

Connecticut Council for Philanthropy  
*formerly Coordinating Council for Foundations*

COMMON REPORT FORM

The purpose of the common report form is to help nonprofit organizations in Connecticut prepare informative and complete grant reports in a format that is consistent and efficient. Please note the following important points:

- \* Every funder has different report deadlines and timetables.
- \* Any funder that has agreed to accept this report form may request additional information at any stage in the reporting process.

INSTRUCTIONS

- \* Please type and single-space all reports.
- \* Please answer all of the questions in the order listed.
- \* Please use headings as provided.
- \* Please submit only one copy.

**Funder: ROBERT G. AND MARGUERITE M. DERX FOUNDATION**      **Date:** August 15, 2017  
**Check One:**       Interim Report     Final Report

**SECTION A**

**Name of organization:** New Fairfield Public Schools

**Name of executive director:** Dr. Alicia M. Roy, Superintendent

**Address:**      3 Brush Hill Road, New Fairfield, CT 06812

**Phone:** 203 312 5755      **Fax:** 203 312 5773      **Email:** mckinnon.jason@newfairfieldschools.org

**Contact person:** Dr. Jason McKinnon      **Title:** Assistant Superintendent

**SECTION B**

Project/program name (if applicable):      **Middle School Student News**

Purpose of grant:

The purpose of the grant is to use video production to produce the morning news program as a means to motivate middle school students to become involved in academics and school activities.

Grant period: 9 / 16 to 6 / 17    Period covered by this report: 7 / 16 to 6 / 17

Grant amount: \$15,610.00

General operating     Project support     Challenge grant     Capital/endowment

Signature of executive director: \_\_\_\_\_      Date:  
Typed or printed name and title:      Dr. Alicia M. Roy, Superintendent

## NARRATIVE

(No more than four pages total. Some questions might not apply to your grant)

### SECTION C (1) Complete this section if you are reporting on a general operating grant.

*Describe organizational and/or programmatic achievements and setbacks; significant board and/or staff changes.*

Last year, the NFMS Morning News program continued to build upon past enhancements to offer students more authentic journalistic and broadcast experiences. We enhanced our broadcast quality so it would rival professional stations. The changes not only improved video quality and virtual sets, we also expanded our program to include access to our high school students and incorporated a morning news program at the elementary level in our grades 3-5 school.

Here are the changes/improvements we made:

- **Upgraded the video format from Standard Definition (SD) to High Definition (HD), which greatly improved the quality of the video we streamed.** This change required an investment in computer hardware that was purchased by the District. We believe this demonstrates our commitment to the program and supports the generous support from the DERX Foundation. Now we can stream directly from the Tricaster 40 to the network. This change dramatically improved the quality and strength of the signal. Our team worked very closely with the Director of Technology, who was instrumental in helping us resolve our technological challenges during this time. As a result, the signal is stronger and higher in quality; most importantly, it is in sync and delivers the news on every device in the building.
- **Expanded our the Morning News Program to the High School.** Our Morning News graduates from the Middle School wanted to emulate the program at the middle school and offer a morning news program at the high school. The District purchased the required equipment, but it was the expertise and experience of morning news students that enabled this broadcast to get off the ground. Morning broadcasts occur daily and use a similar format to the middle school model. The Director of Technology is interested in developing a video yearbook for students, which means taping and capturing events throughout the year similar to a physical yearbook. A video yearbook would be far-reaching, extending beyond the school to the community and beyond. This addition would be a well received next step to our program.
- **We also revised our writing curriculum from Kindergarten to Grade 8 last year.** We emphasize the writing process along with narrative, opinion and informational writing. The writing units that support journalistic writing the most are the opinion and informational units, where students are taught how to present a persuasive argument and share valid and reliable information with their audience.

*Explain how you measured the effectiveness of your activities against your goals and objectives; what you learned.*

The grant allowed for staff salary to facilitate and advance the development of the original video production grant. Per the grant, 20 students from grades 6, 7 and 8 participated in the club this year. Students were completely committed to The Morning News program. Since the first day of school, the students streamed a show every day except for a handful of times due to technical difficulty. It's been amazing to see the dedication and ownership the students demonstrated. Every morning, students were excited to arrive at 7:15am to prep for the morning show to be streamed at 8:00am.

The effectiveness measures included student feedback, parental involvement, positive testimonials, teacher observations and student work. Students indicated their enthusiasm and commitment both through their consistent attendance before school and at after-school sessions and through their comments related to the program. All student club members remaining in the middle school are very interested in continuing their work next year. Many past graduates of the club have continued to refine their skills by becoming part of the Channel 17 High School Student News program.

As indicated above, the student centered program at the High School has grown from the experiences of our middle school students. We are extremely fortunate to have our Director of Technology who also serves as the Town of New Fairfield Video Production Coordinator. Her role involves broadcasting Board meetings and community events on channels 194 and 99. Her background and involvement in the technology associated with video production, technology best practices, and teaching and learning represent a major contribution to our program and support DERX foundation investments.

Students at the high school have been involved in recording community events, interviewing community members for special interest stories, and producing content for viewing on local channels. We intend to emulate this model and involve middle and elementary school students in these activities to further expand our internal broadcasting abilities.

## **2. Lessons Learned**

*What are the most important outcomes and "lessons learned" from this project?*

The overarching lesson learned was a positive one and still has not changed: students can and will rise to the challenge when they see a worthwhile goal in sight. Students were enthusiastic during the production and showed obvious pride in the finished product. Another lesson learned was the positive impact that the program had on the learning community at large. Both teachers and students are currently contributing content creators and view the morning show as a vehicle to distribute information.

*How will you use what you learned to inform future work?*

As a result of the NewTek Tricaster 40 and Control Surface equipment that was purchased, students were able to upgrade film quality and stream content that is in the High Definition format. This change will bring an improvement over the previous Standard Definition format. This change also enabled us to customize to virtual sets and develop our own original set designs. Now that we have accomplished these goals, we will turn our attention to creating more quality school content, increasing participation via social networking, and raising the bar on creative editing. Ultimately, students have more control over set design and more autonomy during each show.

*Are there recommendations you can make to funders or others working in this field? If so, please describe.*

Technology and devices are constantly changing. For instance, newer technologies are streaming content at much higher quality or bitrate demand due to the advancement of cameras. In order to take advantage of this new world, editing software and server infrastructure require constant attention and updating. You can see these changes when walking through Best Buy or similar stores. Our IT department invested resources in terms of hours, support, hardware and research to meet these challenges. This type of project requires a team approach with skilled experts or people willing to attend training to constantly stay abreast of these changes.

*If you were to undertake this project again, would you do anything differently? If yes, please explain*

We have been very pleased with the results of this program. The appropriate staff was involved from the onset, and they have made the program successful. Their high level of enthusiasm for the project helped maintain student interest and involvement. As we look to the future, our library media specialist at the grades 3-5 elementary school will plan and facilitate the Morning News program. Likewise, we intend to expand the program at the lower elementary school for grades K-2.

### **3. Future Plans**

*What is your plan for this project in the future? Briefly describe rationale for ongoing funding, expansion, replication or termination.*

Using the DEX Foundation funds leftover from last school year, we plan to purchase smaller, more compact digital equipment. This equipment will allow students to produce stories on location (such as in the classroom, school grounds or on a field trip) and edit their stories faster. Creating stories to share with the school and community requires writing a story, editing it, and even writing it again as necessary. All of this work is done with the help of the person who is paid the stipend from the DEX Foundation. An important goal is to strengthen student writing while teaching students the skills of a journalist.

We intend to expand this program at grades K, 1, and 2 level during the 2017-2018 school year, where work has began to prepare a studio space, paint a green screen and install necessary equipment. Although these students are much younger, they have been leading the Pledge of Allegiance on the speaker system. We would be expanding the program to include video.

Our intention is to develop a K-12 morning news framework and curriculum with the stated goal of increased internal broadcasting at the secondary level, which is more student centered and focused on content that is relevant to students and their interests. As we move from a student news approach to more dynamic and location-based broadcast, we believe we can expose more students to this program and increase interest, while also introducing post production, writing, and cinematic skills to the program.

Finally, we are interested in joining the Skills 21 Middle School Film challenge where students will learn to create storyboards and write scripts, along with post production skills, to produce and edit a live action film.

**4. Public Relations**

*If possible, provide a “human interest story” that illustrates a success of the project.*

*If applicable, attach selected material relating to the funded project: press or news items, brochures, letters of support, photographs, etc.*

Please see our program highlights from this year by clicking on the attached link to youtube. You should be able to watch this project on any device; however, please call me at 203-997-7195 for technical support if needed.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9AnG-RC-jM>

**SECTION D--FINANCIALS**

*Using the original budget included with your proposal, provide detailed expenses and income for the project for this period. Provide narrative on any variances from the original project budget.*

Budget Item	Original budget	Actual expenditures	Difference	Explanation
Staff	\$15,610.00 (16-17 award)	\$13,637.50	\$1972.50	Staff advisor
Equipment	\$ 2,500.00	\$00.00	\$2,500.00	Cameras not purchased

*Include a detailed, complete accounting of how the specific grant dollars from the Derx Foundation were spent.*

Item	Actual expense	Detail of expenses
Staff	\$13,637.50	Staff advisor/ technology specialist, Patty Linardos, was paid an hourly wage of \$50.00
Equipment		Equipment to be purchased for 2017-18 school year.

*Who else has funded this project, and at what level? Provide a list.*

The Derx Foundation has provided full funding for this project in terms of staffing expenses. Project location, incidental materials, oversight and management were provided in-kind by the school district. The District also contributed computers and hardware for the high school and grades 3-5 school and developed studio space at the New Fairfield High School and the Consolidated School.

**SECTION E--COMMENTS**

*Please share any thoughts about how the **Derx Foundation** could be helpful, either in the funding process or in other ways beyond additional funding.*

The continued support of the Derx Foundation will allow the New Fairfield Board of Education to maintain this program as an enhancement to regular programming. Since equipment will be purchased with funds leftover from last year’s , funding for the program should remain relatively low, ongoing personnel costs are reasonably low. Because of the heavy demands placed on local budgets to maintain quality programming for all students, the district is extremely grateful for ongoing support from the Derx Foundation.