Board of Education – Curriculum Committee Minutes
Neck River Elementary School STEAM Room
March 10, 2026 at 5 p.m.

Present: Cathy Miller, Jessica Wilen, Seth Klaskin
Also present: Craig Cooke, Ph.D., Superintendent; Gail Dahling-Hench, Assistant Superintendent

Presenters:
Michelle Horn- curriculum lead
Amy Casey and Meghan Foster- K-5
Mike Ginsburg- MS
Mike Kiefer - HS
Dan Grenier- CTE Coordinator

The committee received an overview of the district's K–12 STEAM continuum, which has been designed to build skills progressively from kindergarten through high school while increasing student agency and real-world application.

At the **elementary level**, the program is structured around three components: **Lego Spike kits for coding and engineering**, **Lego Science kits aligned with grade-level science standards**, and **maker space projects** that integrate design, environmental problem-solving, and collaboration. Students engage in hands-on projects such as designing amusement park rides to study motion and energy or developing environmental solutions. Early feedback indicates high student engagement and strong skill transfer across grade levels.

At the **middle school level**, Polson offers a **Technology, Engineering, and Design elective** for grades 7–8 that begins with an **Analog AI unit** exploring pattern recognition, bias, and automation. Students then choose between two tracks: **Retro Mech**, focused on coding and mechanical engineering, or **Studio 30**, which emphasizes digital design and visual systems. Both tracks emphasize creativity, iteration, and problem-solving.

The district also highlighted strong **robotics programming**, with the Polson robotics team recently qualifying for the **World Championship in St. Louis** after winning the Connecticut State Championship Program Excellence Award.

At the **high school level**, the department has reorganized its curriculum into **career pathways aligned with industry credentials**, including Onshape Associate certification, AutoUpkeep pre-certification, and OSHA 10. Students also have **dual-enrollment opportunities with UConn, Quinnipiac, and Goodwin University**, allowing them to earn transferable college credits.

Finally, the **FabLab** continues to support interdisciplinary student projects using advanced fabrication tools such as laser cutters, CNC machines, 3D printers, electronics stations, and a music studio. The space allows students to pursue independent design and engineering projects while applying skills learned in class.

Overall, the committee was impressed by the strong vertical alignment of the program and the opportunities it provides for students to develop technical, creative, and problem-solving skills from elementary school through graduation.

Respectfully Submitted by Cathy Miller