

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

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting on January 7, 2016 in the Council Chambers,
3 Primrose Street, at 7:30 p.m.

K. Alexander, Chair	J. Erardi
M. Ku, Vice Chair	J. Davila
D. Leidlein, Secretary	R Bienkowski
K. Hamilton	13 Staff
J. Vouros	6 Public
R. Harriman-Stites	1 Press
A. Clure	

Mr. Alexander called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

Item 1 – Pledge of Allegiance

Dr. Erardi told the Board he expected a joint presentation on budget with Pat Llodra on February 9 and other elected officials would be invited. There was a question regarding the SERV grant and the number of positions that went forward and those that didn't. The reduction in force from the grant is 5.94 FTE which includes the reduction of the .6 project director, the elimination of the recovery project secretary, one counselor, one psychologist, a .29 transition coordinator and 2.05 paraprofessionals. He provided a list of questions and answers from the January 5 meeting which will be put on the website which we expect to do for each budget meeting. He also provided a list of various district's proposed budget increases which will continue to be updated. Regarding special education there was an article in today's Danbury News Times which validates that what is happening here is also happening in the State.

Mr. Alexander asked for more information on the SERV staff reductions.

Dr. Erardi will continue forward with the present staff of 17+ FTEs. They have either been put in our budget, placed in the Sandy Hook grant or were part of the SERV grant. The question was what staff wasn't being brought forward which is in tonight's document. They will not be here next school year.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites asked where these positions were located.

Dr. Erardi would get that information.

Ms. Hamilton appreciated the budget being posted on line and for the object code summary for which she also requested an electric copy.

Mr. Vouros asked what the impact would be with the 5.94 reduction.

Dr. Erardi said that after speaking to staff that number represents our present place of recovery. That doesn't mean that we don't need everything we requested.

Item 2 – Middle School Budget

Mr. Einhorn spoke to some items in his budget. In looking at declining enrollment we made proposals to our staffing next year which included the need for four clusters in seventh grade and four clusters in eighth grade but one of those clusters will have six teachers instead of four. One of those teachers will teach both social studies and English and one will teach both science and math. This will save staffing. Project Adventure will move to the physical education curriculum. This rotation will be reduced by one staff member. Class size will be increased and a total of four positions will be reduced.

Mr. Clure asked for more detail on why Project Adventure moved to P.E.

Mr. Einhorn said our rotation of classes has a low class size for that course. There will be some training for our P.E. staff for this program. Also, a paraeducator is part of it and will continue next year.

Dr. Erardi said the high school looking to continue Project Adventure there which will be P.E. based. The design is to offer the same opportunity at the middle school but changing the place it is being offered.

Mr. Clure question adding the health coordinator.

Dr. Erardi said there is one health coordinator in the district. The person resigned before school started so we decided to not staff it this year.

Mr. Clure noted that social studies was reduced by .5 but there was a positive increase in salary.

Mr. Einhorn said the salary represents the cluster configuration where we asked a teacher to teach two subjects.

Ms. Hamilton referred to pages 126 and 127 and asked if the middle school had one or two art teachers.

Mr. Einhorn stated that next year we would have two FTE art teachers.

Ms. Hamilton asked about the 11.5% increase in the salary line and the computer ed increase of 17%.

Mr. Bienkowski said we currently have staff members out on leave so we have to bring them back on the step they were on so it's a higher salary.

Mrs. Leidlein asked about the NYA homework club.

Mr. Einhorn said we provide three days of afterschool homework help. NYA helps us run the program with high school students.

Mrs. Leidlein asked was the cost paid for.

Mr. Einhorn said it for supervisors for the school year and supplies. Many students have shown they need that extra structure and teachers generate the referral. They move to the library after school. There are usually 30 students per week.

Mr. Clure asked for the number of students that participate in extracurricular sports. He motioned there wasn't a girls field hockey team at the middle school.

Mr. Ku asked about the middle school academic resource center funded by a grant this year.

Mr. Einhorn said there are a number of students who struggle with assignments and are not doing well academically. Teachers would work to help these students and try to find an intern or someone available to work with them during the day. If we could put together a program for these students they work to help manage their homework load and build good habits that would help them be successful. The supervisor works with the students and keeps in touch with the teachers. The hope they will be in the program short term.

Mrs. Ku asked why there was a considerable increase for math tutors.

Mr. Einhorn said there are new programs for each seventh and eighth grade math class.

Dr. Erardi would get more information.

Item 3 – Newtown High School Budget

Dr. Rodrigue thanked Nathalie de Brantes for her help preparing the budget.

Dr. Rodrigue shared her pride in the high school being recognized by US News and World Report and successful completion of the NEASC accreditation process. Our budget requests reflect what we feel is a fiscally responsible approach to our needs. Our goals support student learning and a commitment to increase a sense of social, emotional, and physical safety and well-being within our high school community.

This year two academic officers are working with at risk freshman students and developing partnerships. We also used existing stipends for Tap and teacher positions in our support centers. We piloted a digital academy this year and re-established a collaborative co-teaching model. Next year we are requesting three Link Crew advisors which is a national mentoring program for freshman students. Over 65 juniors are trained as mentors but the grant will no longer cover this program. We are asking for a boys volleyball coach look to restructure the tutoring center to provide SRBI intervention. We have two FTE reductions in science and social studies due to declining enrollment.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites asked for information regarding pay to play money.

Mr. Bienkowski explained that the pay to participate fee assessed to students is directly received by the Board of Education. Around 2003 we had a severe budget cut and at that time the Board decided to increase all pay to play fees. Fees were rolled back at the high school because of the outcry so they were reduced. We wanted to eliminate the fees completely but in 2010-11 we increased them but have stayed there. The town said the auditors said the money coming in was too high so they required us to turn it over to the town. We continued to deposit it on the town's revenue side. Any extra was used to pay for the sports programs. This is the first year we will be short. It would be wise to phase out the pay to play completely.

Mrs. Harrimon-Stites asked where the money from the hockey ticket sales went.

Mr. Simon said hockey is self-funded but we have been giving them more to help. They keep the ticket money.

Dr. Erardi asked what the total cost was to be on the team.

Mr. Simon said approximately \$2,000. They pay for the ice time.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites said other teams have costs and questioned how certain items like the pool scoreboard get into the budget and others don't.

Mr. Simon said we have been fortunate to receive many donations.

Dr. Erardi supports discontinuing pay to play also. He is certain that there is at least one child who cannot participate because of the cost and we have to look at that. At some point we will come to the Board to reduce that cost over time.

Mr. Bienkowski was not in favor of turning this money to the town. It should stay in the school budget.

Mr. Alexander said we now turn over \$84,000 of this to the town because of something that happened years ago.

Dr. Erardi said if we don't make that \$84,000 we have to make up the difference.

Mr. Bienkowski clarified that this happened in 2003-04.

Mrs. Leidlein looked to eliminate it this year.

Mr. Bienkowski said that over the last several years we have had this discussion but it never seemed the right year. This is the first year we will have to cut into the amount we have to turn over to the town. Bob Tait said the amount of \$7,350 is completely insignificant to the towns \$100M budget.

Ms. Hamilton questioned page 161 if the total expense for athletics was \$772,116.

Mr. Bienkowski said the amounts in contracted services need to be added to that figure. Dr. Erardi stated the total cost includes \$772,116 plus \$112,910, \$6,000, \$26,000 and \$63,150.

Mr. Bienkowski said the total cost for athletics is \$884,139. We will collect \$157,000 for pay for play plus additional ticket income.

Ms. Hamilton asked where the ticket income came from.

Mr. Bienkowski said it came from the various sports programs but there is a lot variance in the amount we receive.

Ms. Hamilton said it is projected that we will collect \$157,000 of which \$84,000 is due to the town. What we collect does not cover the cost for athletics. Schools are not supposed to collect revenues. We should talk to the auditors to see if we don't have to.

Mrs. Leidlein stated that the tickets are also being paid for by the people paying for pay to participate.

Harriman-Stites asked if the \$35,901 increase for coaching was contractual plus the cost of the volleyball coach.

Mr. Bienkowski said that was a result of negotiations with the teachers contract with a 3% increase.

Mr. Clure asked why we couldn't lower the costs to parents.

Dr. Erardi said the money collected is accounted for when received. We have to build a voice behind the change. There is engagement of additional parent voices at the high school. We will be back to the Board next year on pay to participate.

Mrs. Ku referred to page 155 and questioned the significant increase in the cost for athletic insurance and asked if there were multiple ways to provide insurance for sports?

Mr. Bienkowski said that years ago parents used their own insurance. He doesn't see it going down in the future.

Mr. Alexander asked if we that could come under our health insurance.

Mr. Bienkowski said that was not possible as there are only a few sports insurance providers.

Mrs. Ku asked about the NEASC report and their recommendations.

Dr. Rodrigue stated that the report is being worked on. We knew some of the recommendations already. Support centers will be part of that.

Ms. Hamilton asked for a copy of the NEASC self-study and for an example of the academic officers do.

Dr. Rodrigue said that last year we split the position between two people and had one class. The officers focus on the incoming freshman and gather lots of information at the middle school level for those who may be at risk academically and social emotionally. They put teams of teachers together with those students. They are now working with students at the high end of the autistic spectrum and we are looking at putting three teachers together. We are also looking to bringing in an AP course in humanities.

Mr. Vouros asked for examples of success the children are having in that initiative. Dr. Rodrigue said we looked at student scores in the middle school, why they were identified and how they fared there and also at their first quarter grade in the high school. Some students are getting A's and B's. Over 65 were identified. We also have a critical skills staff and they place students who need specific interventions.

Mr. Vouros asked if any students were opting out. Dr. Rodrigue stated that no one was opting out because they are being successful and know the program is helping them.

Mr. Clure was concerned that the pupil to teacher in math was high (page 149). Dr. Rodrigue said math classes were the highest but they are within the guidelines. However, because of the declining enrollment it's getting better.

Mr. Alexander requested the number of students involved in activities other than sports. Mrs. Harriman-Stites asked that Dr. Rodrigues share here report notes.

Item 4 – Pupil Personnel, Special Education and Health Benefits

Dr. Erardi said this budget was influenced by our director but it was important to note that member of the department worked to put this information together. Those attending were Bonnie DeLorenzo, Cathy Goralski, Maureen Hall, Anne Dalton and Suzanne D'Eramo.

Mrs. Ku referred to the News Times article that indicated that special education needs are rising. Page 28 of the budget shows that our costs have gone up over the years. There is an increase in the percentage of students being identified and she asked the increase.

Cathy Goralski said that the average is a 6% increase year within special education. Dr. Erardi said it is remarkably different in Newtown with an extraordinary uptick at the high school. We are 30 plus students each year.

Mr. Alexander asked where the identifications were coming from. Dr. Erardi said much has to do with anxiety.

Ms. Hamilton asked if there were just special education students or also 504. Mrs. Goralski said they are all special education students.

Mrs. Leidlein said that looking at the data how have we gone up \$4M in the last 10 years even with the decrease in enrollment. What can we do, how can we approach this and are we trying to look at the costs increasing significantly? We need to address the needs and we can alleviate the burden on the community.

Dr. Erardi said three pieces need to be addressed. The first is to identify the program we need to create to allow us to keep students in our district. Second is the uniqueness of Newtown regarding per pupil expenses that is inflated because of what the state did for us, and third is the inability of the State to fund our needs.

Mrs. Goralski said looking at how we continue the services we will help to eliminate the costs. We need to find ways to have a district program instead of sending student out of district.

Mrs. Hall said that we should be training our staff and offer more programs in house and look at our SRBI model with early intervention.

Mrs. Dalton said that many situations regarding these students starts with a homebound request. The parents need to be made aware of the programs in the system.

Ms. Hamilton said we've added a lot of programming to help students in the schools but she feels we aren't getting to the solution. Are the programs working together to address the real problem?

Mrs. Leidlein said that sometimes identification is late. Can we identify students who come into the district earlier to better address their needs? A lot of interventions earlier were academic and not social emotional.

Mr. Alexander referred to a letter Dr. Erardi sent to our representatives regarding our per pupil expenditures.

Dr. Erardi said we received support from our federal delegates and will bring that forward to a special session as a special bill if all goes well.

Mr. Alexander said the purpose is to try to get the grant money not counted as part of our per pupil expenditures.

Mr. Vouros asked the range of issues for these students.

Mrs. Goralski said the range is from severe problems to those needing help with speech.

Mr. Vouros asked how many with severe problems need more help.

Mrs. Goralski didn't have that data trending. At the elementary level with some identified as special education students has been more challenging this year compared to last year.

Mr. Vouros said cost will increase. We need to be mindful that we have the staff and facilities to work with these children in settings that do not disrupt their progress. He asked if we have enough BCBA's.

Mrs. Hall said we have two in place and are requesting a .5 for next year.

Dr. Erardi said we take the responsibility of an age three students with disabilities until they reach the age of 21.

Mr. Clure asked if we had any programs in place like Big Brother to partner with students.

Mrs. Dalton said Unified Sports is at the high school works with students with disabilities.

Mr. Clure was looking for something during the school day.

Mrs. Ku asked how much of the cost is due to the number of students.

Dr. Erardi asked how many will be out-placed.

Mrs. DeLorenzo said we have 43 students out-placed now. Last year we had 36.

Dr. Erardi said it's being driven by the autistic spectrum and the high anxiety youngsters that can't come to school.

Mr. Vouros asked the breakdown of the 43 students by grade level.

Mrs. DeLorenzo would provide that information.

Mr. Alexander asked if we know that number of students who will have homebound tutoring ahead of time.

Mrs. Dalton said you don't know ahead of time. The can come from things such as planned surgeries to broken legs to anxiety issues.

Dr. Erardi stated that when a student is expelled tutoring is also required. Another cost is legal counsel pertaining to special education.

Mr. Bienkowski referred to page 188 which shows we budgeted \$80,000 this year for legal costs. It's a volatile area.

Ms. Hamilton said in 2010 we only had 22 out-placed students. Do we have a choice where we send these students or chose a program if adequate?

Mrs. Hall said that based on the PPT the team and parents make recommendations
Mrs. Goralski said that sometimes you have find which facilities are available

Ms. Hamilton noted that costs have gone up for out-of-district transportation.

Mr. Bienkowski said it has increased and that is part of the excess cost grant reimbursement.

Mr. Clure said the projections are only 36 and he asked why we have 43 students outplaced.

Mrs. DeLorenzo said that some students are aging out and we are also working with some parents to bring some students back.

Dr. Erardi said the present number of 43 we will have students who graduate. We do our best to project which students will come back to us. The piece we don't do is to try to forecast who will be leaving us.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites would be interested in seeing a program put in place as long-term solutions.

Dr. Erardi said they are trying to do that at the high school.

Mrs. Ku asked about tuition rates and how much they will go up.

Dr. Erardi said many times he refuses to pay what is asked. The rate of increase is extraordinary.

Mr. Alexander asked about the reallocation of nurses salaries on page 202.

Mrs. Dalton said that is from the Starr Program at Reed which only has two students with one leaving the end of this year. The nursing position is being moved to the high school because it has been understaffed.

Mr. Alexander questioned the elimination of the substance abuse counseling service on page 203.

Dr. Erardi said we had a subcontracted position for the high school for a number of years but we can take care of that now with our existing staff.

Mrs. Leidlein said that phase out the Starr Program means there will be space at Reed and asked what would happen to that space.

Dr. Erardi said that will come to the Board in February to use as an additional class for the day care program.

Ms. Hamilton asked about the other staff in the Starr Program.

Mrs. Dalton said one nurse and an agency LPM will continue to work with the student staying in the district.

Item 5 – Technology

Mrs. Amodeo looked at a method of replacing obsolete equipment with a five-year time frame. Each year there are new initiatives and PTA funded donations that will vary the total number of units to replace. She proposed \$80,000 for news initiatives and a total budget of \$700,000 to maintain, sustain and have new initiatives.

Ms. Hamilton asked whether prior to a donation they come to us first to see if their donation will fit into our plan for technology.

Mrs. Amodeo said when people want to make a donation we are contacted to see if the items will be useful.

Mrs. Leidlein asked what we can do to make technology more accessible to students in the classrooms.

Mrs. Amodeo said laptops primarily went to staff. We are using Chromebooks for Power Teachers Gradebooks. We want to be sure students have a device to handle homework.

Mrs. Leidlein asked if we have training for staff in Chromebooks.

Mrs. Amodeo said not this year as they just came into the district. We are looking at apps because it's a predominantly web-based device.

Mr. Clure asked how iPads were purchased.

Mrs. Amodeo said the equipment costs listed also includes a three-year warranty. The iPad cost is \$400. We don't buy the top line. Laptops from last year are being given to staff.

Mr. Clure said it would be better to have more detail on the purchases of iPads and recommended looking at Apple carefully.

Mr. Alexander wanted to note that Apple has done us a favor and provided training.

Mr. Clure asked if there was anything in place that tracks whether teachers are using the device they are given.

Mrs. Amodeo said from observation each school has a group that meets regarding technology. We hear about problems but she feels they are being used.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites asked if we have someone providing technology assistance to teacher using google classroom

Mrs. Amodeo said a couple of our staff members run professional development and they poll the teachers on what training they want. They are proactive in helping and the staff also helps each other.

Mrs. Harriman-Stites referred to the cost for the teacher websites on page 219 and if there are things we can move to google to save on costs.

Mrs. Amodeo said google offers training and we have a district tech committee that looks at things that may need changing.

Mr. Clure asked if there was any other system we could use to pay for school lunches as there is a cost to parents to add funds and limited as to how much you can put on the account.

Mr. Bienkowski said there are companies that provide the service but they charge a fee.

Item 6 – Public Participation

Julia Conlon, Old Castle Drive, asked the responsibilities of the transition position being eliminated. The budget increase may not please the voters. Dr. Erardi has made great strides reaching out to the public but what is missing is what the principals requested that was not included and the thought process behind them. It would be helpful for parents to know. Rising special education costs is huge. The cell signal at Head O'Meadow does not work in all parts of the building.

Caryn Holden, 68 Berkshire Road, referred to Dr. Erardi's presentation. He mentioned how the Sandy Hook PTA Foundation contributed grant money but she didn't find it in the budget book and asked if what the grant is covering could be shared.

Laura Terry, 64 Robin Hill Road, was interested in Project Adventure going into the physical education classes and asked if we were losing anything in P.E. to have it there. Regarding play to pay, she was not sure why we give \$84,000 to the town. Do we receive money from Parks and Rec for using the schools? They charge for their programs but they don't pay to use the schools. We also pay to have our offices in this building. We should look at possibly moving the Board of Education offices into a school.

MOTION: Mrs. Leidlein moved to adjourn. Ms. Hamilton seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 7 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Debbie Leidlein
Secretary

Newtown High School

Budget 2016

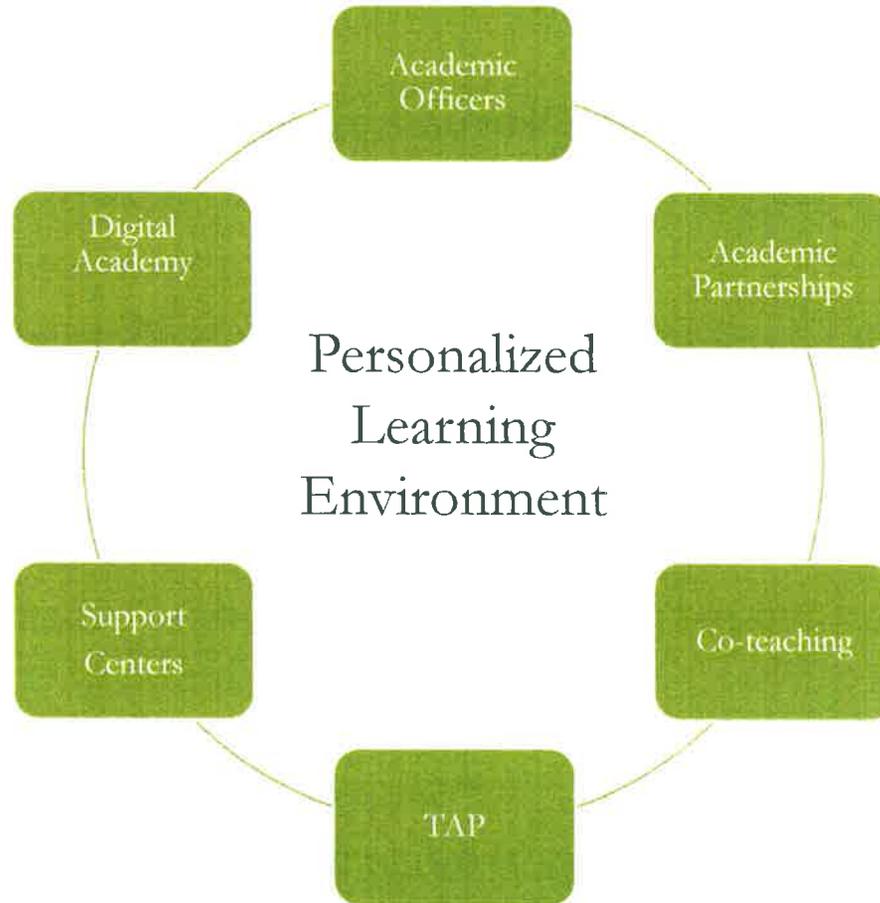
Our school goals, central to our school improvement plan continue to drive what we do...

- Consistent, effective instructional practices that support student learning.*
- Our commitment to increase a sense of social, emotional, and physical safety and well-being within our high school community.*

Through this lens and within this context, this year's budget development took into account 3 important factors:

1. To meet the current academic and social needs of our population in alignment with our school improvement goals
1. To think creatively about how we use our resources and ways we could **reorganize, restrategize, and restructure** anticipating future changes and improvements we want to make at NHS
2. To be fiscally responsible and responsive given future reduction in enrollment

Personalized
Learning
Environment



NHS Requests for 2016

- Link Crew Advisors (3)
- Volleyball Boys Head Coach
- Restrategize - two clerical positions (Career Center to Guidance)
- Restructure - Tutoring Center – tutor to provide SRBI interventions (literacy)
- Pool scoreboard

Other Requests

- Technology
 - Chromebook carts for LMC
 - Smartboard for Nurture program
 - Surface Pros for Math department (2)

Reoccurring Technology Equipment Fund Allocation Request

Goal: To establish a dollar amount to be funded each year for technology equipment that will

- Ensure all technology equipment is able to meet the demands of instruction
- Allow for better long term planning
- Provide for new initiatives

Considerations:

- Include the entire inventory of equipment
- Accept a replacement age guideline for each type
- Establish a replacement cost per unit type
- Recognize that during the initial years, some equipment may be replaced earlier than the age guideline and some may be replaced later

The following table lists the total number of units for each type of equipment in the October 2015 inventory, the accepted refresh rate and the most recent replacement costs.

Budget Year per Year					
Total Dollars for Obsolete Replacements	Unit Cost Est.	Total # of units	Refresh Rate in Years	Per Year Replacement	\$620,971
					Cost
iPad	\$ 600	1133	5	227	\$135,960
Chromebook w/licensing	\$ 409	196	5	39	\$16,033
Computer	\$ 701	1756	6	293	\$205,159
Laptop	\$ 924	538	6	90	\$82,852
Projector with mount	\$ 1,300	382	10	38	\$49,660
Server	\$ 4,000	43	6	7	\$28,667
				SubTotal	\$518,331
Network Projects					
Switches/Router	\$ 4,000	133	10	13	\$53,200
Access Points w/ licensing	\$ 800	309	5	62	\$49,440
				SubTotal	\$102,640

Note that this takes into account only the inventory of equipment on record as of October 15, 2015. Each year there are new initiatives and PTA funded donations that will vary the total number of units.

Based on the above, a fixed equipment annual expenditure to maintain current inventory would include:

- \$520,000 for replacement of the portion of the inventory meeting the replacement refresh age
- \$100,000 for network upgrades and maintenance.

The remainder of the dollars in the reoccurring technology equipment line would be to meet the highest priorities of the building administration.

- \$80,000 for new initiatives

In total the Annual Technology Equipment budget would be set at \$700,000.

Topics raised during budget discussions

Printing Cartridges – The District Business Office is currently exploring the efficiencies and savings that may result from Managed Print Services. In order to take part in such a plan, the vendor will do an analysis of printing needs for each building. The analysis will identify the printers currently in use and the number of pages printed by each per month. Based on these findings, a quote for the monthly cost to maintain the printers and proactively provide supplies and repair services will be generated.

Entering into a Managed Print Services contract will eliminate the stress on the buildings to purchase all printing supplies at the beginning of each school year. The initial analysis may also help to identify printers of low use that may be eliminated.

Lamps– Centralizing the purchase of projector lamps has been considered in the past. The ability to do so presented the challenges of the space to store the inventory, and the ability to understand the frequencies of replacement due to variation in usage by teacher. This has remained with the schools and with the inventory being localized, the custodial staff or building liaison can take care of the replacement very quickly.

The Technology department works to keep an inventory of one of each type lamp in stock as a backup for the buildings. It may be noted that the cost of lamps is decreased as the older projectors are replaced with new models.

Chromebook versus iPad - Each type of device has its strengths and reasons for adoption. The iPad with its wealth of educational apps and touchscreen has been well received and used by the early grades. The Chromebook is a web based device. It does also have apps available but we have only begun to explore them. Unlike the iPad, our Chromebooks do not have a touch screen but do offer a reasonably sized screen and keyboard.

The district has provided one Chromebook cart to each school K-8 for the 2015-16 school year. One need that the district faces that is not well met by the use of the iPad is standardized testing such as NWEA. The iPad's smaller screen makes it less suited for test taking. The model of Chromebook purchased has a 14 inch screen.

Additionally, the Chromebook fits well with the use of Google Apps for Education, GAFE. The district began providing email addresses to our students in grades 4 through 12 in 2012. Many classes are beginning to take advantage of more of the Google apps including Google Classroom. The Chromebook should prove to be the ideal tool for this use.

SERV 5.94 FTE Reduction for 2016-2017

Position	Reduction
Project Director	.6
Recovery Project Secretary	1.0
Counselor	1.0
Psychologist	1.0
Transition Coordinator	.29
Educational Assistants	2.05
Total Reduction	5.94

2016/17 District Comparison Requested Budget Increase

DRG- B Districts	
School District	Requested Budget Increase 2016-2017
Greenwich	2.189%
Monroe	2.43%
Glastonbury	2.89%
Amity	*3.00%
Cheshire	3.00%
Trumbull	3.18%
New Fairfield	3.52%
Newtown	3.87%
Brookfield	4.19%
Avon	4.27%
Guilford	January 11
Madison	January 11
Fairfield	January 13
South Windsor	January 26
Simsbury	February 1

* approximate

Fairfield County Districts	
School District	Requested Budget Increase 2016-2017
Wilton	1.44%
Westport	2.03%
Newtown	3.87%
Bethel	January 15
Redding (PK-8) & Region 9	January 15
Ridgefield	January 15
Weston	January 15
Seymour	January 15
Danbury	January 31

Board of Education Budget Questions
January 5, 2016

- Q. Are there identified greater Support Staff needs in certain grades?
A. Yes, the proposed 2016-17 budget is reflective of these needs.
- Q. Are the requested elementary support staff positions in the budget that are directly related to Newtown Public Schools continued recovery?
A. Yes, staff presently under our Federal grants have moved to the operational plan. Social worker and psychologist positions have been carried over and there are counselors in every school.
- Q. What is the staffing security level for 16-17?
A. The present security level has been maintained throughout the district.
- Q. Is the request to change the unarmed security guard start time from 10:00 am to 9:30 am in the budget?
A. Yes, thanks to collaboration with the town.
- Q. As far as testing goes and the platforms that you have in your schools, are they sufficient for what you need to accomplish?
A. Yes, we have found that the platforms we have support our testing.
- Q. Please define what was not supported within the K-4 Leadership Budget Considerations (page 46-47).
A. 1) Extended School year; 2) Moving Lead Teachers to AP (except in the case of Sandy Hook School); 3) Expansion of Unified Arts
- Q. There are several challenges identified. I appreciate the open dialogue they create. I think I understand the implications of each of the items. What would be the logistics and implications of adding 5 minutes to specials?
A. There are fewer classes to instruct at the elementary level so we are having a number of our specialists teach in more than one building. Adding time to each class creates a more robust schedule enabling us to retain the teacher. It's an added benefit for instruction as well.
- Q. What has been the experience at the elementary schools with the mixed use of iPads and PCs? How do the different platforms support our use of apps and programs?
A. Chrome books are internet-based. A lot of time is spent with iMovie, Moviemaker and concepts around literacy but we cannot share documents on the iPads. We have many more iPads than Chrome books. We expect to use both technologies in the upper classrooms for different things. They will be more project-based.
- Q. Are you certain you have in this budget, in each of your elementary schools, adequate services and staff to deal with students who present unusual challenges?
A. Yes. We have incredible people – dedicated, intelligent and caring. What we need is training, space, time and resources. We are looking forward to conversations with our

future director of Pupil Personnel Services and looking into programming. Who can tell us what is the right way to handle these unique and exceptional students? We need to give our leadership and support staff the tools we need that will enable us to best help these children.

Q. Do we have any data on concerning behaviors in our elementary schools?

A. Yes and we will provide this at the first February Board of Education meeting.

Q. Are you able to share personnel between the schools when you have these issues?

A. We have two behavior analysts in the district so we share those but we do not share our social workers or psychologists.

Q. When I compare the four elementary schools, there are three schools with a reduction of 1 FTE (SHS, HAW, MGS). Two schools show a similar decrease in the total teacher salaries, while MGS shows an increase. Why is this?

A. We build salaries for the schools at Central Office, based on people who are present and moving forward. At Middle Gate there is a senior staff member expected to return but has been on leave for two years, thus the reason for the increase at MGS.

Q. I appreciate the revised projections. Do these in any way take into account the smaller housing unit complexes coming on-line in the next couple of years? Will this affect the enrollment for 16-17?

A. No, this will be further discussed at the January 9th BOE retreat.

Q. Hawley has two students per class more than the other schools and the maximum number of students allowed for kindergarten (Page 53). Is there a way to help Hawley?

A. We have to settle on an aggregate number that's consistent across all schools within the district. The way the budget is built, we held on to only what we know. Hawley's primary numbers are pretty good (page 60) – 2nd grade: 15-16; 1st grade: 19, 20; 4th grade: 22-23. We can't project or predict who's moving in or out. If we need to come back to adjust numbers, we will do that.

Q. One of the goals last year was to continue progress toward full implementation of Readers Workshop in 5th and 6th grade (page 104 – this was updated at the meeting). How far are we from full implementation? What about writers workshop?

A. The curriculum is being written for reading and writing to support the implementation. Everyone has been trained in the methodology of the workshop but there was no curriculum behind them. Everyone has been trained in reading and most in writing. Many were trained at the elementary level.

Q. Don't the units come from Columbia? Didn't the Board of Education purchase them for you?

A. Yes but the units had to be tweaked because they were inappropriate for our students. Hopefully for next year we'll have a draft curriculum to bring before the Board. It will be closely aligned with Teacher's College.

- Q. Is the social worker in the Reed budget?
- A. Yes, the social worker at Reed is now part of the 16-17 BOE budget.
- Q. Has concern about the grade most impacted by 12/14 coming into the 5th grade at Reed. Are you certain you have enough support?
- A. Yes, very confident and certain.
- Q. Would it be possible to put together a joint report showing the funding sources, and how those monies are to be used, for the town and school for the future? It would be extremely worthwhile to get the big picture.
- A. Yes, the Superintendent is happy to work with the 1st Selectman on this.
- Q. What types of things are covered by “contracted services” in the Reed budget? As examples, there is an increase on page 110 for math and a decrease on page 117 for administration.
- A. For math it is a progress monitoring program (technology contracted service) and for administration services for the schedule-building program.
- Q. Each school has an additional amount for the reinstatement of the health coordinator (page 97). Can you explain? Should this be included on page 30?
- A. There was an early resignation (before school started) for this position so it was decided not to fill it. Shouldn't be on page 30 because it is not a new position.
- Q. Does the 11.7 FTE reduction include the 5.94 FTE not covered in the SERV (see the Superintendent's introductory letter to the budget)? Are we reducing district staff by 11.7 or 18?
- A. Analytics will be covered more at the January 7th budget workshop meeting.
- Q. With Newtown's need for services 10 years and beyond, should we look into hiring a contracted grant writer to help us bring in funding?
- A. In the Superintendent's experience in Southington, it was extremely successful. He strongly endorses that further conversation.
- Q. Currently RIS 5th grade has a cohort of students served by 14 teachers. Why does RIS Budget Proposal for next year require 16 teachers for the same cohort as they move to 6th grade?
- A. Our current 5th grade classes are at a max of 25 students per class. Historically, RIS gains a significant number of 6th grade students from K-5 magnet and private schools. Next year RIS will have two of our most impacted groups of SHS students in 5th and 6th grade. It has been extremely challenging this year for our 5th grade teachers to support these students with such high numbers.