



City of New London  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

To: New London Board of Education

From: Daryl Justin Finizio  
Mayor of the City of New London

Subject: Sports and Medicine Magnet School in New London

Date: October 25, 2012

The New London Public Schools have been faced with many challenges for several years. These include flat-funding for the last five years, (which New London was the first in the State of Connecticut to ever do this), collapsing infrastructure, faltering student achievement, and increasing racial and ethnic segregation. Following a state audit of our district, the State of Connecticut appointed a Special Master to aid in reviving our district. It now falls to all of us to chart a new course forward.

*Improving Education in New London*

Connecticut's appointed Special Master, Dr. Steven Adamowski, identified legislation that was introduced and passed by the Connecticut General Assembly, sponsored by Senator Andrea Stillman, in 2006. The legislation enabled New London to be the first district in the State of Connecticut to be an all magnet school district. It also lowered the threshold of students needed from out of the district to 15%. This legislation also allows the district to gain \$3,000 per student if the all magnet district was able to be racially and ethnically integrated. This has the potential of bringing in \$9 million in new revenue to the City. The request from the Board this year to the City Council was \$3

million. With that perspective, this initiative would be able to compensate for years of flat-funding and help the school district and City in immeasurable ways.

The plan for an all magnet district would need at least three magnet academies. New London already has the Science Technology Magnet School and there have been discussions about the possibility of an Arts Magnet Academy to fit with the renovated Nathan Hale Arts Magnet School. That leaves New London in need of one final magnet school. My proposal for the third magnet school, to be created through converting New London High School into a Magnet School, would be a scholar athlete and sports medicine magnet school that would be modeled after the Sports and Medical Science Academy in Hartford. The Sports and Medical Science Academy has been high achieving since it was opened in 1997 and is in a City with similar demographics as New London.

#### *Demographics of Hartford and New London*

New London is a much smaller City than Hartford, being only 6.46 sq. miles, but faces many big City issues, such as poverty. The median income of Hartford is \$28,970 with 32.1 % of the citizens being below the poverty line. New London is higher than that with a median income of \$43,551 with 17.3% of the citizens below the poverty line. In addition, Hartford is a much larger city and is a majority-minority City with 15.8% White population, 38.7% African-American, and 43.4% Hispanic. New London is much smaller only has a population of 27,620 people which is broken down by 48.8% White, 17.4% African-American, and 28.3% Hispanic. Both Cities are faced with unique challenges as both are economically disadvantaged. Urban schools with lower income populations usually struggle in school performance. However, the next section will compare the Sports and Medical Science Academy School in Hartford, which was able to capitalize on an initiative and succeed, and New London High School which is ranked at the lower end of the State in facility quality and student achievement.

### *Sports and Medical Science Academy and New London High School*

The data comparing New London High School and the Sports and Medical Science Academy (SMSA) looks at their scores in 2007 and 2012 and the racial breakdown of each school. In 2007, SMSA was ranked 121<sup>st</sup> in Connecticut and was able to improve to 104<sup>th</sup> in 2012. The CAPT scores in the school were also able to substantially improve. In 2007 the math score was 77.2% met standards while in 2012 that number increased to 85.4%. The reading portion of the CAPT score saw similar improvement from the 2007 score, 77.2% met standard, to the 2012 score, 86.5% met standard.

On the other hand, New London High School saw improvements but were still well below where the scores should be. In 2007, NLHS was ranked 164<sup>th</sup> in Connecticut and moved to 157<sup>th</sup> in 2012. The scores in 2007 for the CAPT test for both reading and math were just at, or below, proficiency. In 2007 the CAPT score for Math had 40.9% of students meet the standard and in 2012 that percentage improved to 59%. The results were similar in the reading portion of the CAPT test but saw much larger improvements. The CAPT scores for reading in 2007 had 47.5% met standards and a large increase to 70.7% in 2012. These increases are steps in the right direction for student achievement but the time appears to have come for innovative ideas to help get the New London district farther ahead than it is currently.

The racial makeup of SMSA and NLHS are similar in the sense that they are both racially majority-minority schools. SMSA is from grades 6 – 12 and has a total of 672 students. The school has also been able to improve racial diversity in the last decade as the school population increased from 316 in 2002 to the current number of 672. In 2002, the school was much more heavily majority-minority with 49% Hispanic, 46% African-American, and 4% White. The school was able to improve diversity in 2011 enrollment to 45% Hispanic, 26% African-American, and 21% White. The student population also reflects the economic issues facing Hartford since 100% of the students qualified for free or discounted lunch.

New London High School is a much larger school even though it only covers grades 9– 12 with a total of 982 students. While SMSA was able to improve racial

diversity since 2002, NLHS has stayed very heavily majority-minority. In 2002, the school had a total of 663 students with a racial breakdown of 41.5% Hispanic, 35.9% African-American, and 19.6% White. In 2011 there were 982 students with a racial breakdown of 42.5% Hispanic, 30% African-American, and 22.7% White. While the population has become more diverse, it is still a heavily segregated school. The student population also reflected the economic hardships of the City with 85% of students qualifying for free or discounted lunch.

Students of any race or ethnicity can achieve equally to any other. Our students can do anything students in other districts can do, which was proven by the recent increase in literacy and math skills this year. We have known, however, since the days of *Brown vs. Board of Education* that separate is inherently unequal.

#### Miscellaneous Benefits of Proposal

A Sports and Science Medicine Academy would be in keeping with the interest among the student population that is currently at New London High School. In addition, there is the possibility for widespread political support for investment in this initiative throughout our community. In the past, the community supported improving the athletic programs and facilities that are available. This academy would maximize the prior athletic facility investments that have already been made. There are also economic advantages for the City with this proposal. The State would be able to commit 100% of the design costs for the conversion of New London High School to an academy. Furthermore, the smaller academy conversion will be cheaper than the previous solutions presented to repair or replace the High School.

#### Recommendation

- 1) Arrange a tour of the Sports and Medical Sciences Academy in Hartford with all interested New London stakeholders.
- 2) Hold forums in New London to gain community input.

3) Research parameters for necessary funding and develop a timeline to achieve the transition.

### Conclusion

One of the pervasive problems facing New London is the quality of our education system and a quality education system is the framework to a successful City. This all magnet school district has the possibility to not only save education in New London, but to also save the City. The increased funds will provide a much needed injection into the system and begin the road to turning the district around. Through the addition of a Scholar-Athlete and Sports Medicine Magnet School in New London we will be able to educate our children at a high level, continue the longstanding tradition of Whaler sports, and move our district from the bottom