the expectations are not being met
<p>Level 3: Warning with Parent Call or in Person Contact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not meeting expectations three or more times in the same day or week. ● A seat change or a break from the activity did not help meet the expectation ● May be referred to a daytime counselor
<p>Level 4: <u>Suspension from C2C for up to 1 week</u> with a re-entry Parent/Guardian and Student Conference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● May occur after Levels 1 through 3 are implemented and unsuccessful <p>A student may be removed from the program at any time do the following but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fighting ● Theft ● Harassment, Intimidation, or Bullying ● Anything that may impact the school day will be reported to the Administration and <i>may cause</i> further consequences.
<p>Level 5: Permanent Removal from the Program</p>

Levels of Response for Bus Violations

Level 1: Verbal Warning/Seat Change for next Busing Day.
Level 2: Parent Phone Call and possible bus suspension.
Level 3: Bus Suspension from the bus for up to one week.
Level 4: Three Incidents, Parent and Student Meeting with Program Director and possible permanent removal from the bus.

Health and Safety

The C2C program prioritizes the health and safety of all students, staff, and volunteers. To ensure a secure and protected environment, we have implemented comprehensive health and safety procedures and protocols.

Emergency Procedures

The C2C program has established emergency procedures to address various situations that may arise during program hours.

These procedures include:

- Summer Fire drills: Regularly scheduled fire drills to practice evacuation procedures and ensure students are familiar with the process.
- Summer Lockdown drills: Conducted to prepare students and staff for potential threats and to practice safety protocols.
- Emergency response plans: Detailed plans outlining procedures for responding to medical emergencies, severe weather, and other crises that adhere to the Newton Public Schools Board of Education Approved Emergency Plans.

These procedures are designed to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants in the event of an emergency.

Medical Information and Emergency Contacts

Parents and guardians are required to complete medical information and forms for each student with their child's school nurse. C2C asks for the following information at the time of registration:

- **Emergency contact forms:** Providing contact information for parents, guardians, and emergency contacts.
- **EpiPen and Inhaler Notification:** Please let us know if your child requires either an EpiPen or Inhaler
- **Medical Conditions:** Please provides us with any information about your child's medical conditions

These forms are essential for ensuring that staff have the necessary information to respond appropriately to students' medical needs.

Allergies and Medication Policies

The C2C program is committed to accommodating students with allergies and ensuring their safety.

Policies include:

- **Allergy awareness training for staff:** Providing education on recognizing and responding to allergic reactions.
- **EpiPen administration training:** Ensuring that designated staff members are trained and certified to administer EpiPens in the event of a severe allergic reaction.
- **Allergy-safe zones:** Establishing designated areas where students with severe allergies can eat and socialize safely.
- **Medication policies:** C2C **cannot** administer medications to your child. Medication can only be administered according to district policies which require written permission from parents or guardians, a doctor's order, and nurse.

The C2C Summer program does have a nurse, but not during the school year. Medical exceptions may be made with prior approval from the Newton Board of Education during the school year.

Safety Guidelines and Rules

To maintain a safe and secure environment, the C2C program has established safety guidelines and rules that all students, staff, and volunteers must adhere to. These include:

- **Active Supervision:** All staff receive training in active supervision to ensure that students are supervised at all times by trained staff members.
- **Playground safety:** C2C follows the daytime school rules for safe play, including age-appropriate equipment and designated areas for different activities.
 - i.e. soccer played on the soccer field, one student on the slide, etc
- **Transportation safety:** Safe transportation practices for field trips and other off-site activities are followed including employing a trained bus aide for the C2C dismissal bus, having up to date trip rosters for students and staff, and expecting everyone to follow the bus expectations
- **Visitor policy:**
 1. Main Entrance Sign-In:
 - All visitors must enter through the main entrance of Merriam Avenue School or Halsted Middle School.
 - Look for the designated "Choose 2 Connect" sign-in area near the entrance.
 2. Sign-In Procedure:
 - Locate the provided sign-in sheet at the designated area.
 - Complete the necessary information, including your name, contact number, and the student's name you are visiting.
 3. Visitor Badge:
 - After signing in, collect a visitor badge from the provided area.
 - Wear the badge prominently and visibly throughout your visit.
 - The badge helps staff identify authorized visitors and ensures a secure environment.

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4. Restricted Areas:
 - Visitors are not permitted on playgrounds or fields without signing in.
 - Respect any posted signs indicating restricted areas.
5. Purpose of Visit:
 - Clearly state the purpose of your visit at the sign-in area.
 - If attending a specific event or picking up your child, inform the staff to receive appropriate guidance.
6. Sign-Out Procedure:
 - When leaving the premises, return to the sign-in area.
 - Sign out by providing the necessary information and returning the visitor badge.
7. Emergency Evacuation Procedures:
 - Familiarize yourself with the emergency evacuation procedures posted in every classroom.
 - Follow staff instructions in the event of an emergency.
8. Code of Conduct:
 - Follow the established code of conduct within the premises.
 - Be mindful of noise levels and be respectful of the learning environment.
9. Reporting Concerns:
 - Report any concerns or suspicious activity to the onsite staff immediately..

Communication and Parent Involvement

Effective communication and active parent involvement are vital components of C2C. We believe that a strong partnership between the program, students, and families is essential for the success and enrichment of our students' educational experience. The following sections detail the opportunities and methods for communication and involvement within the C2C program.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-Teacher Conferences are a cornerstone of the C2C program's communication strategy, providing a forum for parents and teachers to discuss student progress, share insights, and collaborate on strategies to support student learning. These conferences are held:

- On a biannual basis, typically once in the fall and once in the spring in collaboration with the daytime teachers
- By appointment to accommodate family schedules and ensure dedicated time for each student.
- With the flexibility to arrange additional meetings as needed to address any concerns or developments.

The goal of these conferences is to foster open dialogue and build strong relationships between families and the C2C staff.

Updates, Events, and Feedback

The C2C program keeps families informed and engaged through regular updates and newsletters. These communications are designed to provide timely and relevant information about program activities, events, and student achievements.

Updates

- Newsletters are distributed at the beginning of the fall and the middle of summer sessions, offering an overview of upcoming events and highlights from the program.
- C2C also contributes to the Winter and Spring edition of the Brave News, the district's quarterly newsletter.
- Updates may include information on curriculum changes, enrichment activity schedules, and reminders about program policies and procedures.

Events

- **Monthly Family Activities:** Rotating events between Merriam Avenue Elementary and Halsted Middle School. Some of our family favorites include: The Back to School Orientation, The Community Block Party, and the district wide Family Fun Night. Parents are encouraged to bring the whole family for engaging, fun activities. While there all parents are welcome to provide feedback on C2C.

Feedback

The participation of parents in parent surveys is crucial. When parents take the time to provide their input, they contribute valuable insights that can lead to meaningful changes and improvements in the program. Your feedback ensures that the program remains responsive to the needs of students and families, and it helps to create a more effective and enriching afterschool experience. Therefore, the C2C program strongly encourages all parents to participate in these surveys, as their involvement is integral to the program's success and continuous improvement.

They serve several key purposes:

- **Gathering Feedback:** Surveys provide a systematic way for parents to share their perceptions of the program's effectiveness, the quality of instruction, the range of activities offered, and the overall impact on their children's development.
- **Identifying Areas for Improvement:** By analyzing survey responses, the program can identify strengths and pinpoint areas where changes or improvements are needed.
- **Measuring Outcomes:** Surveys help to assess whether the program is meeting its stated goals and objectives, and they contribute to the ongoing assessment of student progress and satisfaction.
- **Facilitating Communication:** They open another line of communication between parents and program administrators, fostering a collaborative environment where parents' opinions are valued and considered.

Parent Volunteering Opportunities

Parent volunteers are a valuable asset to the C2C program, bringing diverse skills and perspectives that enhance the learning environment.

We offer a variety of volunteering opportunities to allow parents to contribute to the program in meaningful ways:

- **Field trips:** Parents can assist by chaperoning and providing support during educational excursions.
- **Special events:** Opportunities to help organize and participate in events such as end-of-year celebrations, showcases, and cultural festivals.
- **Learning workshops:** Parents with expertise in certain areas may lead or assist with workshops that align with the program's curriculum. Please contact your child's site coordinator if you are interested in leading a workshop.

Parent volunteering not only supports program activities but also provides a way for parents to be actively involved in their children's afterschool experience.

Parent Advisory Board

The Parent Advisory Board plays a crucial role in the C2C program by offering a platform for parents to provide feedback and input on various aspects of the program.

The board focus on:

- Providing feedback on the program's activities and overall direction.
- Discussing the relationships between staff, students, and families to ensure effective communication and collaboration.
- Addressing the needs of students with special needs to ensure that the program is inclusive and accommodating.
- Reviewing health and safety policies to contribute to a safe and nurturing environment for all students.

The board meets regularly and serves as a valuable resource for continuous improvement and responsiveness to the community's needs.

Closing

As we conclude this handbook for C2C, we wish to extend our heartfelt gratitude and acknowledgment to all the students, families, staff, and community partners who make this program a vibrant and enriching experience for everyone involved.

Acknowledgment of Partnership

The success of the C2C program is a testament to the strength of our partnerships. We recognize the vital role that parents and guardians play in supporting their children's learning and development. Your engagement, feedback, and participation are invaluable to us. Together, we create a supportive and dynamic environment that encourages our students to thrive both academically and personally.

Additional Resources and Support Services

The C2C program is part of a broader network of support services available to Newton Public Schools' students and families. We encourage you to reach out to the **Community Schools Office** with any questions about support services in the Newton Community including (but not limited to) health services, housing support, food assistance, and family learning opportunities.

Please contact us at community@newtonnj.org or at (973) 383-7440 ext. 2501.

Best Wishes for a Successful Afterschool Year!

As we embark on another exciting year with the C2C program, we extend our best wishes to all our students for a fulfilling and successful afterschool experience. We are here to support you in your academic journey and personal growth. Together, we will explore new ideas, face challenges with resilience, and celebrate every achievement along the way.

Thank you for being a part of the C2C family. Here's to a fantastic year ahead!

2023-2024 Choose 2 Connect- Family Calendar

Choose 2 Connect (C2C) runs on all regular school days from school dismissal until 5:30 pm, ***unless otherwise marked on this calendar.*** If your child's school has an EARLY DISMISSAL because of inclement weather, C2C is closed.

September '23						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

14 Student Days, 15 Staff Days

October '23						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

19 Student Days, 20 Staff Days

November '23						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

17 Days

December '23						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

15 Days

January '24						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

21 Days

February '24						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29		

20 Days

March '24						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

17 Student Days, 18 Staff Days

April '24						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

17 Days

May '24						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

21 Student Days, 22 Staff Days

June '24						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

11 Days

July '24						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	1	2	

20 Days

■ C2C Closed
 ■ Halsted ONLY Closed
 ■ Merriam ONLY Closed

■ First Day: Tuesday September 12, 2023 Tentative Last Day: Monday, June 17, 2024

■ Summer Learning Academy: Runs from 8:00 am to 1:00 pm