



Coventry Public Schools  
Coventry, Connecticut

Budget Request Form – New Item/Program

Department: Pupil & Staff Support Services

Date: December 11, 2017

Administrator: Todd Giansanti

Proposed Program: Relocation and Expansion of Academy / Alternative Education (Gr. 7-12)

Rationale / Justification:

*The Academy is a collaboration of the individual, family, school, and community to instill the academic, social, and emotional skills necessary to maximize each student's potential for a successful transition toward adult independence.*

Many school districts utilize engaging and creative teaching strategies to meet the needs of particular students whom they are servicing through the use of alternative education programs. Alternative education has the potential to offer a small and individualized learning environment conducive to the unique needs of at risk populations. Alternative education programs offer a different pathway in which children are more apt to achieve educational success and ultimately earn a high school diploma.

Coventry is committed to not only continually meeting the needs of at-risk students but to further explore and develop innovative programming to enhance the learning experience for all students. The data obtained for students in the Academy is clear – they do not thrive in the traditional educational environment. After careful consideration of district needs, community assets, feedback from current students, and educational trends, the concept of an environment-based education for the Academy is proposed.

The Academy, potentially located in the setting of Patriot's Park will be able to offer students the unique opportunity to benefit from a learning environment in a "traditional" classroom setting as well as the natural "classrooms" that their surrounding offers. Research indicates that at risk students who experience environmental education demonstrate an increase in standardized testing in social sciences, science, language arts, and math as well as increase skills in problem solving, critical thinking and decision making (Louv, 2008). Immersing Coventry's Academy students in the local environment where creative curriculum development allows them to engage in hands-on learning in a comfortable environment will likely increase their learning engagement, attendance, academic performance, and overall social-emotional well-being.

Students will have access to alternate learning environments such as the lake, dock, band shell, walking trails, and basketball court. These learning environments will allow curriculum to be highly individualized, significant, engaging, and purposeful. For example, students may have the opportunity to build a boat, compost, write poetry, harvest

vegetables in a garden, fish, or compose music - the possibilities are endless and all have the ability to be linked to learning.

While at the Academy, students will receive embedded support from psychological and behavior services, vocational staff, and related service personnel. Each student will receive comprehensive case management with specific focus on areas of continued need, unmet needs, and wrap around supports with a keen focus on individualized curriculum to meet the unique learning needs and engagement considerations. Specialists and guest speakers will provide enriching and valuable knowledge and information to the Academy students. Additionally, the senior center is on site and presents an exceptional opportunity for intergenerational engagement. Encouraging students and senior citizens to interact across age groups allows people to participate in meaningful relationships regardless of age. Whether it is a senior citizen providing a first-hand account of World War II for a history lesson or a youth providing technical assistance, the sharing and teaching between generations benefit both the individuals as well as the community.

Enrollment in the Academy should not be construed as punitive but as a phenomenal learning opportunity. Creating a safe school climate is critical at the Academy; effective teaching and learning takes place and exclusionary practices related to discipline are minimized. There is a positive, individualized approach to discipline and learning through which all members of the community feel valued and safe.

#### Supporting Quantitative and Qualitative Data:

Overall student enrollment at the Coventry Academy has been an average of 16 students since the 2014-2015 school year. Approximately 80% of the student population consists of students with Individualized Education Programs.

The current facility is 1200 sq. ft. In the proposed location, there would be an additional 600 sq. ft. which would provide for more learning space.

If the Coventry Board of Education decides to move the program to a larger facility, as well as, offer services to surrounding districts and families, there would be a potential to generate revenue.

Proposed/Approximate Financial Impact: \$38,000 Capital Improvement

#### Other Impacts:

The proposed environmental based educational program for at risk students with innovative elements such as intergenerational engagement presents a unique program in which other school districts can model.

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Superintendent's Office Use Only  
Superintendent's Proposed Budget Figure:

Other Adjustments