

**Please Note: These minutes are pending Board approval.
Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut**

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting on February 2, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. in the council chambers at 3 Primrose Street.

| | |
|------------------------|---------------|
| K. Alexander, Chair | J. Erardi |
| M. Ku, Vice Chair | J. Davila |
| D. Leidlein, Secretary | R. Bienkowski |
| K. Hamilton | 4 Staff |
| J. Vouros | 15 Public |
| R. Harriman-Stites | 1 Press |
| A. Clure | |

Mr. Alexander called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

MOTION: Mrs. Ku moved that the Board of Education go into executive session to discuss personnel stipends for Newtown High School coaching/advisors for 2016-2017 and a personnel issue and invited Dr. Erardi, Mrs. Davila, Dr. Abbey and Mr. Bienkowski. Mr. Vouros seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 1 – Executive Session

Item 2 – Pledge of Allegiance

Item 3 – Celebration of Excellence

Dr. Erardi introduced Chris Lee, high school music teacher being recognized this evening. Three years ago he became a scorer for AP music classes for the College Board and recently he was selected as one of four educators in the country to actually develop the AP music courses as well as continue to be a scorer. We are fortunate to have Mr. Lee teaching in our music program.

Michelle Hiscavich said that Mr. Lee joined the district in 2004. He is an active composer and was selected to participate at the Westfield Music Festival in Massachusetts. The high school choral group has performed one of his songs and a few years ago he was selected as a Yale distinguished music educator.

Mr. Alexander congratulated Mr. Lee for his national recognition and contributions to the district.

Item 4 – Possible Vote on Executive Session Items

MOTION: Mrs. Leidlein moved that the Board of Education accept the administration's recommendation for contractual adjustments to the following positions: Athletic Director, Head Football Coach, Marching Band Director and the Musical Director. Mrs. Ku seconded. Ms. Hamilton moved to amend the motion to remove the Athletic Director. Mr. Clure seconded.

Ms. Leidlein was not in favor of this amendment. We made an agreement with the union that we would, in good faith, look at these positions collectively as a package.

Mr. Vouros asked if this would have been done collectively if negotiated in the contract.

Mrs. Leidlein said it would and she would like to keep that collaboration going with the teachers and not single out a position.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites was in favor of the amendment because it's a salary position and needs to be looked at separately.

Vote on the amendment to remove the Athletic Director: 4 ayes, 3 nays (Mr. Alexander, Mrs. Ku, Mrs. Leidlein) Motion passes.

Vote on the amended motion: Passes unanimously.

MOTION: Mrs. Leidlein moved that the Board of Education accept the administration's recommendation for contractual adjustments to the Athletic Director position.

Ms. Hamilton said this position should be a salaried administrator position, not a teacher salary with a 4% increase on that salary. The job responsibilities need to be fully defined and she was not in favor of increasing the salary.

Mrs. Leidlein said this increase will make it compatible with other districts. It's important to work with the union and listen to their concerns and recommendations. We are doing a disservice to our education community if we don't work with the union.

Mr. Clure said comparing this to other schools in our DRG is not comparable because those are all administrator positions and ours is not. We would like this to be an administrative position to allow for more sports in the schools.

Mrs. Leidlein said this position has nothing to do with sports in the middle school.

Vote: 5 ayes, 2 nays (Ms. Hamilton, Mr. Clure) Motion passes.

Item 5 – Consent Agenda

MOTION: Mrs. Ku moved that the Board of Education approve the consent agenda which includes the child rearing leave of absence for Cynthia Holberg, the retirement of Lynette Daria, and the correspondence report. Mrs. Leidlein seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 6 – Public Hearing on the 2016-2017 Budget

Karyn Holden, 68 Berkshire Road, thanked Dr. Erardi and the Board for presenting the budget and answering the questions. She spoke about the necessary costs which make up most of the budget. We should address the \$40,000 cost to remove snow from Sandy Hook School as well as the \$16,000 for the pool scoreboard at the high school. The \$84,000 revenue for pay to play given to the town should be used by the Board of Education.

Laura Terry, 64 Robin Hill Road, spoke about ways to save money. Stop the pay to play fees and work with Parks and Rec to use their surcharge to pay for various costs around the athletic facilities. We should fund \$34,625 from this fund. The Board of Education budget is inflated due to the expense of the programs being held in our schools. Revenues from using our schools goes to Parks and Rec so we should decrease our budget by this amount. We could also save \$70,500 by relocating the Board offices to a school.

Julia Conlin, Old Castle Drive, spoke about declining enrollment as an opportunity to reinvest in students by implementing new programs, reducing class sizes and having the maximum number of students per class.

Sushil Gupta, 7 Lincoln Road, spoke about reducing the budget. Why ask for more money with declining enrollment. We should use the money for pay to play and not eliminate it. He mentioned looking into closing Reed or the middle school.

Item 7 – Reports

Chair Report: Mr. Alexander said he and Dr. Erardi attended a Head O'Meadow PTA meeting and encouraged Board members to attend these meetings when they could.

Ms. Hamilton asked that any emails the Board Chair receives be forwarded to the Board members.

Superintendent's Report:

Dr. Erardi attended a roundtable with Senator Blumenthal regarding the crisis with opiate use. In Newtown we are positioned well to stay in front of the issue and have a program in place.

He provided budget information which brought the increase down to 3.75%. These savings include the price of fuel oil decreasing, a savings of \$20,000 for snow plowing at Sandy Hook School, and the cost of the pool scoreboard being shared with Parks and Rec.

The next community forum will be February 24 where the topic will be what the most important thing is for a student to accomplish before graduating.

Mrs. Davila mentioned the incoming kindergarten parent's night which will be held February 8 in the Reed cafetorium. There will be a collaborative presentation with principals.

Dr. Erardi said with the new Sandy Hook School coming on line there will be monthly meetings, Board of Education site visit, Bob Mitchell will attend one of our meetings to discuss the progress of the school, the end of the year calendar and gifting decisions.

Kayla Disibio stated that there would be two college bus trips to Wesleyan and Quinnepiac and Central and Eastern. February 9 all residents 65 and over have been invited for a free dinner and to watch the Girls Basketball game. The Newtown Cultural Arts Commission is providing two scholarships for seniors. The Hawks Honor Society will visit the middle school to talk to students who will be entering ninth grade next year.

Committee Reports:

Mrs. Ku said the first meeting of the new policy subcommittee was held and discussed the administration and instructional policies as well as the fundraising policy. She provided a report from Education Connection which included their services we use.

Mr. Vouros said the Curriculum & Instruction Committee discussed the sleep study and the change in start times for times for Reed and the middle school as well as an update on the elementary progress reports.

Ms. Hamilton said their minutes stated the possibility of going from a four tier to a three tier bus system. She didn't know if was necessary to change the start times.

Dr. Erardi said we will be having a meeting with All Star to discuss that.

Mr. Alexander said the Communications Committee sent the Budget newsletter.

Mrs. Leidlein said the CIP committee discussed the current items and would invite Bob Mitchell to the next meeting to discuss the process going forward. Also discussed were the transportation contract and the different scenarios of extending the contract or going out to bid. The next agenda will include the food service contract and assessment of school buildings.

Ms. Hamilton asked for a copy of the agendas before the meetings.

Item 8 – Old Business

MOTION: Mrs. Ku moved that the Board of Education approve the Video Game Design (I and II) Course. Mr. Vouros seconded.

Mrs. Davila was proud to move this forward with help of the teacher and department chair with revisions from the Curriculum & Instruction Committee.

Ms. Hamilton appreciated the summary and asked if Mr. Burgess would teach the course and if there was a textbook.

Mrs. Davila said he would because he has taught it before. He has reviewed the manual which is user friendly for students so that will be the textbook.

Mr. Clure asked if there was an overwhelming response to taking this course could there be two classes.

Mrs. Davila said they are starting with two classes first.

Motion passes unanimously.

MOTION: Mrs. Ku moved that the Board of Education approve the charge for administration to continue work on the issues of facilities and enrollment. Mrs. Leidlein seconded.

Ms. Hamilton was hoping for more than one representative from the community and suggested there be one person from each school.

Mrs. Ku said it shouldn't be limited to only one Board member. We should all have some participation.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites suggested someone with children in various grade levels, a senior citizen and a community member.

Mrs. Leidlein said members of the Board as well as the community should be on the committee.

Ms. Hamilton suggested the Superintendent and staff and members of the community could present to the Board. She would like to leave it in the hands of district staff to decide what is better for students and the community.

Mr. Vouros said it's key that the education justification of whatever is being discussed is validated because this is about the value of a child and how is it going to improve the educational impact on this district.

Mrs. Leidlein suggested Board members are at the meeting when the facilities are being discussed and feels two sitting members of the CIP Committee should be members of this committee.

Mrs. Ku said we have to look at what the space would be used for if a school is closed. She proposed that this committee meet in public but there would be no public participation.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites agreed that it should be public meeting.

Ms. Hamilton said there was a lot of criticism because people were taken by surprise with the results of the first report and felt the committee was not talking about what was best for the children. It would be helpful if it was videotaped for the public.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites said we would not ask for public input but just give people the opportunity to listen and be part of the process,

Mr. Clure asked if it was possible to remove the item that stated the return of an elementary school to the town after the end of the 2016-2017 school year rather than consider doing that.

Mrs. Leidlein said we have to do our due diligence in looking at elementary schools.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites felt the bottom items should be listed in the first section. The bottom section should include a final analysis as well as adding next steps and what we will use the space for.

Mr. Vouros said the final date is July 1, 2016. When will the committee begin? The Board of Finance and Legislative Council need to know we are actually doing this.

Ms. Hamilton suggested having a facilitator working on this committee who could be objective.

Mr. Clure asked if this group would make a recommendation for the Board to vote on.

Mr. Alexander said this would be a report for the Board to decide on a possible recommendation.

Mrs. Ku felt there should be three or four community members and three Board of Education members.

Mrs. Leidlein agreed.

Ms. Hamilton feels the meetings should be taped.

Dr. Erardi said it is important to consider a member of the townwide facility committee to be part of our committee. Mrs. Harriman-Stites is also on that committee.

MOTION: Ms. Hamilton moved to table the motion. Mr. Vouros seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

MOTION: Mrs. Ku moved to approve the minutes of January 9, 2016. Mrs. Leidlein seconded. Vote: 6 ayes, 1 abstained (Ms. Hamilton) Motion passes.

MOTION: Mrs. Ku moved to approve the minutes of January 19, 2016. Mrs. Leidlein seconded. Vote: 6 ayes, 1 abstained (Mr. Vouros) Motion passes.

Proposed Budget:

Mrs. Harriman-Stites asked for clarification about the BCBA position.

Dr. Erardi said our need for this position comes from the results of PPTs. We have advertised for a half time person but have no candidates at this time. All principals will be at Thursday's meeting to answer any questions from the Board. The elementary principals will bring their comments regarding present enrollment and future needs.

Ms. Hamilton wants a further conversation regarding the BCBA position as well as positions at the high school. She also wants clarification data from the elementary and high school principals to support what they are asking for.

Dr. Erardi said the special education supervisors will also be here.

Mrs. Leidlein said it's almost a legal requirement to fill the BCBA position. It would be negligent on our part to not fill this.

Dr. Erardi said we have no candidates now. Our next step would be to go to Education Connection.

Mrs. Leidlein feels the need at the high school exceeds the current staff. More cases are coming to be identified needing services.

Dr. Erardi said Thursday night Mrs. Amodeo will speak to a technology grant from the State which was approved for approximately \$100,000 and will share if it has to be used this year or next year. Also, Mrs. Llodra, Mr. Tait and Mr. Bienkowski met regarding items being questioned as to why they were in our budget.

Ms. Hamilton asked if we could use the technology grant money this year or to pre-buy for next year.

Dr. Erardi said that would be a Board decision and would have to be spent on technology.

Ms. Harriman-Stites wants a clear view about what the mental health outlook is for next year and what we have in place.

Mr. Alexander said we discussed the teachers' contract with the Legislative Council and Dr. Erardi had details of the contract which would be helpful for the public and asked that be included for Thursday's meeting.

Dr. Erardi asked for the entire leadership team to be here including pupil services support staff, Judy Blanchard, Mark Pompano and Gino Faiella.

Mr. Clure asked for a better understanding of the breakdown of the total lines in the budget.

Dr. Erardi said that every line item object number can be justified with a back story. We have all of that information and he was not sure how much more depth we would need in the budget document.

Mrs. Leidlein said this is challenging for new board members. Mr. Bienkowski has put in additional detail and included back stories. He has always been willing to help anyone understand how he arrived at the numbers.

Mr. Alexander asked Mr. Bienkowski to mention some of the budget details that he added.

Mr. Bienkowski mentioned a few which included two years of expended data to be able to see trends as well as including the staffing for each school and several historical years. There is also more information on sports programs.

Mr. Clure asked how someone would know about the different levels of teachers' salaries.

Dr. Erardi stated that we have those documents during negotiations. It's important to understand that this Board needs that depth. The only local board that has jurisdiction on line items is the Board of Education. The Board of Finance can only give a dollar amount to add or delete from the budget.

Mr. Alexander was hoping to have a different number for the middle school moving up ceremony if not using the O'Neill Center. Also, we didn't have a technology subcommittee meeting and asked about more detail behind the \$80,000 for new initiatives.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites stated that Parks and Rec will pay for half of the pool scoreboard.

Dr. Erardi said their meeting is February 9. They may cover the full amount.

Ms. Hamilton wants to discuss the Chinese course at the high school which has low enrollment. In another district they offered it through the Chinese Language School in Hartford rather than hiring a teacher. There's one in Fairfield County and WesConn offers it. She would also ask if Kathy Gombos would speak to the need for an assistant principal and lead teacher at Sandy Hook School.

Dr. Erardi said there is no lead teacher for Sandy Hook School in the budget for next year. An aspiring administrator has taken on additional duties.

Mr. Bienkowski said Sandy Hook had a lead teacher until the tragedy. The SERV grant paid for the assistant principal and lead teacher. SERV paid the differential for the current year.

Ms. Hamilton asked for information on the projected cost for gas at Sandy Hook School next year which is more than what Reed is using. She asked if among the elementary schools if there was any sharing of special teachers for gym, library and arts. Also, are we anticipating any revenue from pre school and day care programs?

Dr. Erardi listed the information requested from the Board.

- Daycare update with projected bottom line
- Better conversation around BCBA position
- Speak to a K-12 projection on mental health support
- Projected assignment for staffing - leadership team to speak to reductions
- Cost reduction information if the Board supports move from O'Neill Center for middle school moving up ceremony
- Mrs. Amodeo will provide greater detail on technology and impact of new grant
- Discuss \$7,000 for pool scoreboard
- World language conversation on Chinese course enrollment
- Mr. Faiella regarding projection for gas cost for Sandy Hook School next year
- Unified arts staff that is shared between schools

Mrs. Harrimon-Stites said the mental health information should include the substance abuse counselor at the high school.

Ms. Hamilton was concerned that we committed to the Board of Finance date before the Charter due date. We are losing out on having more time.

Item 9 – New Business - None

Item 10 – Public Participation

Laura Terry, 64 Robin Hill Road, spoke about the facilities committee charge and was concerned about having so many members of the community on the committee. The decision should be in the best interest of the schools. Doesn't know the purpose of having someone on the committee who doesn't understand education.

Julia Conlin, Old Castle Drive, said the facilities committee meetings should be open to the public and video taped. She also urged Board members to attend PTA meetings.

MOTION: Mrs. Leidlein moved to adjourn. Mr. Vouros seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 11 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Debbie Leidlein
Secretary

DRG B

Avon

Athletic Director (Administrator's Contract - 196 days)

| | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 | Step 5 | Maximum |
|-------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| 15-16 | \$110,426 | \$111,622 | \$112,819 | \$114,015 | \$115,211 | \$116,408 |
| 16-17 | \$112,911 | \$114,133 | \$115,357 | \$116,580 | \$117,803 | \$119,027 ✓ |
| 17-18 | \$115,451 | \$116,701 | \$117,953 | \$119,203 | \$120,454 | \$121,705 |

Brookfield

Director of Athletics (11mos) - Administrators Contract

| | Min | Max |
|-------|------------|------------|
| 13-14 | 96,748.32 | 109,941.27 |
| 14-15 | 99,408.90 | 112,964.65 |
| 15-16 | 101,894.12 | 115,788.77 |

Cheshire

Athletic Director

| | |
|-------|------------------------------|
| 16-17 | Administrator's Contract |
| 15-16 | \$127,285 Teacher's Contract |

Fairfield

Athletic Director (Administrator's Contract - 225 days)

| | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 | Step 5 | Step 6 |
|-------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| 15-16 | \$119,478 | \$121,787 | \$124,732 | \$127,153 | \$129,988 | \$134,348 |
| 16-17 | \$119,717 | \$122,031 | \$124,982 | \$127,407 | \$130,248 | \$137,035 ✓ |
| 17-18 | \$120,555 | \$122,885 | \$125,857 | \$128,299 | \$131,159 | \$139,776 |

Farmington

Athletic Director

| | |
|-------|----------|
| 14-15 | \$95,987 |
| 15-16 | \$95,987 |

Glastonbury

207 days

Granby

Athletic Director Open to certified staff with \$9000 stipend and up to 100 minutes a day.

Greenwich

225 days

Guilford

Director of Athletics (Administrators Contract, 195 days)

| | Base | plus 10 days |
|-------|-----------|----------------|
| 14-15 | \$112,033 | \$117,778.28 |
| 15-16 | \$114,609 | \$120,486.38 |
| 16-17 | \$117,360 | \$123,378.46 ✓ |

Trumbull

Athletics Coordinator (12mos) - Administrator's Contract

| | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 | Step 5 |
|-------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| 15-16 | \$130,131 | \$133,712 | \$137,406 | \$141,214 | \$145,140 |
| 16-17 | \$133,124 | \$136,788 | \$140,566 | \$144,462 | \$148,479 ✓ |
| 17-18 | \$136,253 | \$140,002 | \$143,869 | \$147,857 | \$151,968 |

Athletics Coordinator (218 days) - Administrator's Contract

| | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 | Step 5 |
|-------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| 16-17 | \$129,694 | \$133,939 | \$137,838 | \$142,106 | \$146,458 ✓ |
| 17-18 | \$132,742 | \$137,086 | \$141,078 | \$145,446 | \$149,899 |

West Hartford

Director of Athletics

| | |
|-------|-----------|
| 14-15 | \$118,000 |
| 15-16 | \$120,356 |

Woodbridge

Amity district ?

Athletics Coordinator (12mos) - Administrator's Contract

| | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 |
|-------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| 14-15 | \$109,959 | \$113,335 | \$116,814 | \$120,845 |
| 15-16 | \$112,433 | \$115,885 | \$119,442 | \$123,564 |
| 16-17 | \$114,963 | \$118,492 | \$122,129 | \$126,344 ✓ |

New Fairfield

Athletic Director/PE & Health K-12

| | Min | Max |
|-------|-----------|-------------|
| 14-15 | \$114,860 | \$120,981 |
| 15-16 | \$117,731 | \$123,955 |
| 16-17 | \$120,675 | \$127,004 ✓ |
| 17-18 | \$123,691 | \$130,129 |

Cynthia G. Holberg
44 Newgate Road
Oxford, CT 06478
January 20th, 2016

David Abbey
Interim Director of Human Resources
Newtown Public Schools
3 Primrose Street
Newtown, CT 06470

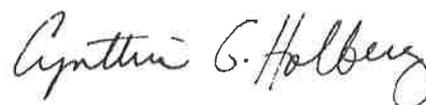
Dear Mr. Abbey,

My name is Cynthia Holberg, and I have been a K-4 choral and general music teacher in the Newtown Public Schools for the past 7 years. I am writing to share the exciting news that my husband and I are expecting our second child in late July 2016. My intension is to take twelve weeks of medical leave, after I give birth, which will continue through the second week of October 2016.

Per the teacher's contract, I would also like to be considered for a general leave through July of the 2016-2017 school year. I am aware that if I am granted this leave I will need to make a final decision about returning to the Newtown Public Schools by February 2017.

At your earliest convenience, I would like to meet with you to discuss the details of my approved maternity leave. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Cynthia G. Holberg
Head O' Meadow School
Music Teacher

Newtown Middle School

Thomas R. Einhorn
Principal



James E. Ross
Assistant Principal

11 Queen Street
Newtown, Connecticut 06470-2172
(203) 426-7642

January 26, 2016

Joseph Erardi, Jr.
Superintendent
Newtown Board of Education
3 Primrose Street
Newtown, Connecticut 06470

Dear Dr. Erardi:

This letter is to inform you that I will be retiring at the end of the 2015-2016 school year.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lynette Daria".

Lynette Daria
Speech Pathologist
Newtown Middle School

Cc: T. Einhorn
M. Hall

Correspondence Report
1/20/16 - 2/2/16

| Date | Name | Topic |
|---------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 1/20/16 | Mary Burnham | Full Day K |
| 1/22/16 | Laura Roche | High School start times |
| 1/22/16 | Wolfgang Halbig | FOI request |
| 1/24/16 | Wolfgang Halbig | SHS |
| 1/25/16 | Mary Ellen Barnett | Wellness Fair |
| 1/26/16 | Linda Baron | an invitation |
| 1/28/16 | Heather Symes | An extraordinary teacher |
| 1/26/16 | Rebecca Carnes | STEM academy |
| 1/29/16 | Julia Conlin | Proposed budget |
| 1/31/16 | Wolfgang Halbig | Governor Malloy |
| 2/2/16 | Janice Gabriel | NHS Beauty and the Beast |
| 2/2/16 | Dave Deepak | Proposed budget |
| 2/2/16 | Wolfgang Halbig | FOI request |
| 1/20/16 | | |
| 1/20/16 | | |
| 1/20/16 | | |
| 1/20/16 | | |
| 1/20/16 | | |
| 1/20/16 | | |
| 1/20/16 | | |
| 1/20/16 | | |
| 1/20/16 | | |
| 1/20/16 | | |

Administrative Report

Tuesday, February 2, 2016

- 1. Federal Presence: NPS – Opiate Crisis**

- 2. Proposed Operational Plan: Adjustments (Attach 1)**

- 3. Community Forum February 24th**

- 4. Grade K Parent Meeting February 8th**

- 5. Sandy Hook Monthly Meeting Agenda Item**
 - a. BOE Site Visit**
 - b. Invitation - PBSC Chair**
 - c. End-of-the-Year Calendar**
 - d. Gifting Decisions**

Joseph V. Emond
2/2/16

Board of Education District Facilities Committee
January 2016

The Board of Education Charges the Superintendent to create a District Facilities Committee to research the use of School Facilities in light of Projected Enrollment Changes in Newtown.

The Board of Education asks the District Facilities Committee to produce a report back to the Board of Education by July 1, 2016, on the following facilities configurations:

1. No change in number of Facilities used by the District from the 2016-2017 school year to the end of the Enrollment Study— should include potential District use and/or partial Town use
2. Return of the Middle School Facility to the Town at some point after the end of the 2016-2017 school year
3. Return of an Elementary School Facility to the Town at some point after the end of the 2016-2017 school year

The Board of Education asks the District Facilities Committee to include the following details in the report:

1. Long term predictions about enrollment, classroom use and reconfiguration including use beyond Newtown enrollment in each case
2. Cost/savings to district and what happens to costs if they are moved to town in each case
3. Outline of why numbers from peak enrollment are not comparable to numbers now (full day kindergarten, SHS has fewer classrooms, RW libraries, computerized testing)
4. Details from 2015 District Facilities study

The District Facilities Committee will be run by the Superintendent and should include members of the district staff chosen by the Superintendent along with a representative from the Board of Education and a representative from the community.

New Program Application
NEWTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

What will the program be called? Give a brief description of the program:

Video Game Design (I & II)

In this course, students will learn the principles of video game design and explore how to market video games through a study of the business side of the industry. Students will initially be exposed to the video game industry and ultimately conduct a research project that allows them to explore the history, current profile, and future outlook of a well-known company. Students will learn how video game companies have been successful over time, the factors leading to their success, and the future of this growing industry. Students will be working collaboratively to design video games of their own and test the usability and marketability across an audience of consumers. Effective game design requires students to develop critical and creative thinking as well as analytical and evaluative skills in order to solve problems and develop innovative solutions. The students will apply innovative thinking and technology skills to convey ideas through sound, music, animation, and computer graphics.

Video Game Design I will be offered in the fall semester as an introduction to video game design and the software program. Video Game Design II will be taught in the spring semester and run with a business model in place. The class will be broken into “companies” where students will work to design, build, and release two video games for the semester. Students will submit their games to the National STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) Video Game Challenge, an educational competition with other high schools from across the country. This is a free program offered in conjunction with the National Education Association and other organizations. Both courses will add to our existing course offerings in the business department and also give students opportunities to explore career-oriented vocations and 21st Century Skills in the area of STEM. The course will be open to all students, including students who are participate in NHS Digital Academy of Arts and Sciences courses.

Answer the following questions:

Planning

1. What is the documented need for the program/pilot or research project?

- This course aligns with the following state Business and Finance Education Frameworks- Computer Information Systems: Content Standard 8: Programming and Application Development. Demonstrate the Ability to Code. Content Standard 6: Digital Media. Use and Create Digital Media. Content Standard 5: Applications. Use Emerging Applications Appropriate for Specific Tasks.
- This course also aligns with the following Common Core Standards: Comprehension and Collaboration: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1B Work with peers to set rules for collegial discussions and decision-making (e.g., informal consensus, taking votes on key issues, presentation of alternate views), clear goals and deadlines, and individual roles as needed. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, or orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source. Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.5 Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.
- The following districts from our DRG are listed and the course(s) they are currently offering; Avon- Computer Modeling for Gaming 1-3, Cheshire- Game Design and Development, Fairfield- Computer Game Design and Programming, Greenwich- 3D Computer Graphics and Virtual Reality Systems, 3D Game Making- Honors, Guilford- Video Game and Application Design, Madison- Video Game Design, Monroe- Video Game Design I and II, South Windsor- Video Game Design and Computer Programming, Region 15- Programming for Game Design.
- Video Games Design will fill a need for many of our students. Not all students participate in activities at Newtown High School (NHS), often because the offerings may not interest them. Adding a course in Video Game Design will reach those students who are interested in STEM fields of study and provide a place where their ideas will be honored and appreciated.

2. What research is available about the effectiveness of this program/pilot or research project?

According to Eric Klopfer, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Associate Professor and Director of the MIT Scheller Teacher Education Program, "Video games challenge players with difficult problems and motivate the players to solve problems. Traditional learning has provided superficial learning through text books. Games are best at teaching a deeper level of learning" (from the article "Can Video Games Reshape STEM Education? in the American Society of Mechanical Engineers"). The growing trend across the country is for schools to embrace STEM courses and academics that tackle this non-traditional approach to learning. Video Game Design aligns with this model of delivering a problem-solving based education to students in the classroom.

In an article from *Hartford Business* titled "On the Rise in Connecticut Video Gaming Education," Professor Greg Garvey at Quinnipiac University and director of their game design program, says, "Effective game design requires critical thinking, analysis, innovation, as well as in-depth research into a subject/content area, breaking down a concept into game mechanics, knowledge of numeric

representation, an understanding of psychology and perception, an appreciation of demographics and sociology, knowledge of sound, music, animation, computer graphics, digital video and music and above all systems, thinking.” This outlines the fundamental components in a video game design course. Beyond the direct links to the Common Core State Standards and Connecticut State Department of Education Standards, Video Game Design provides an ultimate synthesis of 21st Century Skills.

3. How does the program/pilot align with the core beliefs of the Newtown Public Schools?

This proposal supports the quality goal of developing intellectually curious learners which is in keeping with our Core Values and Beliefs. Students will be able to work independently and collaboratively to design and build games. The nature of the course is centered around the idea of a student-driven curriculum. Students will have the opportunity to complete both the Spoken Communication and Problem Solving Graduation Standards in class.

Students will experience how critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making impact their project development and will be able to connect that experience with what is being learned and reinforced in the classroom.

Finally, this program taps into basic human needs by providing students with the tools and opportunities to be creative, competent, and independent in a real world setting. Not only will this curriculum connect real world practice with classroom learning, it will provide students with a framework to use their creative abilities in the technological marketplace.

4. Who have you communicated with about the program/pilot or research project and what are the responses? (Ex. Building leadership team, department chair)

Information about the proposed course was communicated to the B.E.A.T.(Business, Entrepreneurship, and Applied Technology) Department Chair, Erik Holst-Grubbe, Principal, Dr. Lorrie Rodrigue, and the Newtown High School leadership team. The response has been overwhelmingly positive. The complex concepts taught in this course will not only complement math courses, such as JAVA and Advanced Placement Computer Science, but will further extend skills in a highly technical and innovative field.

5. Was the program/pilot or research project critiqued by a curriculum committee? What were their comments?

The Assistant Superintendent, the Department Chair of B.E.A.T., and a teacher met to discuss the proposal of the course and feedback was given. Some of the areas that have been revised are the direct link to Common Core State Standards, CT Business Learning Standards, and Newtown High School Graduation Standards. Connections and relationships to other courses currently being offered at NHS (such as JAVA, Advanced Placement Computer Science, and App. Inventor) have also been examined. Instructional technology components and potential risks were also discussed. The software needed to run the course is available in a free download version and is not web-based, so there is no spam or third party involvement. Finally, the computers in the NHS labs are adequate to handle the software.

The proposal of this course has been tentatively scheduled for the January 7 meeting agenda of the Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee and the January 19 meeting agenda of the Board of Education.

6. Which staff and students will participate in the first year of the program/pilot or research project? How will they be selected?

A current business teacher will teach the course, and students will self-select to enroll. This course will be open to all 9-12th grade students as a .5 elective (per semester) in the B.E.A.T. department, including students who have been a part of the Digital Academy sequence of STEM courses. Students will register for this course during the regular course selection process. There is no prerequisite for the course, but it is complementary to Honors JAVA, App Inventor, music technology, and AP Computer Science.

7. What are the staffing implications?

Based on current course offerings and existing section numbers, we are able to offer this course with no implication on staffing. Personal Financial Literacy is a mandated graduation requirement. Since Financial Management contains a substantial amount of overlap with the Personal Financial Literacy curriculum, it will be removed from the B.E.A.T. offerings. This will allow a current business teacher to assume one to two sections of the new Video Game Design course.

8. Do you anticipate that this will become a mandated program/pilot or research project?

This will not become a mandated program or course. It will remain an elective offering in the B.E.A.T. Department.

9. When and how will the initial start-up curriculum be written prior to initiation of the program/pilot or research project?

Curriculum for this course will be written in June following the completion of the 2015-16 school year. The staff member who is planning to teach the course has taught a similar Video Game Design course in another district and has access to resources that are readily adaptable. Resources from the Digital Arts and Sciences Academy are also available to teachers as well.

10. What is the plan for pre implementation training and follow-up training?

Only one teacher is needed in this process and it will take ten hours to complete. The majority of the resources, tools, and assignments, along with model student work, have been gathered in advance. Ten paid hours will be required to post curriculum to put this information into Rubicon Atlas and adjusted to fit the concept-based curriculum model.

Pre implementation

The staff member who plans on teaching the course attended a Fairfield University seminar sponsored by Google in the summer of 2012. This 3-day course, taught by college professors and high school teachers, focused on best practices in curriculum and how to effectively implement a game design course at the high school level.

Follow-up training

The user manual is laid out in an easy-to-follow, student-friendly manner. Staff members have reviewed this manual to stay current with the software. During the remainder of this school year, the staff will continue to explore Game Maker and evaluate components of the premium versions for possible use in the future. Game Maker offers a strong balance of graphical and textual coding for students to master, and provides the ability to learn how to edit images and develop story lines for characters.

11. What are the projected costs for planning and future implementation? (i.e. Curriculum development, instruction resources, staff training)

Curriculum development costs: 10 hrs curriculum for current development x \$42.50 per hr = \$425.

The Game Makers' Apprentice: Game Development for Beginners, 2012 by Jacob Habgood and Mark Overmars (\$21.43 on Amazon, with 24 copies needed which will be \$514.32)

Measuring Effects

12. How will you measure the program/pilot or research project effectiveness?

A maximum of 48 students will enroll in this course each year. The Spoken Communications and Problem Solving graduation standards will be available for every student enrolled. Student work will be evaluated at the completion of the course through a digital portfolio collected by the teacher. This portfolio, along with a student survey, will be offered to the Board Of Education once the pilot has been completed.

13. Who will use the information to decide if the program/pilot or research project will be continued?

Assistant Superintendent, Jean Evans Davila, Principal Dr. Lorrie Rodrigue, B.E.A.T. Department Chair, Erik Holst-Grubbe, and the Board of Education Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee.

14. When and how will the results be communicated to the Board?

First, there will be a mid-semester update from the B.E.A.T. Department Chair to the Newtown High School leadership team in November of 2016. Second, there will be a mid-semester update presented by the teacher and the B.E.A.T. Department Chair at the Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee meeting with the Assistant Superintendent and building principal Lorrie Rodrigue present.