

About Quinebaug Valley Middle College High School (Excerpts From QVMCHS's Operation Plan)

I. Mission and Vision

The *mission* of the Quinebaug Valley Middle College High School (QVMCHS) is to provide a challenging, personalized, comprehensive learning environment that fosters the skills, knowledge, habits, and individual discipline necessary for students from diverse backgrounds to realize their ambitions and contribute in a positive, meaningful way to their community and culture.

The QVMCHS *vision* guiding the development of this new program is based on the notion that *student learning flourishes in an environment where high expectations and achievement are integral; where rigorous, relevant instruction is provided; and where the real-world application of skills is conducted in a community of strong, positive, and caring relationships.*

II. Core Philosophy

The core philosophy of QVMCHS rests on the belief that students benefit from a well-articulated core academic and career/vocational curriculum that fully engages them in the design, development, and management of their own learning experiences among a community of diverse peers and faculty. The proposed curriculum will feature several overarching concepts and essential questions that will ensure that students are well-prepared for the 21st century, and, moreover, are best situated to embrace lifelong learning as a habit of the mind and personal discipline throughout their lives. For example, students will learn the skills and embrace the value of *weighing evidence as a means of understanding what they know and how they have come to know it.* Students will routinely grapple with such questions as “what is the evidence and is it credible?” in all areas of the core academic and career/vocational-related curriculum options. Students will learn to *seek, evaluate, and value varying perspectives and viewpoints,* asking such questions of themselves and others like “Who is the author and what are his /her intentions?” *Seeing connections and relationships* will be an essential element of the core academic program, and, through the use of *internships, mentorships, and community service opportunities,* students will learn, in a direct and immediate way, to apply skills, theories, research, practices, and knowledge in the real world. Such opportunities provide a rich background against which students try out and apply new skills. Skill development will benefit from a relentless, iterative process involving deliberate practice, feedback, and reflection as students continue to improve and, ultimately, master identified skills.

At QVMCHS, we believe that such a core philosophy ensures that students will graduate ready to succeed in their personal and career lives. Moreover, program graduates will be well-positioned to contribute in a meaningful and positive way to their communities by becoming active, knowledgeable citizens who are able to act reasonably and confidently in a changing and challenging world.

III. Overall Theme

The overall theme of the QVMCHS is that of *the middle college experience*. Our research indicates that students who are developmentally ready to be more directly involved and responsible for the design, development, and management of their own learning, and who benefit from the integration of rigorous academic and real-world/authentic learning experiences, will thrive in a college environment where they have greater autonomy and access to laboratory, career and vocational resources that are, otherwise, unavailable to them in the region's public high schools. Students are better prepared to engage in sustained studies when they work as a member of a small community, supported by adult mentors/advisors who work one-on-one with them, over the course of their high school and college transitional period, and supported by faculty who are experienced in providing interdisciplinary studies within the context of applied-knowledge in real-world settings. The rich technological and library resources of the college environment will be available to the proposed program's students. Programs of study include Allied Health Science, Computer Networking and Computer Services, Construction Technology, Early Childhood Education, Engineering Science, Fine Art, Medical Assisting, and Technological Studies, for example, as well as such support venues as the Career Services Center, Computer Services Lab, the Learning Center, Skills Assessment, and the Opportunity for Success Office, among others. Students will be able to complete their high school studies within this collaborative network of instruction, real-world experience, and support, and begin their post-secondary education studies in a familiar and collegial environment, where they have already established an effective community to guide and foster their individual success.

Within this overarching theme of the *middle college experience*, the program will provide an integrated tripartite focus on ***literacy, contextual learning, and creativity and innovation***. These threads will be integrated throughout the middle college programming to achieve the overall goal of effectively equipping students with the skills, knowledge, habits and discipline necessary to successfully realize their educational and career goals. As a result of their experience in the program, students will experience:

A balanced literacy component: The middle college environment emphasizes clear, coherent writing and speaking skills, as well as the comprehension of all text, media, and discourse environments. Students will be able to make sense of and understand the world as a result of their studies – not only through reading fiction, nonfiction, artifacts, and documents, but also through the visual, emotional, quantitative, civic, and technological cues conveyed through media and communication, and all traditional and nontraditional communication forms. Mastering these skills will lead students to feel competent, and thereby promote their confidence in being able to process information, make informed decisions, and take appropriate action in all areas of their lives as they move through a world that is becoming increasingly more globally interconnected, technologically sophisticated, and complex. Resources at the middle college environment will provide the instruction, practice, feedback, and reflective cycle necessary to lead students to their mastery of core academic skills; and provide the opportunities for career/vocational exploration and preparedness, including real-world internships and mentorships.

Contextual/Applied Learning: To make learning relevant, students will engage in internships, be assigned mentors, and participate in problem-based learning units, College Career Pathways, and other opportunities, where the application of their skills and knowledge in real-world situations will constitute a *primary* learning environment. This active learning expectation draws upon the research associated with the value of authentic pedagogy as an effective means of promoting higher-order thinking skills.

Contextual/applied learning is associated with intellectually challenging work, which students undertake in a collaborative manner, resulting in the strengthening of specific content-related skills. Significant ancillary skills such as teamwork, cooperation, and a spirit of community and belonging will be featured, as well. Individual students develop leadership and cooperation-rich skills, as they engage in solving complex community-based, workplace-based challenges that would, otherwise, be unavailable to them. Today, many youth work in fast-food franchises, among other menial, low-paying work, where they are often managed by peers. As a result, youth lack the opportunity to develop the exemplary work skills, habits, and attitudes that more experienced, effective adults would foster. The proposed program will bring students together with successful adults and mentors through planned internships and work experiences that will foster skill development in a more direct and meaningful way.

Creativity and Innovation: Creativity and innovation are critical areas for students' ultimate success in both the worlds of academia and work. The proposed model will offer a range of programming not found in the region's high schools, including degree programs in allied health, engineering, studio arts, computer networking, and courses in philosophy, conflict resolution, and anthropology – in addition to advanced coursework in the core academic areas of the high school curriculum. Create and “*innovate or die,*” the new credo of today's global economy, is embraced broadly and fervently by business and industry leaders. Companies of all sizes spend more every year to create new and better products or new and better ways of doing business. In a 2005 study sponsored by Cisco Systems, for example, 635 business and IT decision-makers from companies of all sizes ranked creativity and innovation as more important to their competitiveness than better education, lower wages, or reductions in corporate taxes. Not surprisingly, having the highest-quality product or service was the top-rated means of differentiating their businesses from the competition. In light of this trend, program graduates need to be immersed in work and studies that help them learn strategies, approaches, and attitudes that promote their creative and innovative abilities, if they are to be appropriately prepared to meet the challenges of a changing work environment.

The program will be structured to emphasize integrated, interdisciplinary learning experiences and instruction, and will require that each student participate in a community/service learning component associated with their program of studies. All aspects of the program will incorporate strong expectations for academic achievement and personal responsibility, provide high levels of personalized support, and promote and value the diverse interests, talents, abilities, perspectives, and assets of all members of the learning community. The program will be structured to equip students with a strong

foundation in core academic and technical skills, design concepts, aesthetics, communication, text and media literacy, problem-solving, and creative thinking skills. A strong emphasis will be placed on the use of technology as both a production and thinking tool.

In addition, students will be matched with representatives of area businesses and industries, as they undertake community/service learning activities, internships, or mentorships that are designed to provide real-world learning and skill application opportunities. Business and industry representatives will work with the proposed program staff and students to provide a clear sense of the skills, abilities, values, discipline, habits, roles and responsibilities, and strategies that are inherent in related careers, as well as in the design of learning experiences for students that will help motivate and challenge them. As a result of these real-world learning experiences, program graduates will be better prepared to succeed in academic and career/vocational arenas.

Additional features of the program will include the exploration of career options, the attainment of the high school diploma, and the accumulation of college credits.

All students working with an assigned advisor/mentor will develop a personal learning plan. The advisor/mentor will continue to work with his/her matched-student throughout the student's learning career at the program. The learning plan will include the core academic, career/vocational, and elective courses, and community/service learning, mentorships, and internship assignments. In addition, all students will be expected to master identified skill checklists in such areas as computer skills, for example, including word-processing, basic spreadsheet utilization, online research, and information analysis and database management.

Students will be oriented to career and vocational opportunities and to relevant post-secondary educational options as they progress through their high school curriculum. Career preparation activities, including community/service learning assignments and projects, will be structured to promote the development of essential life skills, such as study, time, and project management, as well as housing, personal health and wellness, and other issues that might otherwise present barriers to a successful long-term transition to employment and lifelong learning.

Each student will be assigned a personal mentor/advisor who will assist with day-to-day, short-term, and long-term problem-solving; facilitate communication with and promote the involvement of families; and help identify and access required health and social support services. Counseling support will be available to help students manage problems that are typical of their age and representative of environmental challenges. Such activities as regular student-faculty meetings, community/service learning sessions, and teambuilding activities will act to underscore the importance of each program member's responsibility for positive contributions to the climate and culture of the program and campus life. The involvement of parents and guardians is critical to student success. Consequently, parents will be encouraged to participate in the interview process and will

be invited to activities and events at the program to insure that they are well-represented and connected with their son's/daughter's learning experiences at the program.

IV. Broad Academic Goals and Objectives

Academic goals and objectives will focus on the integration of each student's full complement of learning needs. Students will demonstrate their ability to meet intellectually challenging work as they prepare to pursue their post-secondary education or career/vocational goals. Students will read and write extensively in all classes; apply their learning to novel problems and tasks; produce significant pieces of analytic work; produce research papers, projects, models, and designs for public review and critique; and conduct an end-of-the-year course project that reflects their academic, career/vocation, and community/service learning experiences. Learning objectives and teaching/learning strategies will emphasize the development of strong, flexible metacognitive strategies, creativity and innovation, and problem-solving skills across all content areas. Self-esteem, appreciation and value of diversity, strong collaborative-related skills, and facilitation abilities will all be promoted through specific instructional activities. Goals and objectives will be drawn from current curriculum models proven to be effective in meeting needs of students with varied learning styles.

Requirements for graduation will be consistent with Connecticut mandates and will include 23 credits to be acquired between the local high school (9th grade) and the 10th – 12th grades at QVMCHS. Each course offered will incorporate objectives designed to enhance multicultural awareness and cultural competence. The recommended curriculum will include:

- English: no fewer than 4 credits
- Mathematics: no fewer than 3 credits
- Science: no fewer than 3 credits
- Social Studies: no fewer than 3 credits
- World Cultures, Language and Traditions: no less than 2 credits
- Arts or Vocational Education: no less than 1 credit
- Physical Education/Health: no less than 1 credit
- Fine/Practical/Graphic Arts: no less than 1 credit
- Community Service Learning: no less than 1 credit
- Electives: no fewer than 4 credits

The core curriculum will reflect an interdisciplinary, active-learning approach that incorporates differentiated instruction and data-driven decision-making to the teaching and learning experience. Real-life application of skills in the solving of novel and community problems will be integral throughout the learning model. Students will learn to be better managers and directors of their own learning, will develop the habits and discipline necessary to embrace lifelong learning as a core value, and contribute in a positive and meaningful way to their community and culture. Students will learn:

- Creative application of technologies

- Skills of inquiry and critical analysis
- Strategies for managing change and handling ambiguity
- Perseverance, self-direction, and self-confidence
- The ability to form and manage positive, collaborative relationships with peers and adults

Related learning objectives emphasize student engagement and commitment to identifying and building on cognitive, personal, social, and occupational strengths in a 21st-century climate of continuous change. As technological developments accelerate and continue to transform global society, students will need to develop a sense of self that allows them to realize their own ambitions and contribute, meaningfully, to their community and culture.

Students will be able to:

- Identify individual goals and strategies for meeting their personal goals and career ambitions
- Demonstrate aesthetic appreciation, creative and critical thinking skills, effective reasoning and problem-solving abilities in a diverse, globally interconnected world
- Develop skills for productive careers, sustained employment, contributions to family and community living, and personal achievement through post-secondary education and lifelong learning
- Integrate technological tools and master effective communication skills
- Demonstrate creative and innovative thinking, and value divergent views, perspectives, and experiences of others; and demonstrate a commitment to the common good among all citizens
- Accept and demonstrate personal responsibility for successful learning and employment; establish positive relationships with peers and adults; and promote a global perspective that appreciates age, cultural, ethnic, ability, and racial diversity in solving problems and in making informed decisions

V. Core Academic Program

The core academic program is designed to provide the foundational content knowledge and skills necessary to ensure that students meet rigorous outcomes, and are able to achieve their personal educational and career goals. The curriculum blends classroom instruction, deliberate practice, feedback, and reflective practices with experiential, project-based learning, and mentor/apprentice relationships, supported by extended, personal advisories. This blended approach is designed to ensure that each student's full complement of needs are addressed, rigorous academic outcomes are achieved, and personal educational goals are met. Learning opportunities include selected post-secondary coursework at Quinebaug Valley Community College. Established goals and objectives ensure that students will benefit from a constructive, inquiry-based foundation, resulting in their strengths and skills as self-directed, lifelong learners in a growingly diverse community, and increasingly complex world of work.

As described previously, the focus of the proposed school is a tripartite one featuring the integration of the three components of *literacy, contextual learning, and creativity and innovation*. These components are necessary for students to realize their vocational, career, social, and personal goals in our changing communities, workplaces, and increasingly interconnected global economy. The content focus will promote flexibility, active learning, appreciation for the contributions of others, and an iterative process of asking questions, seeking and weighing evidence, testing hypotheses, and taking action.

By starting as a small learning community wherein students have an equal share of responsibility for the development of a code of ethics and principles of behavior, trust and a respect for risk taking will be readily established and continually modeled by all program staff. The content focus, likewise, will incorporate a data driven decision making approach. Students will be continually asked, in all content areas, three overriding questions: 1) what is the evidence and is it credible, 2) what have you learned from seeking and evaluating various perspectives and viewpoints, and 3) what connections and interrelationships have you unearthed in your investigation and study? Creating a safe learning environment where students feel confident in exploring their ideas and sharing their views and perspectives is a critical cornerstone to the success of this learning model. Moreover, students will be expected to make visible their knowledge, skills, and understanding of content areas throughout their studies. Educators understand, for example, that all students come to formal learning environments with preconceptions about how the world works. Teachers will engage and challenge those preconceptions, asking students to express and explain their understanding and provide evidentiary support. In this way, students and teachers will be continually challenging one another to expand their knowledge and understanding in a collaborative manner, based on the respect for differing viewpoints and experiences. This drive to make knowledge continually visible and thereby shared in a community is necessary if new information, new knowledge and skills are expected to take root and flourish. Throughout this approach, students will learn in both an explicit and implicit manner the metacognitive skills that underscore the intellectual habits necessary for life long learning. The content focus is designed to develop and promote such a metacognitive approach to teaching and learning so that students are able to take greater control and responsibility for their learning and becoming more adaptive, reflective thinkers and doers in a complexly changing world.

Content will be taught in an applied manner so that students learn skills and knowledge in a connected, real-world context. While facts are a necessary component of foundational knowledge, it is the application of skills and knowledge that will be expected of students in their classrooms, homes, worksites, and communities. In using a learning by doing (*discovery learning*) approach, students will benefit from small group instruction and one-to-one assistance even as they are matched to community representatives, business and industry agents, community college faculty, and other caring adults to explore the application of their content-related knowledge in addressing real world challenges. In this manner students will benefit from a full complement of learning support, as well as

plentiful opportunities for deliberate practice and guided reflection in an iterative manner till mastery is achieved. Such an approach promotes the development of the habits of mind necessary to learn to reflect spontaneously on one's own learning and problem-solving. Students will be continually encouraged to build and activate relevant background knowledge, monitor their understanding, and take risks in trying out new ideas and innovation in thinking through solutions to real-world problems in an authentic manner.

The three areas of content are meant to be integrated, taught through the lens of real-world applications and the solving of authentic problems. Research on the differences in novice and expert understandings have long illustrated that it is not merely the quantity or quality of facts and discrete skills that distinguish the two, but the deeper, richer, organized manner in which the content-related knowledge is integrated and understood. It will be the aim of the teaching faculty to promote mastery and a more expert understanding and representation of skills associated with each content area. Students will learn to think creatively and innovatively in addressing learning challenges.

The content focus complements the overarching theme of the college experience. By way of this broader theme, students become immersed in an environment where expectations about greater self-management, self-direction, and personal responsibility for learning are well established. QVMCHS will adapt the broader theme and content focus, as well as instructional strategies, to meet the needs of students who learn best in situations where experiential learning and community support are valued. The development of students' cognitive architecture (their system of thinking activities) to help students unify their learning experiences is significant to the promotion of proficiency and content mastery. The community college setting with its focus on literacy, contextual learning, and creativity and innovation, supplemented by small group instruction and individualized support, will enhance the cognitive foundations necessary for learning at high levels and meeting the high expectations of the model's designers. Matching teaching and learning styles as a strategy for improving the school adjustment of its students is more likely to result in improved grades, decreased tardiness, better attention in class, and increased self-perceptions of control over behavioral learning outcomes.

Incorporated in the magnet school's design is recognition of the value of each member of the learning community as a unique personality with individual strengths, assets, gifts, talents, and interests that have, in many cases failed to flourish. Students' aspirations become confused and need to be clarified. For disengaged adolescents this process often requires immersion in an experiential learning environment that includes a wealth of support from peers and caring adults. Students will learn to take in and process information through a variety of sources, weigh and verify evidence, think and work toward problem solutions, collaboratively, and express and demonstrate their skills in a public manner. Such experiences are enhanced by the context of the multi-age, diverse, creative learning environment of the community college.

As members of the larger community college, students will be expected to learn behaviors that communicate their ideas, demonstrate their respect, and embrace

collegiality both in the immediate environ and the broader community. The college experience will itself be expected to communicate basic constructs that enhance aspirations and nurture commitment to personal and communal growth. These constructs are summarized as follows:

High Expectations: Students will be challenged to make responsible choices in completion of academic work, in solving problems constructively, creatively, and innovatively, and in establishing a community of learner's culture that values the contribution and assets of each member. In content areas, students will be expected to articulate and demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and understandings meet established rigor.

Commitment: An essential difference between the traditional high school setting and a middle college high school is the extreme care with which development of a climate of trust, respect, and commitment is fostered. In content areas, students must demonstrate commitment to their own success and a willingness to take positive risks in sharing their ideas and their creative achievements through public demonstrations. While students will likely demonstrate variation in the quality of products based on abilities and interests, each student will need to demonstrate a commitment to learning in required content areas through projects and public presentations.

Knowledge and skills: Students will develop skills, knowledge, and competencies and demonstrate their proficiency in visible ways. In establishing a community of learners culture that supports and values the diversity of its members, students will benefit from explicit and implicit instruction and guidance in teamwork and collaboration skills. By designing instruction through the content areas to promote collaboration, public displays, and group work, students will, at the same time, be immersed in an environment that focuses on the "soft skills" necessary to succeed in the classroom, at the community college, home, work, and in the broader community. Consensus building, negotiation, teamwork, collaboration, and conflict resolution, for example, are used regularly in classrooms and through the community-approach to learning. Such skills as responsibility, reliability, leadership, effective team work, and the ability to objectively assess and evaluate work, views, and perspectives will be highlighted in several different aspects of the program – from direct instruction to student involvement in the governance of the program. The emphasis in all content areas on interactive, experiential learning will support and enhance these skills.

By providing experiential learning opportunities that foster learning in and beyond the classroom, a powerful contextual basis for teaching is established. On this foundation, mathematics, science, social studies, English language arts/communications, technology, and a rich array of electives can be rigorously supported. This foundation of experiential learning offered within a supportive, learning community, is a suitable environment for promoting optimism among youth who might otherwise fail to realize their promise and aspirations. This magnet school experience will help launch its graduates into futures characterized by optimism, strong bonds with one another, and the skills necessary to meet a changing and complex world.

VI. Teaching Methods and Pedagogy

Instructional strategies will be based upon the assessment of each learner's strengths, assets, talents, and needs. In general, teaching and pedagogy will be based on the integration of four overarching design features:

- A learner-centered approach which begins with what students think and know
- A knowledge-centered approach which focuses on what is to be taught, why, and what mastery will look like
- An assessment-centered approach which emphasizes frequent opportunities to make thinking and learning visible as a guide for both the teacher and the student in learning and instruction
- A community-of-learners/community-centered approach to encourage the development of a culture of questioning, respect, personal responsibility, and risk taking – both within the learning environment and the community at large

Collectively managed by highly qualified teachers, these four approaches will promote the active engagement of students in the development of real-world skills and knowledge, and are, at the same time, propitious in promoting life long learning. These design features get to the route of metacognitive learning. The understandings students bring with them to the classroom shape how they make sense of what they are taught. While students' prior learning is a powerful support for further learning – teachers need to know first what that existing foundation of knowledge looks like. Preconceptions and erroneous understandings can undermine the development of new skills and new knowledge. Unearthing these knowledge bases helps teachers understand how to craft new learning activities that will challenge preconceived notions and help students expand their understanding of how the world works.

Understanding what is to be taught, why, and what mastery looks like is essential. The concept of learning with understanding is comprised of two aspects. First, factual knowledge is best taught in a conceptual framework to be adequately understood; and second, concepts are given meaning through multiple representations that are rich in factual detail. In application this means that both facts and big ideas need to be emphasized in teaching, and that students need many opportunities to work with an idea across varying presentations. Students benefit from understanding how knowledge is connected, and by realizing that knowledge is organized around a foundation of ideas associated with a particular discipline. “Thinking like a scientist” or “working like an artist” implies that there exists a body of connected, organized knowledge and skills in the respective domain. To think in this way is to understand more than the facts, it is to understand the foundational ideas of each particular discipline. Each curriculum subject will highlight the fundamental understanding of the underlying principles that give structure to the subject.

On-going formal and informal formative assessments, designed to make students' thinking visible to both teachers and students, will support learning by providing students

with opportunities to revise and improve their thinking on a continual basis. These assessments will also help students see their progress over time and uncover problems that need to be addressed in instruction. Many activities and problems will be presented to help students make their thinking public, and, therefore, observable. Work in groups and class discussions will provide students with opportunities to ask each other questions and revise their thinking in a supportive way. Frequent writing assignments shared in a writers' workshop format, for example, is an example of how students make their work visible, receive constructive feedback, assess and evaluate that feedback, and undertake multiple revisions and refinement of their work. Visual and graphic arts, communications, and other curricular areas will incorporate public presentations of individual and collaborative work that will help students gain the perspective of others, and learn, at the same time, the different perspectives brought to bear in considering work when it is made visible.

A community-centered approach incorporates the development of group norms, embraced by all members. It also helps members recognize connections and interrelatedness of community norms to an outside world. Learning is known to be influenced in fundamental ways by the context in which it takes place. Every community adopts a set of norms – a culture – that influences interactions among individuals within it. A focus on student learning, which this model promotes, requires a community membership that promotes the invaluable expression of ideas, risk taking, and the respect and regard for the diverse views and experiences of others. Such a community is built by both explicit and implicit means. Establishing a safe haven for students to express their thoughts, ideas, and opinions in an environment where questioning is valued is critical to promoting innovation and creativity.

Teaching methods, within such a supportive educational community, will be designed to inspire active learning on the part of each student. Instructors will employ techniques that:

- Encourage students to speak up and foster practice in responsible self-management
- Maximize student engagement in thinking about questions and problems
- Promote reflective habits which create meaningful learning experiences
- Encourage support among all community members
- Sample student thinking in ways which reflect and value personal perspectives
- Provide ample practice in communication skills, listening, speaking, about ideas, attitudes, and perspectives
- Model processes and help students to understand and use effective metacognitive strategies for effective learning
- Involve all students in effective practice and mastery strategies
- Encourage students to take reasonable risks in ways which build self-direction and self-confidence across learning situations
- Teach students to reach and use personnel, technology, resources, and information in ways that will support and sustain their learning

These pedagogical principles are essential to the unique focus of the school. Since students are attending school on a college campus, they will, of necessity, receive a great deal of practice in functioning effectively within a multi-age setting that reflects our regional environment. This experience will prepare young adults who are ready, knowledgeable, and skilled enough to assume their responsibilities as members of their communities upon graduation.

VII. Partnerships

The richness of the partnership, which includes the school districts of Killingly, Plainfield, Putnam, Thompson, Windham, and Woodstock, EASTCONN, and Quinebaug Valley Community College, provides access to an extended network of learning and support opportunities for students, that has both breadth and depth. Quinebaug Valley Community College offers a full range of programs of study for students who demonstrate a readiness to accelerate their learning. EASTCONN, an exemplary provider of community and service learning programs, is, along with the Community College, well connected with local businesses and industries and thereby amply able to connect students to internships and mentorships throughout the northeast region. Students will benefit from an extensive array of community placements for practicing and applying emerging skills and knowledge in a real world context.

In addition, instructional and emotional support components are well integrated in the design of the program. Students will have plentiful opportunities for receiving individualized learning support as they extend their learning throughout the extended partnerships. Students will work with an assigned advisory/mentor to develop a personal learning plan that will outline assets and barriers to achievement. They will receive career and vocational as well as guidance and advisory support as an integral and ongoing component of their educational experience. These internal partnerships will complement the connections made with college, business, industry, and community, and others, ensuring student success across learning environments.

VIII. Multicultural Education

The unique focus of the inter-district magnet school has been expressed as a concentration on a balanced literacy component, contextual learning, and creativity and innovation. However, the alternative nature of the program and its magnet school status also reinforces the value of the individual within a diverse community. The day-to-day functioning of the school will infuse the expectations, commitment, knowledge, and skills for interaction and achievement within a multi-age, multi-discipline, multi-cultural setting. All students will take part in a morning round (Futures Advisory) and a community meeting, at which times a multicultural theme is instructional and technical supplies for individualized computer-assisted preparation in target skill areas.

In addition students will take a minimum of two credits in world languages/global studies, which incorporates a multicultural theme. Lastly, EASTCONN is a long-term provider of multicultural education, as exemplified in its management of several inter-

district grants. Through this work, EASTCONN has developed a Multicultural Curriculum that builds awareness, appreciation, and skills in building positive relationships among youth of diverse backgrounds and experiences. EASTCONN's *Domains of Diversity* strand will be incorporated in different content areas (communication, social studies, for example).

More than this, however, each content area will include consideration of the ways in which diversity not only enriches the learning process, but is an essential conceptual element. For example,

Language Arts: Classes focus on the individual perspectives and expands to consider common themes, issues, and emotions as expressed through fiction, nonfiction, poetry, drama, and film from different historical periods, regions and nations, literary styles, and cultural roots;

Mathematics: Includes a study of alternative methods of solving real problems, emphasizing cooperative planning, research, and analyses of sets of data and different mathematical methodologies, use of technology and technology applications. Mathematics projects reinforce habits of mind such as flexibility, creativity, and objectivity, which are important elements of tolerance and cohesive communities;

Social Studies: The American studies and community service projects, will explore various events from a variety of personal, historical, and literary perspectives; students will investigate the causes and contributing factors to social conflict, and discrimination, as well as concepts of equality and social justice. By understanding ways in which various cultural, religious, racial, and ethnic groups influenced national and global relations, students will become able to apply knowledge and skills to analysis and intervention principles at the Middle College High School and in their communities;

Science: Investigations concerning the interaction of various organisms upon each other and upon the environment also reinforce the importance of each individual's contribution to sustained growth and development or elimination through the process of natural selection. Analysis of these relationships to the natural world provides many opportunities for application and discussion concerning issues of diversity and preservation of the adaptive mechanisms that strengthen biological and social systems.

While these examples represent only a few of the ways in which an appreciation for diversity and multicultural values will be sustained by the curriculum they demonstrate the underlying theme that has been the foundation for the development of the Quinebaug Valley Middle College High School. The community college will extend opportunities to students to take part in special cultural events, presentations, speakers, forums, etc., that are appropriate for youth and address issues of cultural awareness and understanding.

IX. Student Assessment

A multidimensional approach to assessment will allow evaluation of student progress in terms of:

- Ability to gather and analyze information, articulate ideas, solve problems and make decisions will be demonstrated through in-class projects, community service activities, and career internships. Digital portfolio assessments, performance rubrics, journal activity logs, observation documentation, and self-assessments will be used to determine individual progress toward learning goals.
- Ability to perform consistently, reliably, and to meet expectations for school and community behavior will be assessed through a variety of reports and records including attendance and performance records, staff logs (for community activities), formal and informal feedback from instructors and project leaders, Students will be asked to set personal goals annually and to complete a self-evaluation related to their own goals and objectives at least twice a year.
- Ability to form positive, constructive relationships with peers and adults will be assessed as a part of the evaluation of cooperative projects, teamwork, and formal and informal project and product presentations which analyze the students' ability to communicate and act in ways which contribute to the development of a caring community within and outside the program.
- Ability to preserve and manage the learning environment will be reflected in behavioral observations, student self-evaluation, written, graphic and cooperative products which demonstrate respect for the classroom, school, campus, and community environments; care and conservation of school, campus and community resources, and a recognition of the importance and impact of individual and group behavior on the environment from a larger national and global perspective.

Staff will construct a progress report that provides constructive feedback to students, staff, and parents in the key areas outlined above, as well as the results of final assessment projects and content mastery projects. The report will be used to help students organize and document their successes, as well as identify and implement strategies which will help to integrate and improve skills across academic, social and occupational aspects of the middle college high school experience.

Periodic formal assessments will include criterion-referenced, as well as normative evaluation through state-mandated assessment instruments. In addition, observational assessments will address interpersonal skills and ability to plan and work cooperatively on projects. A key area of assessment will be the ability to use a range of hardware and software in constructive ways and to integrate various technologies to solve communications problems in creative ways. Assessment will focus on integration of technology throughout the curriculum, with a special emphasis on its use as a part of a digital portfolio and in content area culminating projects. By use of multiple types of

assessment instruments, in concert with thoughtful student-advisor-parent conferences related to student progress, a pattern of skills, abilities, and interests will emerge with which a longer range career development plan will be formulated as part of graduation and transition planning.

The curriculum will be designed to address the Connecticut State Performance Standards, which will provide students with a strong foundation for the mastery examinations. In addition, students will be given special preparation in analysis and response to similar types of questions at various points throughout the academic year. Students who evidence a particular weakness in one or more content areas will be paired with peer tutors or assisted by Quinebaug Valley Community College learning tutors.

X. Lottery

EASTCONN will design and conduct annual lotteries for participating districts that meet State, Federal and the Quinebaug Valley Middle College High School's requirements. Should the partner districts be unable to fill the allocation of seats, unfilled seats will be offered to other districts.

XI. Student Governance

It is anticipated that students will also play an essential role in the development of a supportive, creative and committed culture within the school. Students will be responsible for developing and managing day-to-day (school) community issues through a Student Government and Review Board. Students will formulate a code of ethics and will help to orient entering students to that code. Students will also manage many aspects of day-to-day operations including such activities as attendance monitoring, peer mediation and peer tutorials.

XII. School Calendar, School Day Schedule, and Hours of Operation

The school calendar will be consistent with that of the participating public school districts, Killingly, Plainfield, Putnam, Thompson, Windham, and Woodstock including a minimum of 180 days, or 1,021 instructional hours annually. (Range of instructional hours: low, Windham, 984; high, Killingly, 1021). The school year will begin with a five day orientation for all students and staff, focusing on teambuilding activities and adventure initiatives designed to promote an inclusive, nurturing and supportive learning climate. College faculty and administrators will be invited to participate; parents and guardians will be invited to specific orientation sessions. In addition, a mid-winter program will be designed to provide intensive project-based learning experiences that may include travel, full-time internships in career settings, community service projects, focused research, and individual learning support activities designed for students who need strategic support to maintain and refine skills. Students will receive a minimum of 990 (this represents 5.5 hours of daily instruction X 180 days) hours of study throughout the course of the school year. Students will have the option of accelerating completion of their high school requirements through participation in approved summer college courses.

Students may also elect to take college courses for which they meet basic college requirements for dual high school and college credit, as desire and readiness are demonstrated.

The schedule will be designed to take advantage of facility use patterns at Quinebaug Valley Community College, but with the start of their day being connected to available bus route schedules. This schedule will facilitate transportation arrangements from sending school districts. A typical day (Monday through Thursday) schedule is dependent on each student’s program of study, but a possible sample is offered here. Friday’s schedule includes two large blocks of times for integration activities, internships, mentoring, and other activities that require a larger timeframe.

QVMCHS Schedule

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
7:20-7:55	Futures/Advisory-----			
8:00-9:00	<i>Block 1</i> -----			
9:00-10:25	<i>Block 2 or QVCC</i> -----			
10:30-11:15	<i>Block 3 or QVCC</i> -----			
11:45-12:30				
Lunch=11:15-11:45				
12:30-1:55	<i>Block 4 or QVCC</i> -----			
2:00-4:00	<i>Academic Support/Mentoring/QVCC</i> -----			

Friday

7:20-7:55	<i>Futures/Advisory</i>
8:00-9:00	<i>English</i>
9:00-11:15	<i>Integration/Community Service/Internship/Laboratory/QVCC</i>
11:15-12:00	<i>Lunch</i>

XIII. Enrolment

Students in grades 10 – 12 will be admitted to the school. In the fall of 2008, 30 students will enroll in the 10th grade level. Each subsequent year, 30 students will be enrolled as incoming 10th grade students, while each preceding level moves ahead. In year two, for example, the program will enroll 30 new students in grade 10, and 30 students (from the previous year) will enroll at the 11th grade level. Again, in the third year, a new 30 students will enroll in the 10th grade level, 30 students will move on to the 11th grade level, and 30 students will move into the 12th grade level.

The program will serve 30 students during the pilot period, and will gradually increase its student population to 125 over the course of five years, adding 30 annually over a five year transition period. Projected enrollment in each grade at the end of five years will be approximately 30 – 40 students. Class sizes are expected to range from 12 – 15 students.

XIV. Student Discipline

Participants in the QVMCHS pilot project will communally develop a Code of Ethics, which will form the basis for discipline. This Code will be reviewed and approved by the program's Leadership Team and Governance Board. Students will determine whether contracts regarding the established Code will be developed and require signatures. Students will be subjected to the same general rules and responsibilities as college students, as outlined in the Quinebaug Valley Community College Student Handbook, where a new section for the magnet school students will be included. Three primary rules of conduct will be reflected in the Code.

- Respect for others and valuing and appreciating the diverse perspectives, skills, talents, abilities, and contributions of all members of the learning community
- Demonstration of personal responsibility in keeping the school, campus, and community a safe and attractive place to learn; and,
- Commitment to learning and building one's personal assets, talents, strengths, and abilities.

An essential aspect of implementing these rules is creating an atmosphere of trust and respect among all participants. Because the Middle College High School is oriented toward the middle college experience, and focuses on contextual learning, and creativity and innovation, including identifying and solving problems, discipline will emphasize skill-building in terms of expected behavior on the college campus, at work and community service placements, mentorships/internships, and in the community-at-large. Students will be encouraged to deal with violations of the code in ways which are both

preventive (of further problems) and proactive in terms of support for the school, campus, work sites, and the community. Violations of the Code in a college course or in the College's designated common areas will initiate consultation between the program's principal and the dean of Learning and Student Development.

Disciplinary guidelines exist to promote a safe, comfortable, and positive teaching and learning environment for all. Breaches in or challenges to these guidelines with behaviors that infringe upon the learning, safety, and comfort of others, will be addressed in a manner deemed most appropriate to the specific abuse or infraction.

XV. Transfers

Transfers are not routinely encouraged during the academic year since the Middle College High School emphasizes the development of a strong, supportive community-of-learners culture. This supportive climate is established at the very beginning of the school year, during the initial five days of orientation, and is fostered through specially designed activities throughout the year. However, should space become available during the fall semester, participating school districts will be notified and transfer students will be considered for admission. Transfer students will follow the same procedure for admission as those students admitted during the regular process (application in the spring for the fall admission). In addition, transfer students will be matched with a peer who assists in the transition process, ensuring that the newly transferred learner feels welcome and confident in contributing to the learning environment. A modified set of transition activities will be conducted, led by students and advisory staff, to ensure that the newly transferred student is quickly introduced and immersed in the culture and learning environment of the Middle College High School.

Students wishing to transfer to the Middle College High School may do so at the beginning of each semester, based on availability of space. First preference will be given to students on a waiting list, should one exist, in the order their names were drawn in the preceding lottery.

XV. Services for Special Needs Populations

Students Not Proficient in English: Students not proficient in English will be able to enroll in a uniquely designed English as a Second Language course which will be offered by an EASTCONN's English Language for Learners/ELL educator. EASTCONN's ELL staff are available to provide group and individual support, as needed, to ensure that English language proficiency is attained. Services will address the learning range from beginning to advanced levels and include grammar, reading, and writing skill development. In addition, student tutors or other student volunteers will be assigned to provide tutorial support.

Special Education Students: By virtue of its emphasis on individual strengths, the nature of the curriculum and the experiential component, mentorships/internships, and real-world learning opportunities, the Quinebaug Valley Middle College High School is

well-suited to the accommodation of adolescents with special education needs who become students by virtue of the lottery. The Middle College High School will be staffed by a diverse group of professionals who are skilled in interdisciplinary teaching strategies, universal design, Response to Intervention, and differentiated instruction, among others. At least one staff member will be certified in special education and in secondary education, and in instances of ongoing appointments and hires, preference will be given to selecting and appointing staff who hold dual Connecticut teaching certification. Resources within the College, as well as in public schools, may be used to provide additional clinical support in staff training and in case management issues for students who present severe or multiple disabilities. Consultation with the sending district's Planning and Placement Team will help to determine whether the services needed can be delivered with the combined efforts of the local PPT and the Middle College High School staff. Students requiring specific support or instructional services through their Individual Education Plan may require additional fiscal support from the sending school district to address identified special needs.

Students with Physical Disabilities: The proposed program will accommodate students with physical disabilities according to requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Quinebaug Valley Community College is fully accessible, and special arrangements will be made for transportation and other support services as required by individual students.

XVI. Admissions Policy and Criteria

Students who are at least 14 years of age, and who have completed at least one year in a public secondary school program will be considered for admission to the Quinebaug Valley Middle College High School. While the school is designed to serve students who have not performed at potential in other academic settings, it is essential that entering students be ready to join the Middle College community with energy and determination to succeed in this unique setting. For this reason, students will undergo a four-step process to insure both the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) understand the Middle College concept and expectations including the following.

- ✓ Completion of a written application with supporting documents;
- ✓ Tour and orientation to the Middle College program;
- ✓ Personal interview with Middle College staff and students; and,
- ✓ Selection for admission by lottery.

In order to participate in the required lottery selection process, each applicant will demonstrate:

- Understanding that the Middle College High School program is designed to promote academic achievement, community service, and career development;

- Self-initiated referral or referral from a caring adult, guidance counselor, other local school, ecumenical or community representative indicating a belief in the student’s potential for achievement at the Middle College High School, including evidence or examples of student performance or personal characteristics that support this belief;
- Contractual agreement to abide by the Code of Ethics including respect for others in a diverse community, personal responsibility for maintaining a safe learning community, and a commitment to learning and building one’s personal assets, talents, strengths, and abilities; and,
- Commitment from an adult sponsor (usually a parent/guardian) to provide support for the student and to communicate regularly and as needed with the staff of the Quinebaug Valley Middle College High School.

Students who meet requirements for entry but who are not selected by the lottery process will be placed on a waiting list in the order their names were drawn. These individuals will then be eligible for admission based on available space. Below you will find a process and timetable chart to be used for Admitting Students. *Please note that due to delays in hiring in the first year these dates will be revised.

Annual Admission Process

Process	Responsible Person(s)	Timeline
1. Outreach and Recruitment Activities	Members of Planning Committee	September – March
2. Written applications submitted	Student applicants	By March 15
3. QVCC Tour and interviews	Students, QVMCHS/QVCC staff/QVCC faculty representatives	By April 1
4. Lottery selection and waiting list identified	QVMCHS staff/QVCC staff	By April 1
5. Acceptance confirmation by student applicants	Students and parents	By May 1
6. Waiting list notification	QVMCHS staff	By May 15

The Middle College High School’s mission is to provide a challenging, personalized, comprehensive learning environment that fosters the skills, knowledge, habits, and individual discipline necessary for students from diverse backgrounds to realize their ambitions and contribute in a positive, meaningful way to their community and culture. The Program intends to serve students who are not performing at potential in traditional school settings, create a high school more diverse than exists in several of the participating districts, and infuse a new dimension into the Quinebaug Valley Community College community. By establishing outreach and admission procedures that emphasize the mission of the school, the admission process will reinforce the critical role that each student must play in establishing a safe, effective learning environment. The process also reinforces the importance of building positive relationships with adults, since one way

students will undertake referral is through their guidance counselors, and representatives from the community. Through this process, students will identify an adult sponsor who will agree to support them in the program. Finally, the contractual agreement to abide by the Code of Ethics stresses individual responsibility for personal performance, contribution to the community, and commitment to achievement and program completion. The lottery will make the admission process as unbiased as possible. Each of these procedures emphasizes the vision and mission of the school.

The admission policy is the same for siblings as for other students seeking admission to the Middle College High School program.