

VALLEY CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
944 Route 17K
Montgomery, New York

January 8, 2024

A Public Hearing was held by the Board of Education and was called to order in the Administration Building at 5:30 p.m. by the President, Mr. Bond.

PRESENT: Mr. Bond, Mrs. Messing, Ms. McKnight, Mrs. Fox-Pizzonia, Mrs. Revoir, Mrs. Samuelson and Mrs. Terralavoro

ABSENT: All Present

Also Present: Ms. Avila, Mrs. Mojica, Mr. Miller and Mr. Conklin

Also Absent: Media (WVT/THR)

This Hearing is being held for the purpose of considering the Volunteer Firefighters and Ambulance Workers Partial Tax Exemption pursuant to Section §466-a of the New York Real Property Tax Law. A copy of the Notice of Public Hearing is attached.

Mr. Bond introduced the Public Hearing and read the following statement:

The Valley Central School Board will be considering the adoption of a partial tax exemption for eligible volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers at this evening's Board meeting. The terms and conditions for qualifying for that exemption are set forth in Sections 1-4 of the resolution included in Agenda Item C under New Business. Among other terms, they include up to a 5% exemption from the assessed value of residential real property owned by volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers who are certified as having served at least five years for the fire company or volunteer ambulance service in the locality where they primarily reside. State law requires the Valley Central School Board hold a public hearing on the proposal before it is acted on.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were eight requests for public comment this evening.

Harry Luciano
Tim Hannigan
George Brown

Jim Grismer
Paul Pullar
Cynthia Nokland

Carl Prezioso
Matt Thorpe

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Bond called for a motion to adjourn the Public Hearing.

Mrs. Fox-Pizzonia moved, Ms. McKnight seconded that the Public Hearing be closed at 5:42 p.m. Voting YES: Unanimous [7:0]

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen T. McGoldrick
District Clerk

/em

VALLEY CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

944 State Route 17K
Montgomery, New York

January 8, 2024

The regular meeting of the Board of Education was called to order in the Administration Building at 6:30 p.m. by President Joseph Bond.

PRESENT: Mr. Bond, Ms. McKnight, Mrs. Messing, Mrs. Revoir, Mrs. Samuelson and Mrs. Terralavoro

ABSENT: None

Also Present: Ms. Avila, Mrs. Mojica, Mr. Miller, Mr. Conklin, Student Representatives Ms. Ellison, Ms. Zefi and Mr. Nasser, and approximately forty faculty, staff, students and community members in the audience

Also Absent: Media (WVT/THR)

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Bond called for a motion to enter Executive Session at 5:42 p.m.

Mrs. Terralavoro moved, Mrs. Samuelson seconded that the Board convene to Executive Session at 5:42 p.m. to discuss pending litigation and the employment history of particular personnel. Voting YES: Unanimous [7:0]

Mrs. Messing moved, Mrs. Fox-Pizzonia seconded that the Board come out of Executive Session at 6:30 p.m. Voting YES: Unanimous [7:0]

PLEDGE TO FLAG

Following the Pledge, Mr. Bond then made the regular announcements regarding emergency egress, no smoking, public comment, and video streaming/recording of the meeting. He made available a copy of the opening statement/guidelines for public comment for those wishing to speak.

OTHER

Mr. Bond announced that Item C under New Business will be moved up to this point in the Agenda for the Board's consideration.

Mr. Bond called for a motion to modify the resolution.

Ms. McKnight moved, Mrs. Messing seconded that the resolution be modified to authorize a partial tax exemption from taxation on real property owned by qualified volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers, or a qualified spouse, of ten percent of the assessed value of such property with a service requirement of at least three years. Voting: YES: 6; ABSTAIN: Mrs. Samuelson.

Mr. Bond then called for a motion to adopt the resolution.

Ms. McKnight moved, Mrs. Messing seconded that the following resolution be adopted:

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, New York Real Property Tax Law (“RPTL”) §466-a, provides for a partial exemption from taxation on real property owned by qualified volunteer firefighters and volunteer ambulance workers or a qualified spouse of up to ten percent (10%) of the assessed value of such property if so determined by a governing body of a city, village, town, school district, fire district or county, after a public hearing, subject to the conditions set forth in RPTL §466-a; and

WHEREAS, RPTL §466-a requires that a minimum service requirement for each applicant be set between two to five years of service; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Education of the Valley Central School District (“School District”) desires to adopt a resolution providing a partial tax exemption on real property used as the primary residence of, and owned by, qualified volunteer firefighters and volunteer ambulance workers in accordance with the provisions of RPTL §466-a; and

WHEREAS, a public hearing was held in accordance with RPTL §466-a;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Education, as follows:

Section 1. **Grant of Exemption.** Residential real property owned by an enrolled member of an incorporated volunteer fire company, volunteer fire department or incorporated voluntary ambulance service shall be exempt from taxation and assessments levied by the School District to the extent of ten percent (10%) of the assessed value of such property, exclusive of special assessments, subject to the requirements set forth in this Resolution.

Section 2. **Eligibility.** Such exemption shall not be granted unless:

- A. The applicant resides in the School District, and in the city, town or village within the School District which is served by such incorporated volunteer fire company, volunteer fire department or incorporated voluntary ambulance service;
- B. the property is the primary residence of the applicant;
- C. the property is used exclusively for residential purposes; provided, however, that if any portion of such property is not used exclusively for the applicant’s residence but is used for other purposes, such portion shall be subject to taxation and the remaining portion only shall be entitled to the exemption provided by this

Resolution; and

- D. the applicant has been certified by the authority having jurisdiction for the incorporated volunteer fire company, fire department, or voluntary ambulance service as an enrolled member who has served such incorporated volunteer fire company, fire department, or voluntary ambulance service for at least three years. The applicant must submit such certification together with the tax exemption application.

Section 3. Application. Application for such exemption shall be filed with the Assessor on or before the taxable status date of each year on a form as prescribed by New York State.

Section 4. No diminution of benefits. No applicant who is a volunteer firefighter or volunteer ambulance worker who by reason of such status is receiving any benefit under the provisions of Article 4 of the state Real Property Tax Law on the effective date of this Resolution shall suffer any diminution of such benefit because of the provisions of this Resolution.

Section 5. This Resolution shall take effect immediately.

Voting: YES: 6; ABSTAIN: Mrs. Samuelson.

STUDENT PRESENTATION

Berea Elementary School

Berea Elementary School Principal John Solimando introduced fifth grade teacher William Carter and several of his drama club students, who will be performing a scene from an original play written by Mr. Carter, *Drama Camp the Musical*.

The following students performed this evening: Lucas Colom, Christopher Eastmond, Madison Bonaparte, Aurora Garrison and Jayda Turner.

The students were thanked for their presentation and a round of applause was offered.

CORRESPONDENCE/COMMENDATIONS

Ms. Avila and Mr. Bond reviewed the attached correspondence and commendations.

PROPOSED CONSENT AGENDA

Mr. Bond introduced this Agenda item and called for a motion.

Mrs. Messing moved, Ms. McKnight seconded that the following Consent Agenda be approved, as listed and/or attached:

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

- A. Regular Board Meeting Minutes dated 12/11/24

FINANCIAL REPORTS

- A. Acceptance of Treasurer's Report for November
- B. Acceptance of Expenditure Budget Status Report for November
- C. Acceptance of Revenue Budget Status Report for November
- D. Acceptance of Record of Claims for November
- E. Acceptance of Extraclassroom Report for November
- F. Acceptance of Cafeteria Profit and Loss Report for November
- G. Acceptance of Investment Report for November
- H. Approval of General Fund Budget Transfer for November

RECOMMENDATIONS OF CSE/CPSE

FOR APPROVAL

- A. Approval of Side Agreement between Valley Central School District and the Valley Central Administrators Association
- B. Approval of Overnight Trip Request:
High School - French Honor Society
- C. Declaration of Obsolete Equipment:
High School - Laminator

SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Acceptance of Resignations:

Instructional

Name	Position/Building	Effective Date
1. Lisa Paulus (Retirement)	School Media Specialist/HS	June 30, 2024
2. Glenn Taylor (Retirement)	School Counselor/HS	June 30, 2024
3. Linda Geiger (Retirement)	Foreign Language Teacher/HS	June 30, 2024
4. Kelly Abiodun (Retirement)	Special Education Teacher/HS	June 30, 2024
5. Laurie Cauthers (Retirement)	Mathematics Teacher/MS	June 30, 2024
6. Kathleen Clair (Retirement)	Remedial Reading Teacher/MS	June 30, 2024
7. Brian Wojehowski (Retirement)	English Teacher/MS	June 30, 2024
8. Scott Kramer (Retirement)	Business Teacher/MS	June 30, 2024

9. Christine Gustafson (Retirement)	ENL Teacher/EC	June 30, 2024
10. Lorraine Tsopelas (Retirement)	Special Education Teacher/MES	June 30, 2024

Noninstructional

Name	Position/Building	Effective Date
1. Iris Noll (Retirement)	Paraprofessional/MS	June 28, 2024
2. Tisha Thomas	Paraprofessional (LPN)/MS	January 12, 2024
3. Deanna Wild	Paraprofessional/BES	December 29, 2023
4. Jo-Ann Pugh	Paraprofessional/EC	January 1, 2024
5. Karan Vanderley (Retirement)	Paraprofessional/MES	June 30, 2024

B. Approval of Leaves of Absence:

Instructional

Name	Position/Building	Effective Date
1. Jonna Stone-Tsoucalas (Childcare Leave)	Science Teacher/MS	On or about May 23, 2024 through April 20, 2025
2. Paige Matuszewski (Childcare Leave)	Mathematics Teacher/MS	On or about June 4, 2024 through June 26, 2024

C. Approval of Appointments:

Instructional Annual Appointments

Name	Position/Building	Schedule/Step	Effective Dates
1. Emily Prior	Home Tutor/District	\$48.00 per hour	2023 – 2024 School Year
2. Alison Gerow	Non Certified	\$110.00 per day	2023 – 2024 School Year
3. Michaela Gironda	Substitute		
4. Tyler Moran	Teacher/District		
5. Emily Prior			
6. Calli Quinlan			
7. Colin Uszenski			
8. Kimberly Cameron			
9. Morgan Kelly			
10. Alyssa Thompson			
11. Fiona Wassermann			

Noninstructional

Name	Position/Building	Schedule/Step	Effective Date
1. Ricardo Perez	Groundskeeper/ O&M	(CSEA),GRND/Step 5	January 9, 2024

(Resignation Rep.)			
2. Algon Rose (Resignation Rep.)	Custodial Worker/MS	(CSEA), CUST/Step 1	January 9, 2024
3. Tiana Martinez (Resignation Rep.)	Paraprofessional (School Monitor)/MS	(SRP), Para/Step 3	January 9, 2024
4. Safaa Burton (Resignation Rep.)	Food Service Helper/WES	(NUTR), FSH, Step 1	January 9, 2024

Noninstructional Annual Appointments

Name	Position/Building	Schedule/Step	Effective Date
1. Noah Hoffman 2. Cailynn Patterson 3. Emily Prior 4. Calli Quinlan	Substitute Paraprofessionals/District	\$15.00 per hour	2023 – 2024 School Year

Cocurricular Appointments

Name	Position/Building	Schedule/Step	Effective Date
1. Peter Pekny	Non-Paid Wrestling Coach/Athletics	N/A	Winter 2023 – 2024
2. Tom Boffa	Non-Paid Basketball Coach/Athletics	N/A	Winter 2023 – 2024
3. Amelia Krouse	Student Lifeguard	\$15.00 per hour	2023 – 2024 School Year

Extracurricular Appointments

Name	Position/Building	Schedule/Step	Effective Date
1. Barbara Cook	Crazy 8s Advisor/BES	Cat. F, Step 1	2023 – 2024 School Year

Voting YES: Unanimous [7:0]

REPORTS

A. Student Representatives

Mr. Bond introduced this Agenda item and invited the Student Representatives to present their report. Ms. Ellison, Ms. Zefi and Mr. Nasser provided information on activities at the High School including athletic contests, recent holiday concerts and celebrations, the Senior Food Drive, preparations for the upcoming Regents and mid-term exams, college applications, and plans for the Sophomore Class Trip to Six Flags in May.

B. Superintendent of Schools

Following introduction of this Agenda item, Ms. Avila shared information on the winter concerts, visits to the schools and plans for the upcoming tours of Walden Elementary School.

She encouraged the community to participate in the tours of Walden Elementary School as the District is exploring options for renovations. The schedule of tours will be posted on the District website in the coming weeks.

Mrs. Avila also highlighted the efforts at the High School and Middle School this year to foster a sense of belonging and engagement amongst the students, which is showing very positive results.

C. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction

Following introduction of this Agenda item Ms. Mojica shared information on several committees being formed to explore various items including a literacy pilot, MTSS, professional learning, the mentoring program, and the grading policy. Mrs. Mojica reminded the Board and those in the audience that the next VC21 meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 31st at Walden Elementary School at 6:30 p.m.

D. Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources

Mr. Bond introduced this Agenda item. Mr. Miller shared a PowerPoint presentation on the District's Equal Employment Opportunities Report.

E. School Business Official

Mr. Bond introduced this Agenda item. Mr. Conklin reported

F. Community Participation

Following introduction of this Agenda item, Board members commented on events that they had participated in or attended recently, including a PTA Council meeting, winter concerts, athletic events, and a Walden Building Committee meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no requests for Public Comment this evening.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Second and Final Reading of:

- 1. Policy 4321.12 – Use of Time Out Room and Physical Restraints (New)**
- 2. Exhibit 4321.12-E – Use of Time Out Room and Physical Restraints (New)**
- 3. Policy 5314 – Corporal Punishment Complaints (Revised)**
- 4. Regulation 5314-R – Corporal Punishment Complaints (Removed)**
- 5. Policy 5605 – Voter Registration for Students (Revised)**
- 6. Policy 6700 – Purchasing (Revised)**
- 7. Policy 6710 – Purchasing Authority (Revised)**
- 8. Policy 7360 – Construction Contracts, Bidding and Awards (Revised)**

- 9. Policy 8210.1 – Use of Cameras on School Property (Revised)**
- 10. Policy 9126 – Workplace Violence (New)**
- 11. Policy 9520.6 – The Rights of Employees to Express Breast Milk in the Workplace (New)**

Mr. Bond introduced this Agenda item, referenced the above listed policies/exhibit/regulation presented to the Board, and noted that these were presented for a first reading at the December 11th Board meeting and were made available for review. He then called for a motion.

Ms. McKnight moved, Mrs. Fox-Pizzonia seconded that the Board adopt above listed policies/regulation/exhibit, as presented and attached. Voting YES: Unanimous [7:0]

NEW BUSINESS

A. 2024-2025 Budget Presentation: Budget Snapshot

Following introduction of this Agenda item, Ms. Avila and Mr. Conklin outlined the District's mission, the current year's revenue and expenditures, and financial history. Ms. Avila and Mr. Conklin also reviewed the 2024-2025 budget development timeline, guidelines and goals. Mr. Conklin noted that the budget development is a work in progress; the anticipated expenditures and revenues will change as the District receives additional information in the coming weeks on such items as state aid, unsettled contracts, special education costs, insurance rates and PILOT agreements. He encouraged those in the community to contact Central Office with any budget questions.

B. Approval of Memorandum of Agreement between Valley Central School District and the Confidential Secretarial Unit

Mr. Bond introduced this Agenda item, referenced the Memorandum of Agreement provided to the Board, and called for a motion.

Mrs. Messing moved, Mrs. Revoir seconded that the Memorandum of Agreement between Valley Central School District and the Confidential Secretarial Unit be approved, as presented and attached. Voting YES: Unanimous [7:0]

C. Adoption of Resolution: Volunteer Firefighters and Ambulance Workers Partial Tax Exemption

This Agenda item was considered earlier this evening.

D. Adoption of Resolution: 2023-2024 Health & Welfare Services Rate

Mr. Bond introduced this Agenda item, referenced the resolution establishing the 2023-2024 Health and Welfare Services rate at \$1,600.65 per pupil, and called for a motion.

Ms. McKnight moved, Mrs. Samuelson seconded that the Board adopt the resolution establishing the 2023-2024 Health and Welfare Services rate, as presented and attached. Voting: YES: Unanimous [7:0]

E. Approval of Agreement between Valley Central School District and Green Chimneys Children's Services

Mr. Bond introduced this Agenda item, referenced the agreement provided to the Board members, and called for a motion.

Mrs. Revoir moved, Mrs. Messing seconded that the Board approve the agreement between Valley Central School District and Green Chimneys Children's Services, as presented and attached. Voting YES: Unanimous [7:0]

F. Approval of Agreement between Valley Central School District and Dillinger Research and Applied Data, Inc.

Mr. Bond introduced this Agenda item, referenced the agreement provided to the Board members, and called for a motion.

Mrs. Terralavoro moved, Ms. McKnight seconded that the Board approve the agreement between Valley Central School District and Dillinger Research and Applied Data, as presented and attached. Voting YES: Unanimous [7:0]

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Bond called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mrs. Fox-Pizzonia moved, Ms. McKnight seconded that the meeting be adjourned. Voting YES: Unanimous [7:0]

Mr. Bond adjourned the meeting at 7:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen T. McGoldrick
District Clerk

/em

RECEIVED

EA JAN 08 2024

VALLEY CENTRAL
ADMINISTRATION

Memorandum

To: Evette Avila
Members of the Board of Education

From: Barbara Gravel, Attendance Teacher/Homeless Liaison

Date: 1/9/24

Re: Donation Acceptance for 1/22/24 Board of Education Meeting

MOTION:

1. To accept the donation to the Valley Central School District from the St. Andrew's Episcopal Churchwomen in the amount of \$100.00.
2. To accept the donation to the Valley Central School District from Douglas and Judy Gridley in the amount of \$50.

Further, to amend the General Fund Budget by appropriating such funds to the revenue account code A2705 and budgetary account code A2805.450.00.0000 in the amount of \$150. I will use this money to support VCSD homeless and needy students.



VALLEY CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

ADMINISTRATION OFFICES
944 STATE ROUTE 17K
MONTGOMERY, NY 12549.2240
TELEPHONE: (845) 457-2400 Ext. 18122
FAX: (845) 457-4254
www.vcsd.k12.ny.us

Date: January 10, 2024
To: Evette Avilia
From: Brad Conklin, Business Official
RE: Assessment Reduction and Refund of Taxes

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "BC", is written over the "From:" line.

Orange County ordered the reduction of assessment and payment of the refund of taxes for the current school year as follows:

Total Refund: \$18,917.17

Northvale Prop LLC Assoc. 30-1-70.12

2018	Amount Paid	\$	74,688.43
	Corrected Amount	\$	70,954.01
	Refund	\$	3,734.42
	Original Assessment	\$	2,079,000.00
	Revised Assessment		1,975,050.00
		\$	103,950.00
	Tax Rate per 1,000		35.925171
	Refund	\$	3,734.42

2019	Amount Paid	\$	75,234.45
	Corrected Amount	\$	71,472.73
	Refund	\$	3,761.72
	Original Assessment	\$	2,079,000.00
	Revised Assessment		1,975,050.00
		\$	103,950.00
	Tax Rate per 1,000		36.187806
	Refund	\$	3,761.72

Northvale Prop LLC Assoc. 30-1-70.12

2020	Amount Paid	\$	75,971.78
	Corrected Amount	\$	72,173.19
	Refund	\$	3,798.59
	Original Assessment	\$	2,079,000.00
	Revised Assessment		1,975,050.00
		\$	103,950.00
	Tax Rate per 1,000		36.542462
	Refund	\$	3,798.59

2021	Amount Paid	\$	75,792.24
	Corrected Amount	\$	72,002.63
	Refund	\$	3,789.61
	Original Assessment	\$	2,079,000.00
	Revised Assessment		1,975,050.00
		\$	103,950.00
	Tax Rate per 1,000		36.456105
	Refund	\$	3,789.61

Northvale Prop LLC Assoc. 30-1-70.12

2022	Amount Paid	\$	76,656.70
	Corrected Amount	\$	72,823.86
	Refund	\$	3,832.83
	<i>Original Assessment</i>	\$	2,079,000.00
	<i>Revised Assessment</i>		1,975,050.00
		\$	103,950.00
	<i>Tax Rate per 1,000</i>		36.871908
	<i>Refund</i>	\$	3,832.83

The following resolutions will need to be made at the next board of education meeting for the reduction in assessment:

BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Education of the Valley Central School District approve the reduction of assessment and payment of the refund of taxes as recommended by the Supreme Court of New York, Orange County in the amount of \$18,917.17

BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Education of the Valley Central School District, pursuant to the provisions of Section 3651 of the Education Law, hereby approves the transfer from the following reserves to the 2023-2024 General Fund for the payment of claims arising out of tax certiorari proceedings commenced for the tax roll in the year such monies were deposited into the Tax Certiorari Reserve Fund:

\$3,734.42 from the 2018-2019 Tax Certiorari Reserve Fund
 \$3,761.72 from the 2019-2020 Tax Certiorari Reserve Fund
 \$3,798.59 from the 2020-2021 Tax Certiorari Reserve Fund
 \$3,789.61 from the 2021-2022 Tax Certiorari Reserve Fund
 \$3,832.83 from the 2022-2023 Tax Certiorari Reserve Fund



VALLEY CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

ADMINISTRATION OFFICES
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MONTGOMERY, NY 12549.2240
TELEPHONE: (845) 457-2400 Ext. 18122
FAX: (845) 457-4254
www.vcsd.k12.ny.us

Date: January 10, 2024
To: Evette Avilia
From: Brad Conklin, Business Official
RE: Assessment Reduction and Refund of Taxes

Orange County ordered the reduction of assessment and payment of the refund of taxes for the current school year as follows:

Total Refund: \$31,931.80

Hudson Valley Credit Union 29-1-93.12

2018	Amount Paid	\$	52,702.23
	Corrected Amount	\$	44,796.89
	Refund	\$	7,905.33
	Original Assessment	\$	1,467,000.00
	Revised Assessment		1,246,950.00
		\$	220,050.00
	Tax Rate per 1,000		35.925171
	Refund	\$	7,905.33

2019	Amount Paid	\$	53,087.51
	Corrected Amount	\$	45,124.38
	Refund	\$	7,963.13
	Original Assessment	\$	1,467,000.00
	Revised Assessment		1,246,950.00
		\$	220,050.00
	Tax Rate per 1,000		36.187806
	Refund	\$	7,963.13

Hudson Valley Credit Union 29-1-93.12

2020	Amount Paid	\$	53,607.79
	Corrected Amount	\$	45,566.62
	Refund	\$	8,041.17
	Original Assessment	\$	1,467,000.00
	Revised Assessment		1,246,950.00
		\$	220,050.00
	Tax Rate per 1,000		36.542462
	Refund	\$	8,041.17

2021	Amount Paid	\$	53,481.11
	Corrected Amount	\$	45,458.94
	Refund	\$	8,022.17
	Original Assessment	\$	1,467,000.00
	Revised Assessment		1,246,950.00
		\$	220,050.00
	Tax Rate per 1,000		36.456105
	Refund	\$	8,022.17

The following resolutions will need to be made at the next board of education meeting for the reduction in assessment:

BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Education of the Valley Central School District approve the reduction of assessment and payment of the refund of taxes as recommended by the Supreme Court of New York, Orange County in the amount of \$31,931.80

BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Education of the Valley Central School District, pursuant to the provisions of Section 3651 of the Education Law, hereby approves the transfer from the following reserves to the 2023-2024 General Fund for the payment of claims arising out of tax certiorari proceedings commenced for the tax roll in the year such monies were deposited into the Tax Certiorari Reserve Fund:

\$7,905.33 from the 2018-2019 Tax Certiorari Reserve Fund

\$7,963.13 from the 2019-2020 Tax Certiorari Reserve Fund

\$8,041.17 from the 2020-2021 Tax Certiorari Reserve Fund

\$8,022.17 from the 2021-2022 Tax Certiorari Reserve Fund

Higher Heights Youth Empowerment Programs, Inc.



157 Church Street, 19th Floor
New Haven, CT 06510
(475) 655 - 3117
<https://www.higherheightsyouth.org>

Evette Avila
Superintendent of Schools
Valley Central School District
944 State Route 17K
Montgomery, NY 12549

January 17, 2024

Dear Superintendent Avila,

Subject: Proposal for Comprehensive College Access Services and Professional Development for Valley Central School District

I trust this message finds you in good spirits. On behalf of Higher Heights Youth Empowerment Programs, Inc., I am delighted to present an expanded proposal aimed at bolstering college access services and elevating professional development opportunities for the esteemed school counselors and administrators within Valley Central School District.

A Brief Overview of Higher Heights Youth Empowerment Programs, Inc.:

Our organization boasts a distinguished two-decade legacy of empowering students through college access services supporting over 10,000 secure over \$800 million in scholarships and grants. Collaborating with numerous school districts, we've facilitated the academic and personal growth of thousands of students, leaving a trail of successful academic journeys.

Proposal Objectives: Expanding to Support Post-Secondary Transition and Individual Student Success

1. Comprehensive College Access Services for School Counselors:

We propose conducting workshops and training sessions for school counselors, equipping them with the latest tools and strategies to guide students effectively through the college application process. Our experienced team will provide valuable insights on scholarship opportunities, financial aid options, and admission requirements for various universities, ultimately empowering counselors to better assist their students in making informed decisions about their educational future. In addition to our proposed workshops and training sessions, we commit to implementing a robust system supporting graduating seniors' post-secondary transition. This system ensures personalized guidance and resources tailored to each student's unique needs, fostering informed decisions about their educational future.

2. Professional Development and Framework Support:

Our commitment extends to monthly professional development sessions for school counselors, focusing on refining their skills and aligning their efforts with the newly designed framework for academic advisement during middle-to-high school transitions, post-secondary planning, and the design of a developmental counseling framework. Built into the PD sessions will be bi-weekly consultation with the counselors to provide individualized and departmental support.

3. Data and Accountability Analysis:

Higher Heights will collaborate with your school district to establish a comprehensive data analysis system. Our team will work with school counselors to develop a tracking system for student progress, identify challenges, and measure the success of college access initiatives. By utilizing data-driven insights, we can collectively enhance our strategies and ensure positive outcomes for students on their journey to higher education.

On-the-Ground and Virtual Support:

As the Executive Director of Higher Heights Youth Empowerment Programs, Inc., I am personally committed to providing on-the-ground support to school counselors, and administrators within your school district. This hands-on approach allows me to work closely with your team, understand your unique needs, and tailor our services to maximize their impact.

In addition to on-the-ground support, I will also offer virtual assistance, conducting virtual training sessions and consultations with your staff as needed. This blended approach ensures that we can address challenges promptly and continue supporting your school district efficiently, even when in-person interactions are limited.

Benefits of Collaboration:

Empowered Counselors: Bi-weekly and Monthly professional development sessions and ongoing support will equip your counseling team with cutting-edge knowledge and resources, elevating their ability to guide students effectively.

Seamless Transitions and Individualized Support: Our pre-college planning system and student success plans ensure personalized guidance for graduating seniors, creating a solid foundation for their post-secondary journey.

Enhanced Data Utilization: The implementation of data and accountability systems will provide a clear understanding of the counseling department's impact, allowing strategic improvements for greater student success.

Community Growth and Success: As students gain access to higher education, the community reaps the benefits of a skilled workforce, driving economic growth and social progress.

Budget:

The budget for this comprehensive initiative is \$45,000. We aim to maximize the impact of every dollar invested, ensuring substantial outcomes aligning with Valley Central School District's objectives and constraints. The District will be billed monthly based on services completed.

Conclusion:

Our partnership promises to significantly enhance college access services, professional development opportunities, and data-driven accountability within Valley Central School District. Together, we can empower students, unlock their potential, and build a brighter future for the entire community.

We eagerly anticipate the possibility of collaborating with Valley Central School District and impacting the lives of our students positively. For any inquiries or additional information, please feel free to contact me at (203) 589-5828 or chaka@higherheightsyouth.org.

Thank you for considering our proposal. We're excited about the prospect of working together in creating a more promising future for the students of Valley Central School District.

Sincerely,

Chaka Felder-McEntire

Chaka Felder-McEntire, Ed.D.
Founder/Executive Director
Higher Heights Youth Empowerment Programs, Inc.

About Dr. Chaka

Dr. Chaka has been helping leaders and school districts for over 25 years use innovative and comprehensive approaches to repurpose their work into quantifiable long-term success. At the core, she works with schools, churches, and corporations to break down inequities and social justice barriers that prevent student success. Dr. Chaka is the recipient of the 100 Black Women in Connecticut, an Adjunct Professor, co-founder of Booker T. Washington Academy (New Haven), and founder of Higher Heights Youth Empowerment Programs, Inc.

Education and Certifications

- Doctorate of Education - Southern Connecticut State University
 - Dissertation: *Perceptions of the school counselor evaluation process in an urban district*
- Cornell University: Diversity and Inclusion Certification.

- Sacred Heart University: Administrative Certification Program.
- Canisius College
 - M.S. Counselor Education.
 - M.S. Organizational Communication and Development.
- Connecticut Administrator Certification
- Connecticut School Counselor Certification

Leadership:

- District Administrator
- District Supervisor
- Assistant Principal
- Department Head
- School Counselor
- Executive Director
- Adjunct Professor
- University Administrator

Skills and Results:

- 25 years as a certified school leader and a district administrator
- Led diverse districts, 60+ schools, 50,000 students, over 100 school counselors, and support staff
- Increased graduation rates by 20%
- Redesigned performance evaluation systems and processes for school districts
- Designed and implemented CTE and dual enrollment courses and programs
- Developed comprehensive developmental guidance programs in multiple school districts

Civic Engagement:

- Common App Advisory Board
- National College Access Network Advisory Board
- ACT Regional Council
- Connecticut School Counseling Association Committee
- National Partnership for Educational Access Committee
- Connecticut State Department of Education's Taskforce



LEADING EDUCATION PRACTICE, LLC

PROPOSAL TO

VALLEY CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HUMAN RESOURCES SYSTEM REVIEW

January 17, 2024

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Leading Educational Practice proposes a systems review that identifies essential questions, collects aligned and relevant data, rigorously reviews data for patterns and trends, and provides a descriptive report that can guide continuous improvement.

Leading Education Practice, LLC, is the independent consulting organization of Richard W. Lemons, EdD.



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LEP Qualifications and Profile of Team

Leading Education Practice is an educational consulting firm founded and operated by Richard W. Lemons, EdD. We bring decades of experience in educational leadership, improvement, policy, and research. In addition, we have worked with hundreds of schools, districts, and states in helping to assess their current organizational capacity, identify improvement priorities, develop a plan for change, implement the structures and systems to make improvement processes impactful, and design professional learning systems. We do not offer pre-designed products; instead, we work with system leaders to tailor an approach consistent with the local context and the leadership theory of action.

About Richard W Lemons, Ed.D.



Richard Lemons is the Founder and Director of Leading Education Practice, LLC, a technical service firm that works with districts to design systems, develop leadership, and implement sound strategies for improving student learning outcomes. When not doing independent consulting work, Richard is the Executive Director for Partners for Educational Leadership (Hartford, CT). Partners works with educational leaders to reimagine teaching and learning, dismantle instructional inequities, and support systemic improvement so all students can flourish.

Throughout his thirty-plus years in public education, Richard has held many roles, including classroom teacher, literacy coach, change coach, researcher, policy advocate, and university professor. Regardless of the role, Richard's professional career is defined by a commitment to the large-scale improvement of instruction and leadership aimed at bringing about more powerful outcomes for young people. Richard earned a bachelor's degree in political science from North Carolina State University and his master's and doctorate in administration, planning, and social policy from Harvard University.

Richard co-authored the educational bestselling *Change Leadership: A Practical Guide to Transforming our Schools* with his Harvard Change Leadership Group colleagues. He has



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published numerous book chapters and articles in periodicals, including *Kappan*, *Journal of Staff Development*, *ASCD Express*, *Voices in Urban Education (VUE)*, and *Education Canada*. His most recent publication--on the power of routines to promote improvement while bridging research and practice is available [here](#).

Since his days at the Harvard Change Leadership Group, Richard has designed and implemented system reviews for dozens of school districts nationwide. At Harvard, he worked with the rest of the CLG team to construct a change framework still used to assess system readiness. At the University of Connecticut, Richard worked with others in the Educational Leadership Department and the Institute for Urban School Improvement to create school review and policy review processes that could promote continuous improvement. He has conducted school quality reviews for the Massachusetts Department of Education. At the CT Center for School Change, he helped design the Capacity and Coherence Framework, articulating the relationship between systems strength and organizational capacity for improvement. For multiple years, he oversaw the implementation of the Capacity and Coherence Review, an audit of district systems.

Richard also serves as a faculty member for Yale University's Education Studies Program and the Yale School of Management's Broad Center, where he teaches courses on leadership, change, design thinking, and policy to undergraduate and graduate students.

Richard Lemons is a sought-after public speaker, executive coach, and analyst. He has worked with hundreds of school districts and educational organizations across the United States and overseas.

Past Clients Include, But Are Not Limited To:

- NYC Department of Education
- Grand Rapids Public Schools, MI
- Block Island, RI
- Kent Intermediate School District, MI
- Grand Valley State University, MI



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- Queen Rania Teacher Academy, Jordan
- Tri-State Consortium
- Hawaii
- Lake Forest, Ohio
- Revere Schools, Ohio
- Scotch Plains, NJ
- Boston Public Schools, MA

Past Projects Have Focused Upon

- Systems Analysis and Studies
- Strategic Planning and Strategic Plans
- Leadership Professional Development
- Networks & Communities of Practice
 - School teams across larger systems
 - Principals within and across systems
 - Superintendent communities of practice
- Research Review and Summaries
- Systems Change
- Instructional Improvement
- Implementation of Instructional Rounds

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Project Approach

LEP works closely with client districts and organizations to understand their context, theory of action, assets, and constraints. We seek to match a process and product to the precise needs and expectations of the client. Below is a proposed approach for the Human Resources Review, but we are open to recommendations and suggestions that would better align the outcome with Valley Central's needs. You will note that the process begins with an effort to better understand the district's desired outcomes and scope of work.

Before presenting the project review, it is essential that Valley Central School District understands LEP's values and working assumptions about system reviews.

Observations About Organizational Change and Public Education

With over three decades in the field and the experience of working across numerous districts and several states, LEP has observed how systems capacity is an often under-examined variable in improvement. School districts should regularly assess readiness, strengths, and areas for improvement within their core systems. A body of rigorous research and applied science demonstrates that well-developed systems and organizational coherence are associated with a district's capacity to implement effective and sustainable improvement.¹ Moreover, many school districts do not possess a thorough knowledge of how their systems work in relation to a broader evidence base and set of established best practices. This lack of understanding creates a drag against forces for improvement. As renowned education scholar Anthony Bryk writes, "It is hard to improve what we do not understand."

Taking a systems approach to improvement in school districts involves viewing the educational system as a complex and interconnected network of components rather than focusing on isolated initiatives and actions. A systems perspective recognizes the interdependence of

¹ LEADCT (2018). *Leading for Capacity and Coherence*. CT Center for School Change. Hartford, CT. See also: Bryk, A, et al. (2008). "Organizing Schools for Improvement." *Kappan*.; Childress, S., Elmore, R and Grossman, A.. "Note on the PELP Coherence Framework." Harvard Business School Publishing Case, 2004.; Cobb, P., & Smith, T. (2008). "The challenge of scale: Designing schools and districts as learning organizations for instructional improvement in mathematics." In K. Krainer, & T. Wood (Eds.), *International handbook of mathematics teacher education: Vol. 3. Participants in mathematics teacher education: Individuals, teams, communities and networks* (pp. 231-254). Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense.



various elements within the education system and aims to bring about comprehensive, sustainable, and systemic change. A systems approach focuses on:

Holistic Understanding: A systems approach allows school districts to understand the interactions and relationships among various components of the education system, including human resources, curriculum, leadership, family partnership, and professional learning. This holistic perspective recognizes how alternations in one area may impact others.

Root Causes: Instead of merely treating symptoms, a systems approach encourages school districts to uncover, identify, and focus on the root causes of challenges.

Resource Management: A systems approach assists in maximizing the use of resources by ensuring aligned and targeted interventions. This prevents duplicated efforts and wasted resources.

Continuous Improvement: Systems thinking emphasizes the importance of constant improvement as a discipline. It encourages clear articulation of improvement aims, consistent reflection, data and evidence analysis, and adjustment based on feedback loops.

Adaptiveness: Educational environments are dynamic, and a systems approach allows districts to adapt to ever-changing conditions.

Sustainability: Implementing narrow interventions may result in short-term gains but not produce profound and sustainable improvements. A systems approach focuses on creating persistent improvements by situating change efforts into the context's surrounding culture, politics, policies, and practices.



HR Review At - A -Glance: Visual Representation of the Project Approach



Workflow of Project

Phase and Timeline	Summary of Work	Deliverable
Project Launch and Preliminary Evidence Gathering to Clarify Partner Expectations and Preferences	LEP will meet with the superintendent and board (as necessary) and any other designated parties to discuss: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The scope of work in detail: clarify the timeline, stakeholders to engage, tools to utilize, and desired structure of the final product, etc.2. Logistical details necessary to deliver the final product on time.	Written agreements on the process, timeline, and deliverables. Adjustments/ revisions to guiding documents
Evidence Gathering (Needs Assessment)	LEP will examine multiple sources of evidence and data to assess the overall health of the human resources system, benchmarked against rigorous scholarship on effective HR processes as well as established best practice among comparable districts. LEP will begin with interviews, observations, and artifact analysis. We will pay attention to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Strengths/assets2. Weaknesses3. Opportunities4. Threats5. Standard operating procedures of the HR system	



	<p>6. Unique contextual factors that Inform the direction of the HR system</p> <p>7. The interrelationship between Valley Central's HR system and other core systems (professional learning, onboarding, instructional guidance system, student support, strategic resource management, etc.)</p>	
Initial Evidence Review	LEP will conduct an initial data scan to identify blind spots, contradictions, and emerging questions. LEP will collect additional data if necessary.	Verbal update to the superintendent of progress.
Co-constructed Review of Findings	LEP will present raw (but sanitized) evidence and an initial description of findings to identified district stakeholders. Stakeholders will ask questions, probe for examples, and identify blind spots or unanswered questions. The stakeholders will also help LEP create more nuanced and detailed conclusions.	<p>Written descriptions of evidence and preliminary findings.</p> <p>Adjusted findings, per work with stakeholders.</p>
Final Report of Findings	LEP will provide a detailed summary of findings and recommendations, presented in the form of a PowerPoint presentation for readability and ease of use.	Final report of findings.



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	LEP will present findings to stakeholder groups determined by the Superintendent/Board.	
Ongoing Research and Benchmarking (will occur throughout the entire process)	LEP will provide research services, identifying districts or comparable organizations for benchmarking or reviewing current scholarship to address problems of practice and improvement questions.	Briefings to superintendent

Note 1 - Technology to Streamline: LEP has deep experience leveraging technology to promote broad and deep participation in system review processes. LEP suggests combining in-person and virtual data gathering, including interviews and focus groups.



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References

1. REFERENCE: William McKersie, Superintendent of Schools, Hastings-on-Hudson
ADDRESS: 27 Farragut Ave.
CITY, STATE, ZIP CODE: Hastings-on-Hudson, NY 10706
TELEPHONE: 914-478-6205
EMAIL ADDRESS: mckersiew@hohschools.org
TYPE OF OPERATION: School district
2. REFERENCE: Ron Gorman, Assistant Superintendent, Kent Intermediate ISD, Michigan
ADDRESS: 2930 Knapp Ave.
CITY, STATE, ZIP CODE: Grand Rapids, MI 49525
TELEPHONE: 616-364-1333
EMAIL: RonGorman@kentisd.org
TYPE OF OPERATION: Intermediate school district and technical service organization
3. REFERENCE: Alex Extrella, Superintendent of Schools, Norwalk Public Schools
ADDRESS: 125 East Ave
CITY, STATE, ZIP CODE: Norwalk, CT 06852
TELEPHONE: 203-854-4000
EMAIL: estrellaa@norwalkps.org
TYPE OF OPERATION: School District



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Budget

The cost of the scope of work proposed is **\$20,000** in total, inclusive of all LEP labor and expenses. As noted previously, the LEP is deeply committed to partnerships anchored in a given client's unique needs and leadership aims. Should the superintendent and board desire adjustments to the proposed scope of work, LEP is open to such suggestions.

Cost	Description
Process Planning with Superintendent (and additional stakeholders as designated)	Approximately 1 day over the stretch of project
Data Collection	Development of interview protocols, focus group processes, and surveys to gather perceptual data. Collection of evidence and data through multiple sources, including interviews, focus groups, observations, artifact analysis, and surveys.
Data Analysis	Initial data analysis, summary of findings, sharing of preliminary results, final data analysis.
Development of Final Report and Presentation (s)	
Ongoing Research and Benchmarking (will occur throughout the entire process)	Ongoing, as needed.
Subtotal	\$20,000
Supplies	None/Included within daily rate
Travel Costs	Included within daily rate
Total	\$20,000
Total	

The District will be invoiced monthly as services are completed.

