



## CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT OF NEW BRITAIN

# New Britain Board of Education Curriculum Committee Meeting

June 15, 2020– 6:30 PM | Virtual Meeting

### Call to Order and Opening

Dr. Violet Jiménez Sims, Curriculum Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:19 PM.

### Board Members Present

Mr. Merrill Gay, Ms. Diane Leja\*, Mr. Nicholas Mercier\*, Ms. Annie Parker, Ms. Diana Reyes\*, Dr. Violet Jiménez Sims\*

*\*Committee members*

### CSDNB Staff Present

Ms. Amy Anderson, Ms. Lara Bohlke, Mr. Matthew Cannata, Ms. Leona Clerkin, Ms. Kristin Salerni, Ms. Nancy Sarra

### New Business

### Review and Approve Minutes from the Curriculum Committee Meeting on May 18, 2020

There were no recommended changes to the minutes from the Curriculum Committee Meeting on May 18, 2020.

***Mr. Mercier motioned to approve the minutes from the Curriculum Committee Meeting on May 18, 2020 as submitted, seconded by Ms. Reyes. Motion carried unanimously.***

### Newsela Presentation

Ms. Lara Bohlke, District Coordinator of Curriculum for Grades 6-12, introduced the Newsela platform to committee members. Newsela is an education website focused on building student reading comprehension by providing high-quality news articles and real-time assessments for students. 161 CSDNB teachers have used Newsela this school year, 71 at the elementary level and 80 at the secondary level. 100 of these CSDNB teachers began using Newsela as a resource after March 13th, at which point the majority of the collection became available to teachers free of charge. While many teachers have taken advantage of the free access to tap into original vetted content, more have not, aware that once free access was unavailable, they would no longer be able to use it. Ms. Bohlke would like to allow teachers to begin to plan over the summer, knowing what resources, virtual and otherwise, they will have at their fingertips, regardless of what 'school' looks like in the fall. Newsela has features to support EL learners as well, including highlighting and vocabulary tools as well as translation and audio supports, such as text to speech.

Ms. Bohlke believes Newsela is a high quality resource that provides all of the following:

- Flexibility to respond to and meet our content needs and support our students, no matter what happens next year or what our students end up needing
- Accessibility and equity for every student, regardless of reading level, background, or access to technology
- Support for teachers across subjects, including social and emotional learning, both in and out of the classroom
- Ease of implementation (many Teachers and Students are already familiar with Newsela) and works with Google Classroom
- Gives us visibility into what's happening across the district

### New Britain Board of Education

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Ms. Kristi Maroudas and Mr. Stephawn Newsome from Newsela, Inc. attended the meeting to provide additional information and answer questions about their platform. Mr. Newsome provided an overview of Newsela describing it as an instructional content platform which brings current events to life and aligns them to historical documents. He highlighted the various instructional resources provided within the platform including activities, lesson plans, and differentiated reading levels. Ms. Maroudas and Mr. Newsome also explained how the content is aligned with state and subject specific standards and described the PD experiences offered.

Ms. Maroudas shared key features and pricing differences between the Newsela ELA Package and the Distance Learning Suite Bundle. The Distance Learning District Suite Bundle allows for the purchase of all four content solutions, plus on-demand PD resources, all for \$14 per student for the year. That includes Newsela ELA, Newsela Social Studies, Newsela Science, The Newsela Social-Emotional Learning Collection (for elementary and secondary), and our PD Pass, and is a savings of an additional 15% on what you'd pay normally with the Partner Discount/Full District 30% discount.

Required funding will be available either through Academics or through state funding at an approximate cost of \$107,000. "The CSDE is committed to financially support LEAs' efforts to provide appropriate recovery services for all students, including students with IEPs and to prepare students and teachers to reenter the school building when it is safe to do so." Part of this Education Recovery financial support includes "funding for instructional supplies/equipment (resources)." Newsela fulfills these CSDE parameters and allows CSDNB teachers the resources to provide students relevant articles at their appropriate reading level.

***Mr. Mercier motioned to favorably refer the purchase order for Newsela Distance Learning Suite Bundle in the amount of \$107,940.00 to the Superintendent for approval under Summer Authority. This motion was seconded by Ms. Leja. Motion carried unanimously.***

## **QuaverMusic Presentation**

Ms. Leona Clerkin, Coordinator of Fine Arts, Gifted and Talented, presented a slideshow overview of the QuaverMusic platform. QuaverMusic is a web-based, PreK -8 General Music resource. With the increase of on-line learning, we have partnered with QuaverMusic to support general music teachers at the elementary level to provide remote learning opportunities for our students K- 5. The Quaver music program has been generously allowing the general music teachers K - 8 piloting rights to the on-line platform. There are 10,000 schools currently using Quaver Music, with 6,547 digital resources with Quaver and 1,195 interactive songs, all aligned to the National Music Standards. This platform gives teachers an opportunity to enhance their pedagogy and increase student engagement, while empowering classroom teachers with tools to directly address the five core CASEL competencies of self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills. Music has a powerful role to play in developing the academic, social, and emotional skills of students, both in and out of the music classroom. The purchase of this platform would enhance the learning experiences of students at home should be continue distance learning, and at school, should we return in the fall.

## **Highlights of the program include:**

### **Teachers:**

- Extensive collection of resources and tools
- Lessons and activities developed and aligned to Kodaly, Orff and other standard music pedagogies
- Flexible customization allowing integrations of teachers' current, non-Quaver, resources in their lessons and assignments
- Addresses all the CASEL core competencies and sub-competencies

### **Students:**

- Unlimited free student accounts – this includes Band, Choir, and Orchestra students not in GM classes too
- Engaging student music learning environments, composition tools and music literacy activities all available from home or school via individual accounts

### **District:**

- Equitable resource platform across entire district
- Platform encourages colleague collaboration and sharing of best practices
- Integration and support for SSO and rostering

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- Usage reporting

**Support:**

- Staffed toll-free number for questions and issues
- Library of 24/7 online PD tutorials
- District specific PD opportunities – currently New Britain has completed two 90-minute PDs scheduled during at-home learning

Mr. Mercier and Dr. Jiménez Sims agreed that the range of culturally appropriate music is something that this platform needs to work on developing further and this concern should be shared with QuaverMusic.

*Mr. Mercier motioned to favorably refer the purchase order for QuaverMusic online program in the amount of \$16,800.00 to the Superintendent for approval under Summer Authority. This motion was seconded by Ms. Reyes. Motion carried unanimously.*

## Closing and Adjournment

Ms. Leja motioned to adjourn at 8:13 PM, seconded by Mr. Mercier. Motion carried unanimously.