Novato (CA) Unified School District Board Meeting, January 17, 2017

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|  | 14.a. Approval of the No Bells Initiative Program and Launch Plan at Novato High School for the 2017-2018 School Year - 8:20 p.m.   |  | | --- | | Rationale: | | **Matthew Baldwin, Principal, Novato High School**  **Rob Lippincott, Consulting School Design Lead**  **BOARD GOAL**   * *Student Success* * *Staff Success* * *Community Engagement* * *Equity*   **OBJECTIVE**  To approve the launch plans and projected build to full enrollment for the No Bells Initiative at Novato High School.  **BACKGROUND**  The “No Bells Initiative” (NBI) is a unique and ambitious deeper learning effort to build and open a “radically personalized” school-within-a-school program at Novato High School (NHS). NBI is scheduled to open in August 2017 with 100 ninth grade students.  NBI is a completely new learning community where bells do not signal the beginning or the end of learning. Students will master the content knowledge for college and the essential skills for career and life. The program, and the space it occupies, is designed by the educators, parents and students who make up the community. NBI will continuously evolve in order to be the most engaging learning experience for students – interest-driven, project-based, rigorous and authentic learning – and the most rewarding environment for teaching – cross-disciplinary, collaborative and enough time to personalize learning to individual student needs.  ***Academic Program and Graduation Requirements***  The academic program is designed to be comprehensive, preparing every student for high school graduation and readiness for the college program of their choice. All students will be guided to fulfill the “A through G” requirements as specified by the University of CA. Every student’s pathway to fulfilling graduation and post-secondary requirements and goals will reflect his or her own interest.  Upon completion of the learning program at NBI, students will receive a high school diploma from Novato High School with special mention of the NBI program.  NBI graduation requirements include all requirements for NHS, including:   * English **–** 4 years * Math **–** 3 years; Algebra 1 * Science **–** 2 years; Labs in Life & Physical * Social Studies **–** 3.5 years; World & US * Health & Geography **–** 1 year; GFSF * World Language **–** 2 years * Visual & Performing Arts **–** 2 years * Physical Education **–** 2 years * Electives **–** 6 years * Community Service   And, in addition, NBI requirements include:   * 12 units (a full semester) of College Credit * At least one multi-month Internship work experience * A student selected and design “Capstone Project” * Exemplary Evidence of Self-Directed Learning   ***Admission & Equity***  NBI is open to every interested ninth grade student in good standing. The single requirement for entrance to NBI is a student’s willingness to participate in the program. It is anticipated that the program will enroll a full complement of 100 ninth grade students each year. If there are more than 100 applicants, the enrollment will be determined by a random lottery. The NBI community is designed to reflect the diversity and strength of NHS and the greater geographic and demographic community. A combination of targeted outreach to parents and a random lottery process will ensure that this dedication to equity is achieved and that the demographics of NBI resemble that of Novato High School.  ***School Structure***  Every student at NBI is a student at Novato High School (NHS). All programs, classes, after-school, extracurricular and special programs are available to every NBI student.  All NBI students will be pursuing and individually designed program designed to fit his or her own interests and sufficient to meet NHS graduation and UC entrance requirements.  Each student is part of an annual “Cohort” – beginning the first year with 100 9th grade students. Each student will be part of an “Advisory Group” of approximately 25 students and a “Project Studio” according to general initial area of interest.  NBI is administered by NHS, shares space and facilities with the Marin School of the Arts (MSA) and is governed by the faculty and students. NBI will meet monthly with the NHS administration to consider all business and disciplinary issues.  ***School Schedule***  The school day begins for students every weekday at 8:30 am. Every day will begin with a meeting of either the advisory group, a combined advisory or the whole school. After that, every student has responsibility to build, maintain and follow his or her own schedule of projects, appointments, internships or NHS classes. The school day is officially over at 3.:30 pm to accommodate all extracurricular activities, but individual student schedules may vary.  The first weeks of school each year will be devoted to establishing a strong school culture, building the bonds of a welcoming advisory group and planning the specifics of every individual student’s schedule. Schedules are designed by students in close collaboration with guiding faculty, based upon the 4-year goals, annual targets and current blocks of activities which a student chooses. It is expected that schedules will change as student interests evolve, milestones are accomplished, opportunities arise and requirements are met. The schedule will be available to every student, their teachers and their parents, including all milestones, deadlines and ongoing progress measures.  NBI faculty, in the role of Advisor, will meet with each advisee a minimum of 10 minutes each week in a one-on-one session to deeply review student progress and plans. These sessions are integral to the “radical personalization” which allows this program to fit the needs, interests and abilities of each student.  NBI faculty will meet daily before school and at many other points during each week to collaborate explicitly on the students in their advisory groups and project studios. This professional collaboration time is designed to allow a much increased level of personalization of the program each student’s respective path and pace of progress.  **Sample Schedule**  ***(See Attachment 1)***  ***The School Culture***  NBI strives to be a learning community where faculty and students learn and pursue interests together. Faculty guides are both teachers and mentors. They are all certified teachers whose academic expertise will shape the content goals for every project and whose coaching and advising skills will serve as primary supports for the students in the process of creating their own learning program.  Students are asked to express themselves, develop their own voice and “agency”, learning to understand their own interests and skills so that they may better pursue their own learning pathways.  Together, the faculty and students will “write the rules”.  All will share the obligation and opportunity to set and maintain individual and community expectations. Parents and outside learning resources – both human and institutional – will be called upon to participate in every way useful to the learning process.  Students will be encouraged and guided to access expertise and learning assistance from a full range of people beyond their immediate faculty, including peers, parents and professionals. NBI will be developing technical tools and social media applications to enable and accelerate this practice.  Using the general principles and aggregated wisdom of the “Agile” development process, widely used across the technical community, NBI will continuously re-map very specific expectations and evolve the program to best fit the needs and ambitions of each student and the community. This will involve regular evaluations of progress and re-setting of tasks as frequently as every two weeks.  ***The Learning Program***  NBI is designed to offer a holistic program including a full complement of:  *Content Knowledge*  This includes each skill across the full array of the NHS college preparatory program of “A though G” required courses and subject areas.  *Cognitive Skills*  These college and career readiness skills have been perhaps best captured in the extensively detailed rubrics created by the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity. They form the basis of many of the assessments built into the courses NBI will offer.  *Habits of Success*  There are many organizations who have attempted to catalog these, none better than the “6 Cs” of the NUSD Graduate Profile: Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking, Conscientious Learner, Cultural Competence, Character.  Most learning experiences at NBI – projects, internships and courses – will involve creating and building. The products of this work – the tangible outputs of learning experiences will be shared in “Exhibitions of Learning” with the NBI school community – the students, their teachers and parents. These will include recitals, demonstrations, presentations and explanations. Many will be shared with the wider school community at NHS and Novato, including professionals from the disciplines chosen by students.  Identifying, recognizing, pursuing and cultivating a passion takes guidance, experimentation and perseverance. It is both the most natural and the most powerful way to learn. It is the fundamental business of the NBI.  It is expected that the majority of each school day and the school year will be dedicated to project work of a student’s own choosing. Selecting, designing and completing a project which meets and deepens a student’s interest while also fulfilling sufficient requirements is the joint responsibility of the student and the faculty guides. Project selection is largely based upon interest, allowing a student to participate directly in an interest area, explore the demands and challenges of the topics, disciplines and skill clusters which are of direct interest to the student. Learning becomes authentic in pursuit of accomplishment in a chosen field and on the student’s own project. Competence, and everything that contributes to the development and exhibition of that competence, is grown because it matters in the context of interest.  Not all requirements for graduation or acceptance into the successive program of life or learning can be captured in a single project or project area. Students will be encouraged to explore areas of apparent interest in order to understand their own level of engagement. In so doing, they will learn what most truly interests them. And by learning what they most want to learn, they will tap into genuine and enduring motivation. This core experience, as evidenced by the projects selected and the work undertaken will reward students daily and help them build the most rewarding life pathway – whether that is to and through college or into a career shaped by interest and skill. Some requirements will be most efficiently met through traditional High School courses.  ***Ninth Grade Courses for 2017-8***   * English 9 * Spanish I * Get Focused Stay Focused * Human Geography * Bio Fitness *(Pending NUSD approval of UC-approved course)*   This course includes:   * + Biology (1 year)   + Health (.5 year)   + PE (1 year) * Algebra (in a NHS classroom) * Additional Electives (from NHS offerings)   ***Grades & Transcript***  Grades, although not the target or the primary form of progress measurement, will be maintained to allow transfer of credit into and out of the NBI program. Student work will be assigned grades by the faculty. These grades will be recorded in a student’s record conventionally if work is of a level to achieve an “A” or “B” or “C”. If, however, insufficient progress has been made in a subject area or a project, the grade will be recorded as “Not Yet”. A grade of “Not Yet” is intended to signify that work is still underway. It will serve in the process of athletic eligibility as an “Incomplete”. However, unlike a traditional “Incomplete” it will not become an “F” after 30 days, but remain on the transcript as “Not Yet”.  The deep awareness of every student’s progress by the faculty at NBI will include careful tracking of any pattern of incomplete effort by a student. Mentoring sessions, alternative learning approaches conferences with internship supervisors, external faculty and the student’s parents will be the basis of any determination of a student’s continuing participation in the NBI program. Multiple measures of progress will inform this process. Recorded measures will include evaluative comments, unit and course assessments and results of “Exhibitions of Learning”.  All work, signs of progress, assessments, scores and comments will be available to every student, their teachers and their parents in an evolving online learning and progress tracking platform. This aggregated record and online portfolio will be continuously updated and closely monitored.  Each student will be expected to carry a “full load” of courses each year – achieving a passing evaluation for at least a full grade allocation of the “A through G” requirements. Upon completion of the 12th grade, all students will have a college-ready transcript listing completed coursework. The full Student Portfolio for every learner will contain evidence of service learning, internships and projects.  If any student needs to transfer out of NBI before graduation, a transcript of course work with grades will be generated.  ***Budget Considerations***  The NBI program as designed is fully supported by re-allocation of existing teaching, administrative resources and classroom facilities. It is anticipated that the teacher to student ratios will grow to reflect the school average as the program matures. Specifically, the skills and processes needed to effect “radical personalization” require a smaller advisory cohort, especially in the first year.  There has been much discussion of what additional staff, time, technology or other resources are needed. It is expected that the program will be fully integrated into the NHS budget by year 5, when the first class graduates. To improve the chances of a successful launch and build out, the Design Team proposes to establish a non-profit entity or foundation to identify additional funding which would be most useful in the following areas:   * Any Program Staff not in current NHS budget – including a “Program Director” * Additional Teacher Professional Development * Research into Program Effectiveness * New & Proprietary Tools & Software * Codification and Replication of the NBI School Model   ***Key Dependencies and Partners***  The NBI program has been conceived and explored by a process envisioned, supported and spearheaded by the visionary leadership of Jim Hogeboom and Matt Baldwin. Mary Jane Burke of the MCOE has been a powerful supporter. The original ideas and energy for NBI are directly drawn from Glenn Corey, exemplary NHS science teacher and Paul Allen Distinguished Educator, a restless innovator whose delight in learning is only surpassed by his love of kids.  The Design process was initiated in June of 2016 with a “Design Charrette” meeting, hosted by consulting School Design Lead, Rob Lippincott and attended by a diverse array of every school constituency and several invited experts.  Following the approval by the NUSD Board in September, an entirely voluntary Teacher Design Team was formed, including:   * Glenn Corey * Danny Kambur * Javier Ordoñez * Michele Sanner * Michael Taber   This group has extensively researched models and tools, visiting four different existing school programs, literally driven by Matt Baldwin. The program plan, policies, curriculum, and aspiration are the collective work of that team. The program will be fully fleshed out by the Teachers selected by Matt Baldwin to staff the school pending NUSD approval, but if these teachers are those chosen or represent the breadth, caliber and dedication of those chosen, NBI will have a strong heart and deep resources.  The program will also depend upon several outside organizations:  The **Summit Public Schools** effort has made available its “Personalized Learning Platform” (Summit BaseCamp) which has been designed and evolved over several years of use in Summit Schools. It will continue to be developed and adapted by FaceBook engineers as they make it much more widely available, as an “open source” application. We are eager users.  The **College of Marin** is an outstanding local resource and partner in the development of what we see as a national model for High School students to earn college credit as part of their HS experience. Through a co-designed program of dual credit and concurrent enrollment, NBI students will be able to take several courses. And the core curriculum will require that they earn at least one semester of credit.  The **Buck Institute for Education** is widely recognized as the “Gold Standard for Project Based Learning”. Their work with Novato is but another example of their national standing. Their new CEO, Bob Lenz has a strong personal history and interest in Marin with PBL and innovative programs like NBI. He has agreed to serve as an advisor and to collaborate with NBI to create and deliver a program of Professional Development well beyond the PBL foundation and focusing on the most ambitious aspects (“radical personalization”) of NBI during its first several years.  NBI enjoys a close and collaborative relationship with key educator representatives at **Google** and we look forward to deepening the technical, pedagogical and organizational dimensions of that relationship.  ***Thought Partners***  NBI is led by the faculty and administration of NHS. Its initial launch will be dependent on the interest and participation of parents. With the launch of the program, a core priority for all community adults will be to discern, to articulate and to amplify student voice and genuine student choice. This “voice and choice” will be powerful forces in determining the culture and the ongoing evolution of the NBI program. The direction of the school program will be determined by this whole community. Additional guidance and advice needed to inform and validate this direction will come from a group “Thought Partners” whose real world application of the guiding ideas and relevant current experience serve as touchstones and reference points. This list will grow and change over time as NBI seeks to continuously evolve its offerings.  In preparation for launch and in anticipation of the needs of the program in diverse areas including research, outreach, internships and potential financial support, the list includes at least one individual from each of these organizations:   * American Canyon High School * Big Picture Learning * Buck Institute for Education * College of Marin * Google * George Lucas Educational Foundation * High Tech High * KQED * Marin County Office of Education * Marin Community Foundation * Marin City Community Development Corporation * New Profit *Reimagine Learning* * Next Gen Learning Group * Paul Allen Family Foundation * Riverpoint Academy * Summit Public Schools * WestEd   **FUNDING SOURCE/COST**  N/A  **RECOMMENDATION**  The Superintendent and Staff recommend approval the No Bells Initiative Program and Launch Plan at Novato High School for the 2017-2018 School Year. | |