

Rationale for Proposal

New Fairfield High School's program of studies provides many opportunities for students to take courses in different areas of the curriculum, and it is a strength of the school that we have viable programs beyond traditional academic areas.

However, in the language of the school, programs that do not exist in these traditional areas are commonly referred to as "elective" departments and programs. In fact, these programs are just as much a part of our core mission as English, Math, Science, and Social Studies. These programs, when operating at a high level, are where students apply academic knowledge, have the opportunity to experience fields in the way professionals do, and have opportunities to have authentic, hands-on experiences.

A current examination of the program of studies reveals part of the issue that needs to be addressed. There are several illustrations of sequences within departments, pages devoted to prerequisites within departments, and passive descriptions of the content of courses. Outside of pages describing graduation requirements, little or no credence is given to how courses of students connect across disciplines.

Our goal, as expressed in our Attributes of the Graduate, is to make sure that every New Fairfield High School graduate has a repertoire of skills and a growth mindset to be a productive citizen, a citizen who can think critically, communicate effectively, and solve complex problems. Within our core values and belief statement, we are committed to "enabling continuous growth through authentic, flexible pathways" and empowering our students to take ownership of their development. It is time for us to reimagine our programs to allow for that growth, provide pathways that are relevant to our students' ability to thrive in their postsecondary lives, and foster greater ownership of their high school experience.

Our current program is, for lack of a better term, somewhat static. College and Career Pathways will allow our students to look at their plans dynamically, foster greater focus and creativity in the development of our curriculum, and help us build a culture at New Fairfield High School where students are encouraged to take charge of their education, make purposeful decisions about their future goals, and think beyond acquiring requisite credits to earn their diploma.

On the pages that follow are a first draft of what College and Career Pathways at New Fairfield High School can look like, and how they would improve our students' educational experience. These preliminary ideas combine in-person courses already offered, greater utilization of online opportunities, and collaboration with other educational institutions. They also express areas where our current program falls short of what will best prepare our students for the world they are entering. As we move forward, these pathways will help us focus and prioritize our efforts to ensure that a New Fairfield High School education is relevant, adaptable, and rigorous.

Program Description

The purpose of Pathways at New Fairfield High School is to:

- Provide students to develop in-depth knowledge in a focused area of study that augments the comprehensive graduation requirements.
- Highlight and celebrate the relevant career and college applications in a focused area of study
- Foster school programs that emphasize cross-disciplinary connections, authentic experiences, and self-directed learning
- Provide students an opportunity to combine college credit opportunities, real-world application and training, co-curricular involvement, and their summative SEE project into a portfolio of experiences that will better prepare them for their postsecondary planning

All Pathways programs require students to meet baseline NFHS graduation requirements, and also to push themselves and make a commitment beyond those requirements. As part of their Pathways coursework, we would aim to build in structures to support these aims.

Credit Beyond High School

We would require that as part of a Pathway, students must earn a minimum of one AP, ECE, or community college course credit. Each Pathway would be designed to include this opportunity. While many NFHS students who choose this route and are college-bound may already be planning on taking an AP class, we want all students to have that experience and opportunity. ECE and community college options offer more flexibility in course offerings and college and career relevance to our students.

At every point possible, students will also be offered the opportunity to earn certification in different areas that may not carry credit, but would be desirable for employment.

Pathways Seminars

In order to build community among students in different grade levels in a Pathway, we would plan regular seminars to take place during our REBEL block, or even as a class, for those students to share experiences with a faculty mentor, collaboratively plan internships and SEE projects, have meetings with community leaders and partners with whom they may be working, etc.

Co-Curricular Connections

As a part of their planning, students would participate in a co-curricular activity related to their area of focus. In some cases, this may mean refocusing or rebuilding existing clubs and organizations, and could also mean adding to our offerings.

Professional Immersion & Connections

Our College and Career Counselor will work closely with Pathways students to provide 30 hours of immersion, job shadowing, or service learning experiences.

As part of the school's commitment to the students who embark on these Pathways, we will budget to sponsor student memberships in a professional organization in their field of interest. Professional organizations typically offer student-level memberships for high school and college students.

SEE Project

The Senior Enrichment Experience (SEE) Project requires all NFHS students to engage in the

process of exploring an area of interest, proposing a personalized experience, and presenting to a panel of adults. Within the Pathways program, planning for the SEE Project would be embedded in the seminars. Pathways students would also be prioritized for experiences related to their area of focus.

Structure

Pathways will combine the selection of existing courses with the opportunities above. Consistent with the overall message that there are many connections between subject areas relevant to the fields students will enter after high school, Pathways may have multiple areas of focus. The examples below express this idea that within a field, there are multiple ways that students can structure their educational program.

Recognition

Successful completion of a Pathways course of study will be recognized with a Diploma with Distinction in the student's focus area. For example:

- Diploma with Allied Health Distinction
- Diploma with Arts and Design Distinction
- Diploma with Computer Science Distinction

These Pathways distinctions could potentially replace the former "Diploma with Distinction" and "Diploma of Highest Distinction." These distinctions are based on a model of passive accrual of credits and achievement on standardized tests, not an educational plan or focus. There is certainly room for a Diploma with Academic Distinction, which should be re-examined to be consistent with our goals as a school.

Future Implications

As we move forward, designing College and Career Pathways will have significant influence on the development of our program of studies, and challenge us to think in different ways about learning opportunities in the classroom and beyond the walls of the school. The focus of our thinking about programs should be focused on how our program adapts to the world and provides the best opportunities for our students.

Even during this preliminary stage, there is new thinking happening around the best ways to approach pathways in STEM fields to be relevant, and how we can develop pathways in areas that are not represented in this document, such as the humanities and business. In some cases this is because it is simply very early in development, and in others it is because our programs do not currently offer enough diversity or are not current enough. In either case, these Pathways will help us develop better courses of study for all students, even if they do not elect to focus on a particular area.

Pathways Drafts

Below you will find some sample Pathways that are meant to serve as preliminary drafts for development. They illustrate the specific courses that can be combined in a student's program to offer a cohesive and focused experience, and also where we do not have sufficient course offerings and will have to think outside of our current box.

Allied Health Pathway

Required Courses:

ECE Allied Health Professions
ECE Medical Terminology
Statistics or AP Statistics
Intro to Psychology or AP Psychology

Pre-Med Focus

Required:

AP/ECE Biology
AP/ECE Chemistry
Honors/AP/ECE Physics
Human Genomics

Minimum Two:

Sociology
Child Development
Sports Nutrition
Lifeguard Training
EMT Training
CNA (NVCC)
Hospital Internship

Health Careers Focus

Required:

Anatomy & Physiology 1
Anatomy & Physiology 2
Sociology
Sports Nutrition or Child Development
Exercise Science or Lifeguard Training
EMT Training or CPR (NVCC)

Minimum Two:

Child Development
Sports Nutrition
Exercise Science
Lifeguard Training
EMT Training
CNA (NVCC)
Hospital Internship

Certification Opportunities

- CNA Certification
- CPR Certification
- EMT Certification
- Red Cross Lifeguard Certification

Credit Beyond High School

- UConn ECE
- AP potential credit
- NVCC potential credit

Diploma

- Allied Health Studies Distinction

Arts & Design Pathway

Required Courses:

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Performing Arts Focus

Required:

Musical Ensemble (3 credit min.) or
Creative Drama and Theater Workshop
and Directing Workshop

Popular Music & Diversity ECE or
Humanities ECE

Stagecraft & Technical Design

Co-Curricular Performance

Minimum Three:

Music Theory or AP Music Theory
Digital Music/Recording
Music Listening and Critique (VHS)
Digital Media & Movie Making
Media- Television Production
Costume Design
Fashion Design
AP English Literature
Film and Literature (VHS)

Visual Arts Focus

Required:

Digital Foundations ECE

Studio Art 1 and Studio Art 2 or
Photography 1 and Photography 2

Art History (VHS)

Graphic Design

Fashion Design

Co-Curricular Performance

Minimum Three:

AP Studio Art
AP Art History (VHS)
Sculpture
Publications
Media- Television Production
3D Animation
Engineering Graphics
Woodworking
Interior Design
Film and Literature (VHS)

Certification Opportunities

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Credit Beyond High School

- UConn ECE
- AP potential credit

Diploma

- Arts and Design Distinction

Computer Science Pathway

Engineering Focus

Required:

Calculus or *Honors Calculus* or

AP/ECE Calculus

Discrete Mathematics

Principles of Engineering

Comp. Sci. and Software Engineering

Physics or *Steam21 Physics* or

Honors Physics or *AP/ECE Physics*

Minimum Two:

Applied Mechanics ECE

Eng. & Architectural Design

3D Modeling and Animation

Sustainable Engineering (VHS)

Programming Focus

Required:

Statistics or *AP Statistics*

Computer Science Essentials

Computer Science Principles

AP Computer Science

Cybersecurity

Minimum Three:

Robotics 1

Robotics 2

3D Modeling and Animation

Web Design (VHS)

Video Game Design (VHS)

Music Theory or *AP Music Theory*

Level IV World Language

Certification Opportunities

- SolidWorks Certification
- Web Design Certificate
- CompTIA IT Fundamentals or A+ Certification

Credit Beyond High School

- UConn ECE
- AP potential credit

Diploma

- Computer Science Distinction

Note: As we have had further discussion of these Pathways, we want to consider an Engineering Pathway that breaks down into foci such as Civil, Environmental, Aerospace and a separate Computer Science Pathway that has a theoretical track and an applied track. **This is the type of thinking Pathways can foster!**

“Build Your Own” Pathway

Title of your Pathway:

What are your college and career goals? How does this Pathway provide you with an opportunity other than those available to you through our program of studies?

Which courses at New Fairfield High School will you take to achieve your goals? Your selections must be the equivalent of a minimum of five (5) credits.

How will the program you are proposing help you demonstrate your ability to be a Critical Thinker, Effective Communicator, Problem Solver, and Productive Citizen?

What courses will you take at NFHS or through another institution that will grant you credit beyond high school?

Will your Pathway provide you with a professional certification? If yes, what certification will you earn?

What type of professional will you shadow for at least thirty (30) hours as part of your Pathway? Whom have you contacted to explore this part of your Pathway?

What professional organization(s) would you consider joining? How does this organization relate to your area of interest and college and career goal(s)?

What co-curricular activity or activities will support your Pathway? How?

What ideas do you currently have for your SEE Project and internship? How will you demonstrate your learning in your Pathway in your SEE project and internship?

What faculty or staff member will serve as your mentor in this Pathway? Why did you choose them?

In describing your Pathway plan to a future college or employer, what would you tell them was your motivation to develop this Pathway?

You will need to prepare a presentation addressing the questions above for a panel consisting of the Principal, a Department Chair, a school counselor, and teacher from your area of interest.