NEW BRITAIN BOARD OF EDUCATION APPROVES PROPOSED BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2017-2018

The New Britain Board of Education has accepted Superintendent Nancy Sarra’s proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2017-2018, which calls for a 0.85 percent increase from 2016-2017.

The budget, which is a $1 million increase from last year, totals $127 million, with approximately $88 million going towards personnel costs. This proposed increase, the smallest one in over ten years, is a result of Sarra’s efforts to streamline operations since taking over as Superintendent on April 1, 2016.

“While the proposed increase is a small one, it is one that was possible because of our collaborative efforts throughout the district,” said Sarra. “Through fiscal responsibility and a new approach here at Central Office, we have been able to save approximately $2 million.”

Sarra noted that a big focus of her proposed budget is centered around special education students.

“While we must meet the mandated needs, our focus is on improving existing programming as well as adding programming to better provide a continuum of services for all New Britain students. This includes adding staff that ranges from speech pathologists, special education teachers and paraeducators.”

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UPCOMING EVENTS

For a list of home and away match-ups for our winter athletic teams, please scroll to the back cover of the publication.

January 22
Second semester begins at NBHS

January 27
Districtwide dress down day
$1 for students | $5 for staff

January 27 - 6 PM at VFW
NBHS Baseball Social

January 30
NBHS report cards mailed home

January 31
Elementary/Middle report cards distributed

February 1 - 8 AM - NBHS SCA
Coffee and Breakfast with the Principal

February 6 - 6:00 PM at NBEAC
Board of Education Meeting

February 8
Early Dismissal due to Professional Dev.

February 10
Paraeducators Scholarship Dress Down Day

February 13
No School

February 14 - 5:00 - 6:30 PM
HALS Multi-Cultural Night

February 15
Early Dismissal due to Professional Dev.
The ultimate goal, as Sarra moves forward, is to add value to the current system without spending additional dollars. One way to achieve that goal is to make smarter and more efficient use of grant dollars.

Another way, according to Sarra, is to continue to build capacity of all staff members, which will allow CSDNB to recognize a savings in out-of-district placements and in turn, will allow CSDNB to bring on additional staff.

"There are many ways to add value to our current system without spending additional money. Besides grant dollars and reducing out-of-district placements, we must also continue to establish and/or maintain partnerships and programs that add value to our district’s vision and goals. This will allow us to have in-kind services, which are no cost to the district."

New Britain Board of Education President, Nicholas Mercier, commended Sarra for a budget that is all-encompassing while taking into account the many needs of the students within the district, especially with the limited funds she has to work with.

"The reality of the situation is that until there are significant changes at the state level, urban communities like New Britain are going to need to do more with less."

Mercier added, "We will continue to streamline our processes and work to make sure every dollar we spend is contributing to improving the quality of education in New Britain."

Sarra said that at the end of the day, it’s about maximizing every penny in the budget.

"I owe it to the taxpayers of New Britain to truly understand where every penny is going towards. Until I know that I have maximized every penny, I will not ask the Common Council for large increases. With cuts to our funding from the State Department of Education and the fiscal problems at the state level, it is a time to make sacrifices and work together throughout the city."

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Regardless of which side you sit on, the Inauguration of the President of the United States every four years is a historic occasion. Yesterday, many of our classes watched the Inauguration to be a part of history. At Jefferson Elementary School, WFSB - Channel 3 Eyewitness News was on hand to watch with Ms. Pensiero’s fourth grade class.

To view the report from Channel 3, please visit our Facebook page (@CSDNBCT) and search for Pensiero Inauguration.

CSDNB OFFICE OF FAMILY EDUCATION SERVICES - PARENT TIPS

Homework, difficulty making friends, or losing a game are just a few situations that can lead to disappointment, frustration, and anger. Before you can effectively coach your child, they must first be ready to listen.

- Validate their feelings. “I see you feel ___.”
- Breathing – Pretend to “Blow Up Balloons” by having them cup their hands in front of their mouth and exhaling.
- Pretend to have “sticky” hands and press them together for 20 seconds. Now tell your child to slowly allow their hands to come apart.
- Tense and Relax by bringing fists to shoulders. Repeat five times.
- Story books can spark conversation, identify with characters in stressful situations and understand emotions/empathy.
- Avoid using media as a soothing strategy to help your child with limit setting and ability to self-regulate their own emotions.
- Consult the American Academy of Pediatrics Family Media Use Plan: www.healthychildren.org/MediaUsePlan

JUDY GRECO, LONGTIME EDUCATOR AND BOARD MEMBER, PASSES AWAY

It is with deep sadness that we announce that Judy Greco, longtime educator and Board of Education member, passed away on January 12. In the early 1960s, Judy walked into Smalley School and from that point forward, she made it her life mission to serve the children of New Britain. She taught at Smalley until 1973, when she was hired as a guidance counselor at Roosevelt Junior High School.

In that decade, she also served as a counselor at Pulaski High School and interim principal at Roosevelt Junior High School. In 1981, she became the first female housemaster (assistant principal) at New Britain High School.

In 1989, she was hired as the principal of St. Thomas Aquinas High School and would serve there until 1995, when she retired. In 2009, she was elected to the New Britain Board of Education, where she served until her passing.

Below are statements in regards to Judy and the impact she has made in New Britain.

Nancy Sarra | Superintendent
When I was principal at Jefferson, Judy was our board liaison and we connected with each other very quickly. She soon became my mentor and someone I could confide in. When things weren’t easy, Judy was the first one I turned to. Over the past few months, Judy would sit quietly but when she spoke, she was sharp and always on point. She was an amazing lady who was strong, probably before it was fashionable for women to be strong.

Mayor Erin Stewart
Judy was an inspiration; A selfless individual who gave everything to benefit our city. The school district will never be the same without its matriarch. It is now up to us to ensure her memory lives on.

Paul Salina | Chief Operations Officer/Assistant Superintendent
Judy Greco has been “old school” in the best sense of the meaning of that term throughout her life. She was meticulous in her appearance because as a leader and one who sets examples for others...that was important to her. She was a lady of class, because that’s the way she was raised, with an understanding of civic and social responsibility. She was a person of high standards, because as she held herself to those high standards, she raised the level of standards for those around her. Judy will be missed, but not forgotten.

Nicholas Mercier | Board of Education President
Judy was a witty and extremely intelligent educator. I only had the pleasure of knowing her for just over eight years, but I always enjoyed talking with her and listening to her stories from her days working as an educator. She was always kind to children and loved watching them grow and play. Her knowledge, experience, and passion will be missed.

Sharon Beloin-Saavedra | Board of Education Member/Former President
Judy was my teacher, counselor, mentor and best friend. I admired her strength, persistence, honesty and true grit. She loved New Britain’s children and spent her life working on their behalf. Her legacy lives on in the generations of students she touched. Our relationship came full circle. Today (January 12), I lost a member of my family.
Happy New Year CSDNB Families!

Welcome back to the 2016-2017 school year! I hope your holidays were spent enjoying time with family and friends. I think we can all agree that spending time with our children is one of our most worthwhile investments.

My wish for all of our students and for all of us beginning today is that we commit to giving 100% in all that we do. Teaching our children through our words and actions that perseverance and determination = success is yet another investment that will enable them to succeed in life.

As adults, we must be committed to doing the same, walking the walk so that they can “see” what perseverance and determination look like. We must show them what it means to “go the extra mile,” to not give up...ever. The payoff comes at different times for different folks, but helping our children see the value in hard work all along the way will payoff for all of them.

In a recent article, "How to Prepare Young People for Jobs of the Future," the author writes about the importance of modeling and teaching skills that are most vital to young people entering the workforce. In summary, we must teach and reteach our children the value of having ambition, adding value to whatever job they choose to do and bringing expertise to the group. In addition, we must model and teach the importance of strong interpersonal skills, getting along with others and the ability to speak and write clearly.

When we model and teach our children to be solution-driven rather than giving up, we will be strengthening their workforce-ready skills and will be making them competitive and self-sufficient. Imagine the benefits if we all choose to walk this walk. So let’s commit to ongoing modeling and teaching that will ensure our students are career ready and strong contributing members of our community!

Thank you in advance for your continued partnership and commitment as we pursue excellence, for all New Britain students, one student at a time.

In partnership,

Nancy Sarra
Superintendent of Schools
TOTAL ENERGY CONNECTIONS LLC LAUNCHES $10,000 SCHOLARSHIP AT NEW BRITAIN HIGH SCHOOL

The Woodbridge-based Total Energy Connections LLC has implemented a scholarship geared toward students interested in pursuing math, science or a vocation.

“We as an organization decided we should give back to the community,” said Partner/Co-Founder Jay Polydys. “It’s important to us as a business.”

Polydys said $500 will be awarded to a student annually, which will allow Total Energy to help graduates for years to come. He added that the scholarship will be aimed at “middle tier” students, ones who are good students but not necessarily the top ones who are able to win all kinds of other scholarships.

NBHS Principal Joseph Pinchera said, “We are truly grateful for the generous donation from John and Jay of Total Energy Connections. This scholarship will assist seniors going into the STEM and mathematics fields. The amount of new donors that have contributed to the NBHS scholarship fund is unbelievable. Our students are very fortunate that our community partners continue to support our annual scholarship event every year.”

Nancy Sarra, Superintendent of Schools, said that this is just another step in the right direction for the Consolidated School District of New Britain and partnering with community organizations and businesses.

“Having a community partner such as Total Energy Connections is what will help our students here in New Britain succeed beyond high school. We truly thank them for their commitment to our students and we look forward to working with them for years to come.”

Assistant Superintendent Paul Salina, who is also president of the NBHS Foundation, said the district is grateful to Polydys and the entire team at Total Energy.

“The scholarship will be given in perpetuity and will help a graduating senior in their pursuit of a post high school education. We applaud Total Energy for not only their commitment to provide an efficient power source for the high school but for their thoughtful gesture to establish a never ending scholarship to assist our students.”

Salina added that the district wished to thank facilities liaison Robert Smedley for coordinating much of the work for NBHS fuel cell and the partnership between NBHS and Total Energy.

NEW BRITAIN POLICE CHIEF JAMES WARDWELL SPEAKS TO STUDENTS AT NEW BRITAIN HIGH SCHOOL

Last week, Chief James Wardwell of the New Britain Police Department spoke to students currently enrolled in the Man-Up Program at New Britain High School. Additionally, students from Pulaski Middle School were in attendance.

He spoke to them regarding leadership in the community and other various topics. We thank Chief Wardwell for taking time out of his busy day to speak to our students!
STUDENTS ATTEND ELEMENTARY LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

On January 12, the Connecticut Association of Schools held the 2017 Elementary Student Leadership Conference at Three Rivers Community College in Norwich.

A few of our Student Ambassadors and students from our LEAP Program attended three sessions on leadership, teamwork and talent development and had a closing assembly by Interactive Theatre on “Leading to Stop Bullying.” There was also a special session for parents on “the role of parents in fostering leadership and improving learning” which our parent chaperone from Holmes Elementary, Aly Arroyo attended.

Mrs. Leona Clerkin, Advisor, attended “Look for the Good” presented by Anne Kubitsky. The elementary students that attended were Olivia Escobales, Student Ambassador from DiLoreto School and Jeniye Acevedo, Student Ambassador from Chamberlain School along with LEAP students Hailie Arroyo and Natalia Olszewska from Holmes Elementary School and Aiden Ocasio and Ariana Mohamed from Smith Elementary School.

Everyone agreed it was a wonderful learning experience for these elementary leaders! Special thanks to Mrs. Leona Clerkin for sending in the photo and information.

NATIONAL JUNIOR HONOR SOCIETY AT SLADE WORK WITH COMMUNITY TO CREATE CARE PACKAGES FOR THE HOMELESS

Last weekend, 31 volunteers, including 10 Slade Middle School National Jr. Honor Society students, participated in a community volunteering event in the Slade cafeteria. The group was recently awarded a $2,000 grant from Foresters Financial and with their assistance, they were able to put together 150 care packages of personal hygiene products.

The care packages were donated to the New Britain Homeless Over-Flow Shelter to be distributed to those in need during the cold winter season. Thank you to Mr. James Clerkin, Slade Guidance Counselor and National Junior Honor Society Advisor, for sending the photo and information our way.

STUDENT APPRECIATION VIDEO MADE FOR SMALLEY STAFF

Everyone who works hard deserves to be honored and recognized. At Smalley Elementary School, Franco Cartiera (Media Specialist) and Danielle Medeiros (Teacher), put together a video of students talking about how much they appreciated their teachers. This was their way of saying thank you to their colleagues for all the hard work they do on a daily basis.

The video was shown to the staff members at Smalley last week and their reactions were caught on camera! The video is just under 30 minutes long, but it is well worth watching. Take some time and see how our teachers go beyond the classroom while focusing on whole child development. To view the video, please visit our Facebook page (@CSDNBCT) and search for Smalley Appreciation Video.
NBHS STEM TEAM DETERMINED TO LEAVE A LEGACY

This article was published in the New Britain Herald and was submitted by Donna-Lou Douglas, a sophomore at NBHS.

A legacy is something — in this case memories and knowledge — that comes from the past or a person of the past. New Britain High School’s Legacy Racing team rocked its first ever STEM competition in Ipswich, Massachusetts. The team acquired first place in graphic design, third place in enterprise and finished in fourth place overall, only missing third place overall by two points.

Legacy Racing is affiliated with Ten80 Racing Challenge — a National STEM League program (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math). Students competing in the racing challenge form teams around 1:10 scale radio-controlled cars. Teams mirror professional race teams and include management, marketing, engineering and design activities.

Student racing teams around the United States have been accumulating points since September and the top points leaders will be participating in the national finals in Troy, New York, this April. Legacy Racing is currently in third place in the national points standings and are continuing to work hard to earn a trip to nationals in their inaugural year.

NBHS’ Legacy Racing is a lab-based experimental class, employed by teens that learn by experience. Students seek to provide an educational foundation that encourages and challenges them to develop to their maximum potential.

Legacy Racing’s major goal is the infusion of engineering with sound business practices. The students focus on project based learning that doesn’t overlook the learning. For more information visit the league website: www.Ten80Education.com.

Donna-Lou Douglas is a sophomore at NBHS. She was born and raised in Jamaica and is heavily involved in the STEM Club and the Creative Writing Club. Local students who would like to contribute an article about their school, sports team, community or civic organization may do so by submitting the article to Bianca Pavoncello, New Britain Herald managing editor via email to bpavoncello@centralctcommunications.com. Email submissions should include the words "student submission" in the email subject line.

NBHS STUDENTS SET TO BE HONORED BY CAS

Congratulations to Jasmine Colapietro and Paola Bronner for being selected as outstanding students who excel in performing and/or visual arts. Both students, along with their families, will be honored by the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS) at the 22nd Annual Connecticut High School Arts Recognition Banquet, which will be held in April at the Aqua Turf Club.
NBHS WRESTLING STUCK IN A RE-BUILDING SITUATION YEAR AFTER YEAR

Wrestling is not necessarily a sport that kids in New Britain flock towards. Because of that, New Britain’s wrestling team finds itself in a rebuilding situation year-in and year-out.

“We get a lot of numbers every year,” Hurricanes head coach Charles Ferguson said. “But the problem is that a lot of those numbers are first-year wrestlers and they don’t understand the magnitude of how hard it is and what it takes. Because of that, we are starting over every year with young wrestlers and trying to get them to understand the sport. It hurts so we are trying to keep the veterans coming back.”

One of the wrestlers that has some experience this season is junior Jordyn Rowe. He is in his second year with the team and has a theory as to why wrestlers don’t return.

“It’s hard to get them back and get them as motivated as they were when they were trying to learn the sport,” Rowe said. “It gets repetitive to them, but wrestling is a sport where you need several years to get the technique down.”

Because many of the wrestlers on the Hurricanes are in their first season with the sport, they have a lot to learn in a short period of time. The head coach especially wants his grapplers focused more on the mental side of things during the latter stages of their matches.

“Come back,” Rowe said. “I feel like as a team we will do a lot better next year with the new people coming in. The more experience you have the better the team will do. It’s always good to have a bigger team because the more people you have to practice with the more exposure you get to different kinds of wrestlers and things like that. So yeah, definitely come back.”

Note: The text above is an excerpt from an article that was published in the New Britain Herald on January 19. It was written by Michael Woolfson and can be found on the New Britain Herald website. Photo courtesy of the New Britain Herald.