



City of Newburyport

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE
2007-2008
SELF EVALUATION**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2007-08 school-year will be characterized by setting the stage for continued improvements for the Newburyport School District. We focused our attention on delivering a budget which supports student achievement, and on taking initial steps towards repairing the damage done over the past five years of budget and program cuts. The focus on and passing of the “Mission” budget is the shining achievement of the School Committee in a year in which we graded our accomplishments as a B-. This grade is consistent with the view of the community, which, based on a survey, also graded the Committee with a B- in accomplishments.

This is the first year in which the School Committee used a self evaluation instrument tied to our goals; each member evaluated our performance for each of our 26 goals, rated the goal’s importance in the context of effect on student achievement, and provided commentary to explain their ratings. The instrument also asked members to grade the overall performance of the school committee in terms of accomplishments (what we did) and in terms of operations and process (how we did it). Finally we were asked to list what we believed were our greatest accomplishments and our greatest disappointments.

This is also the first year in which we obtained community input in the process. We asked Newburyporters to complete a survey and give us their comments about our performance. The survey was available on-line, and paper copies were distributed at the City Clerk’s office, at the City Treasurer’s office and at Public Library. The community was invited to participate via e-mail lists, the Daily News and signs at the Library and City Hall. We received almost 300 responses, and while the statistical data gathered is valuable, the commentary, included verbatim in this report, is especially enlightening.

Combined, these instruments indicate a general level of satisfaction with what we were able to do under tight financial constraints, but also revealed a sense of frustration over what we were not able to accomplish. We share, with the community, a strong awareness that we have much more to accomplish. We can, and must, do better.

The following are the salient top-line results of the self evaluation process:

- The School Committee graded its accomplishments as B- (consistent with the community, also a B-), its operations and process as a B (community score B-). The community also graded the School Committee with a B- for Communications, a B- for responsiveness, and a C+ for fiscal management.
- The focus on and passing of the “Mission Budget” rated highest on our list of accomplishments. Also rated high were the start of the strategic planning process and the implementation of the school re-organization.
- Our greatest disappointments were our inability to fund the return of foreign languages to the middle school and our failure to implement a comprehensive, on-going communications plan.
- Analysis of the selection of top accomplishments and disappointments, and the accompanying commentary indicate we have a very balanced School Committee. While there is interest across the board in all the issues in our purview, there are at least two School Committee members who show a *strong* interest or passion on

each of the following facets of our work: policy, financial management, student achievement and curriculum, community relations, long range planning, school culture and student safety. This variety of passions bodes well for the pursuit of educational leadership.

- The School Committee set so many goals for itself (24 grouped in 7 categories) that it lacked focus. This is further evidenced by a disconnect between the importance of the goal set and the grades we achieved. Our top three goal sets (in terms of importance) rated 3, 7 and 6 in terms of grades.
- Comments strongly supported the need to improve our goal setting process. We need to look at number of goals, the applicability of the goals (ensuring they are Committee goals, not Administration goals) and goals over which we have control through our actions.
- The overall accomplishment grade (B-) is slightly higher than the average score of all our goals (C+). This is influenced in part by other accomplishments achieved by the School Committee that were not a part of our goals. Chief among these are improvement of relations with Whittier Vocational Technical School, and work in the policy area.
- Both the self evaluation and the survey comments indicate, that although some progress has been made, our meeting management has much to be desired.
- The community survey, answered primarily by parents, indicates a general satisfaction with our School District, given its tight financial constraints. 78% of respondents believe we have a good school system, however 83% also believe the schools are not adequately funded and 86% believe that the quality of our schools has slipped as a result of budgets.
- The survey also indicates a reasonable understanding of the role of the School Committee (at least 65% of respondents), although some specific questions and many of the comments indicate a need to do a better job of educating the community about our roles, particularly as compared to the roles of the administration. Many responders also left the role questions un-answered, and explained they did not know enough to answer the questions.
- Just over half of survey respondents indicate it's not clear how the School Committee spends its money. A review of the comments indicates this is not a question of transparency (data availability) but of *understanding*. We need to do a better job of communicating the budget elements and how they tie to student achievement.
- 88% of Survey respondents have children in Newburyport Schools. There is no significant difference in response between parents and non-parents in any of the opinion statements in question 1. This, however, may be due to the small sample of non-parent responders (31). Future survey strategies need to address this.
- There were comments from about 5% of respondents which indicate a lack of trust and faith in the SC's ability to lead the District to providing better education for our students. There are comments about unfair treatment, about lack of trust

that we'll spend money the way we say we will, that the system still operates based on "who you know," and that we'll be successful in finding a creative and successful path to a better education. We need to understand these issues and take action to correct them.

Respectfully submitted,

Policy Sub-Committee

Nick deKanter- Chair

Gordon Bechtel

Bruce Menin

Kevin Lyons

- **OVERALL GRADES**

1) Please rate the School Committee's accomplishments (what we did) during the 07-08 school year. Please use a letter score (A-F), and explain your grade in the comments box

Accomplishment Grade:

Self- score: **B-**

Community Survey Score: **B-**

Goal by Goal Grade Average **C+**

Cole: I would offer a grade of B+ with the understanding that none of what was accomplished this year could not have happened without that was labored through, during the year before through strong cooperation between the school committee, school administration, teachers, parents, and the community as a whole.

Menin: A grade of B: Strong finish; energized committee functioning, dynamic, productive and transparent budget process (and the unanimous adoption of a mission budget that ended up almost fully funded by the city), strengthened and improved communications with the community, improved community partnerships, progress on all goals.

Bechtel: We accomplished a lot this year, but could've done better in a couple of areas, most notably the administrative study. One thing we need to do better is write more realistic goals. Many of the goals we wrote for this year were too big to ever possibly achieve. I believe in stretch goals, but not impossible goals.

Moak: I think we have accomplished much during this past year. Personally feel that the School Committee has worked together to establish a positive perception from the public. I think we take on too many tasks and set unrealistic objectives. This leads to a perception of not accomplishing as much as we actually have accomplished.

Weaver: We continued to provide transparency and accountability with the budget process. Policy has totally been re-energized and a lot of positive changes are being made to reflect our commitment to student achievement, and to bring our district into compliance. It also should be recognized that this was a year with two members leaving and two new members coming aboard...transitions need to be taken into account.

Hooper: My grade here can be easily explained by looking at my grading of each of the 24 goals. Only one-sixth fully completed; more than one-fifth with no steps towards completion.

deKanter: A C+ (Barely) Although a lot was accomplished, and we actually catalyzed the beginning of a recovery for our schools, too much went undone. Of particular import are the administrative study and better communications to the community at large.

Accomplishment Importance and Grade Ranking by Goal Grouping

	Importance Ranking		Grade Ranking	
Strategic Planning	2.93	1	77.9	3
Curriculum & Student Achievement	2.65	2	72.1	7
Finance and Revenue	2.54	3	73.9	6
Quality Assurance	2.52	4	83.2	1
Communications	2.43	5	77.5	4
Admin	2.43	6	76.4	5
Capital Needs	2.1	7	81.7	2

Community Comments on Accomplishments:

- Not aware of what was actually accomplished
- Good job in doing what you did with funding available.
- I would like to know what you felt YOU accomplished... I like that we have new members of the school committee, and I applaud the efforts of the Superintendent, but I still see us below an acceptable operating line for curriculum, etc.
- The reconfiguration of the schools worked well in its first year
- It's getting better, communications have improved between the committee and the city council, which is critical
- Great transition to the new school set-ups. (big thumbs up to Dave at Molin).
- Alternative funding study was professionally done.
- I think the idea to change up the school build was interesting and has been effective, however 9am start time is a little late and as a parent it is tough to arrange a schedule that gets my child there. An Early morning program that mirrors the after school program would be nice."
- No idea
- I think it took a lot to separate the schools and get them working properly.
- Lots of paper but not a lot of action. Direction is good but our kids need more in the classroom and less in the public forum.
- Chaos
- Overall, I appreciate the intensity of the work you have done. We have made some excellent progress and you have dedicated yourselves to effectively using a limited amount of money while trying to rebuild our capacity
- It's not clear to me as a parent what exactly was done by the School Committee over the year - it seems the school staff took the brunt of the work/responsibility for implementing the school realignment decisions.
- The year focused on stabilization of the system from all the changes
- you've had a lot of challenges and I think you've done an exceptional job.
- a transition year for this committee
- Incomplete/ Perhaps a general list of what the SC thinks they have accomplished would be helpful?

- We moved to Newburyport because of the schools. What a mess they have become in the short time we have been here. I am very disappointed in what I have seen!!
- Don't know
- Improvement since January.
- I feel the S.C. is heading in the right direction.
- Managed to keep schools open and maintain minimum performance requirements
- Wow! Look at what you did with the budget!
- moving in the right direction with regards to making the budget process more transparent, aligning budgets with vision and projecting needs for the future"
- I see positive change and greatly appreciate the opportunity to comment.
- I know you are trying
- I think the School Committee has improved its community communication, developing a forecasting model and seems to have developed a very good working relationship with the Mayor. We have been very impressed with Mayor Moak's recommendation to reduce the city's debt and increase funding to the school system. I believe that the School Committee also realizes and has now been communicating better that if we continue to face budget cuts our school system will continue to decline. Also, we could lose one of the best School Superintendent that Newburyport has ever had. Dr. Lyons has done an outstanding job especially in the last year.
- seem to be doing the best you can, but budget limitations are hurting us
- As a new parent, I am still learning about what you have accomplished
- took much time spent on budget
- Boy I hate to be mean, but you closed the Kelly School and I can't forgive you for that. F for failure to exhaust every single other effort - grants, etc...
- consolidation of the schools was a great accomplishment
- I don't think the new school set up is very effective
- trying hard to keep adequate funding to keep essential programs
- Unable to respond.
- Things seem to be somewhat better this year, than in the past but still a long way to go.
- If one of the goals was to get our schools returned to the same services level, then it was not achieved. Still no language in middle schools and a host of other cuts have been maintained.
- A for finally rearranging the Kelley School and utilizing the Nock's large previously underutilized space.
- I give the accomplishments a C. I am not very happy about moving all of the schools around. I feel that 4th graders are too young to be around middle-schoolers. I also don't like my 1st and 2nd grader on the school bus with the older kids. My children have been told things that they don't understand and were even told by the older kids that Santa isn't real. It has in a way made my kids grow up too fast. I just wish things would go back to the way it was last year.

- It seems like the Committee is still trying to get some major goals accomplished.
- Not sure
- dealing with difficult choices re: budget cuts..."you can't please all the people all the time!"
- Communication and planning is better. more is being done in the open
- You could have done better if your hands weren't tied by budgetary constraints.
- Same old rhetoric, same old mediocrity.
- Graceful and reasonable immediate response to a tough year. Need more innovative thinking for long-term solutions.
- I understand it is a hard job with limitations but I was expecting something unique and terrific.
- It was a good year, the process seemed more streamlined.
- Keeping school safe. Life schools program. Barry is a responsive and communicative principal.
- we need to work on getting money from the state and federal government for our schools
- I feel the school committee is working hard to support the school system.
- the fact that the School Committee refrain cuts this year has been very beneficial for our children. I also believe the transition year went very smooth.
- The school has a wonderful fine arts department
- I was disappointed with the process of reconfiguring our schools but at this point am not completely dissatisfied with the result.
- You accomplished the reconfiguration, although I strongly disagreed with components of it.
- I'm taking a hard line here...until we have the best teachers, curriculum (including strong arts and foreign languages) in addition to a cooperative, collaborative relationship between the schools and the citizens, then much hasn't changed.
- See my earlier note as the specific accomplishments are vague - the distinction between what the committee has accomplished versus the administration, for example. I believe that the current committee (since January) is working well and that Gordy's leadership is a significant advance.
- I attended NBPT school system and graduated in 1999. Since then I have seen the school system on a downhill slide. From closing the Kelly, charging for transportation and athletics, cuts in music and language programs. The lack of upkeep on the current school buildings is very disappointing. My daughter is in the Bresnahan and the school is overcrowded, class sizes are too big. The portable classrooms are terrible...now since the closing of the Kelly with wasted space which should never have closed in the beginning; this city now has to wait for funding for school repairs or an addition to one of the standing buildings. I am very disappointed in the school system.

- Excellent job with the re-structuring of grades and schools. Thank-you for finally closing the Kelly School. This provides equal access to services provided. Thank-you for your hard work.
- Why is RVCS excluded from any of the planning sessions? – it is a public funded school and therefore should be better represented by the school committee.

2. Please rate the School Committee's operations and procedures (how we worked) during the 07-08 school year. Please use a letter score (A-F), and explain your grade and give specific recommendations for improvement in the comments box

Operations and Procedures Grade:

Self- score: **B**

Community Survey Score: **B-**

Cole: I believe that paying attention to the macro issues allows a greater focus on what is most presentable and most important to be understood and communicated than focusing too much time and effort on to-do lists. While it is important not to omit attention and effort to any process, it is even more important not to begin to unbundle a whole operational process, especially one that lives today as a result of paring and reduction. Student achievement, school and student safety, and school operations are vital macro issues which can be translated into a variety of initiatives, strategies, objectives and goals and be kept whole.

Menin: A grade of B+: Focused meetings, clear and articulated progress towards goals and a greater level of accountability, collegial atmosphere, stronger presence in the community at "non-confrontational" events, beginnings of a larger community engagement in SC operations. I would continue the trend of setting up outside advisory groups to the SC and Schools that draw from the larger community; I would continue SC support for more community/school projects (opportunities for the community to work inside the school to offer students access to unique skills and knowledge, as well as more chances for the students to get out into the community to learn).

Bechtel: We improved how we work dramatically this year. Organization, preparation and follow-up to meetings are much better. Tracking of goals is much better. However, there's always room for improvement. One area we need to work on is focused attention and regular tracking of progress on our goals. The meeting assessment approach we used this year was only marginally successful. It often was pushed off the end of the meeting by a full agenda. We need to find a way to keep our goals in the front of everyone's mind for the whole year.

Moak: We need to find a manner in which to make meetings more concise, if we want the public to take a sincere and active interest in our meetings and actions. We need to direct our conversations at meetings to decision making. We should continue to allow time for presentations at meetings, but they need to be spaced around the time necessary to complete SC work in a manner that would allow the public to want to view the meetings. We should return to a work session and an educational session each month.

Weaver: (I can't remark on the fall of 2007) As of 2008, Gordy's "annotated" agendas have been extremely helpful in identifying who/what needs to be done prior to working meetings. There's still a little bit of lag-time in getting materials prior to the meetings, but in general, things have greatly improved. I would continue to suggest that we not put items on the agenda (such as presentations or reports) unless we have those materials ahead of time (not the afternoon of the meeting). There is more accountability with the "action item" list, and it helps remind the community about what we are working on. There has been some issue with folks getting back to one another (not reading emails, simply not responding)...I would advise we discuss this and see what other forms of communication might be more effective.

Hooper: I think we made tremendous progress in the way the meetings are conducted and progress at those meetings. Much progress was made in terms of maintaining a list of action items and keeping track of what we have committed to. I personally this year struggled with sticking to deadlines for deliverables and know that as a committee we need to do better at that.

deKanter: Much improvement in agenda work making for better meetings. Chair has made strides in focusing and limiting discussion (particularly since discussion of athletic fees) and should continue to manage the discussion. We need to improve clarity and consistent interpretation of goals of our subcommittee work. A lot of time was wasted and little was accomplished in communications (post-card project) and Finance (admin study).

Community Survey Comments on Operations and Procedures

- Not familiar enough
- Didn't attend a meeting this year.
- meetings are too long and some committee members talk just to be heard. it discourages people from attending.
- The line item budget process on local cable gives more insight to residents
- I have not been to meetings and do not feel that I am in a position to assess how you do what you do.
- No idea
- Did not attend meeting
- Definitely interested in the kids and like the openness.
- only insiders allowed to really be heard
- Quality of broadcast system is terrible"
- I think this new group works better than the previous committee!
- I don't have familiarity
- procedures could be tightened and have you ever considered the basic etiquette that hiding behind your laptops while someone is speaking appears that you are not listening?

- They go on and on with nonsense from some members, perhaps a more directed meeting with a schedule that is adhered to would be helpful. Even more helpful would be to actually start the meetings on time. Often people are waiting for the chat prior to the meeting to start for well over 15 minutes, which in turn holds up the regularly scheduled meeting. It is disrespectful of other's time
 - don't know
 - Team works hard to really consider each situation carefully before making policy.
 - These do get tedious, as I am sure you all know. Perhaps each member could decide when they need to speak, but maybe not EVERYBODY speak for EVERY issue. Makes for a long meeting.
 - Closed historically significant schools with strong arm tactics lacking an election mandate to do so. Give feeling that job is to do what 'has to be done' vs. 'needs to be done'.
 - Meetings could be FAR MORE EFFICIENT. Certain member WASTE incredible amounts of time bickering.
 - could be more efficient. "
 - things are becoming more transparent and that is a very positive change.
 - "I have attended a number of School Committee meetings and I have found them to be quite tedious and frustrating. It seems as though there is a lot of talk and a number of people more intent on positioning rather than the decision making process. Or, if there are decisions made it take so long to get there because of the positioning of a few. I have been amazed at how long it takes you to make a simple decision.
 - I have been disappointed by the management of the school committee meetings which always go over time on meeting and it appears that no one is taking the role of agenda management seriously. I would recommend that in future meetings:
 - Adequate time is given to each subject and prior to the start of the meeting all agrees that time limits are adequate.
 - That the committee is held to that amount of time for each agenda item. If there is a need to go over, then agenda priorities need to be realigned and time taken from other agenda items.
- The school committee meetings are some of poorest run meetings that I have ever attended (and I have attended hundreds of meetings)."
- Don't know
 - need to prioritize better
 - The process should have been more imaginative and thorough, to exhaust all possibilities before closing the Kelly and lumping the 4th graders into the Middle School environment.
 - I am not completely certain about the open meeting rules - but subcommittees should do the debating and the Monday meetings should take public input but not waste time debating policy at that point
 - putting in the time and effort

- Unable to respond.
- How does a school committee member who does not have children in the school system benefit the families that do?
- It seems that the committee is open with reporters so that a community member who may not have the time to attend meetings can read about everything in the paper.
- I've been to a few meetings and some were allowed to drag on without efficient resolution of issues.
- Can't give you a grade because (shamefully) I am not familiar enough w/ your processes and procedures
- The committee is too rigid in its processes and does not brook any public dissent. Past Committee members who have disagreed have been shunned.
- I have not seen or attended one, so I cannot answer this question.
- Lots of great leadership by Supt, but where is leadership by the school committee? Where are the task groups involving members of the larger community? Where is the outreach to non-ed groups?
- As I mentioned in my previous comments - I have been to meetings that were not informative, audience members direct questions were not answered, and the meetings were long and drawn out.
- don't know enough
- Additional time for public comments would be beneficial.
- No idea.
- Unable to comment.
- Unsure, haven't been to enough to know.
- MUCH better since Kevin Lyons and new school committee members have come on board.
- Seem more organized and focused.
- seems to be improving
- Even though there is a public comment portion of SC meetings, I'm not sure where the role of response (from SC) and discussion comes in.

GOAL BY GOAL ASSESSMENT

Communications

- 1) Ensure that the City Council and School Committee have a common understanding of the district's financial condition and the short- and longer-range budgetary implication.
- Regular dialogue between the analogous Finance Sub-committees
 - Verification that Joint Education SC representatives have the necessary material to accurately relay financial concerns
 - Joint workshop early in the budget process

Priority Score: 2.43 Achievement Score: **3.86**

Cole: Between last years efforts to include override attempt, and school reconfiguration, along with this year's strategic effort with the mission budget, much of this objective has been accomplished. Moreover, a better foundation from which to continue this effort has been established.

Menin: Significant strides in shared dialogue, ongoing communication with CC since beginning of the year. Process adjusted to ensure that format for transfer of information is agreed upon and consistent.

Bechtel: We did have dialogue with the City Council and enjoyed a relatively smooth FY09 budget process, which, I think, was the primary reason behind this goal. We did not, however, accomplish several of the specifics of this goal, including regular dialog between finance subcomms or the joint workshop.

Weaver: 2008 was a continuation of an extremely transparent budget process. Joint Education was given all materials & asked to "update" the Council as a whole. Councilor Earls (since January) has made a point of reading through important budget related items during subcommittee reports at City Council Meetings...this is a huge improvement from last year. As of yet, we haven't scheduled a joint meeting (though it has been attempted), but this year's presentation during the regular working meeting of the City Council (by Dr. Lyons and Deirdre Farrell) was extremely effective in making sure the Council had a common understanding of the FY09 budget.

deKanter: Although a joint workshop was not held, communication channels were implemented to successfully pass budget

2) Inform the community on specific educational issues impacting the district's budget, curriculum and/or student performance.

- Materials distributed throughout the year
- Forum topics

Priority Score: 2.71 Achievement Score: 3.43

Cole: While the community is progressively better informed as more people become engaged, it may be wise to look at what was deployed in the last calendar, or school year, and make a plan to redeploy what worked best and provide some incremental improvement to that.

Menin Consistent; standard set for future budget years.

Bechtel: The mission budget was this year's primary issue. It was fairly well covered by presentations done by Dr. Lyons. The SC did not issue many (maybe zero) materials directly on this subject and did not host a forum.

Weaver: Nothing has been given out on Inclusion as of yet. We did get out plenty of information on the budget itself, but there were no forums during the 07/08 year.

deKanter: Only a position paper on school funding was published. Forum topics were not developed, forums not held.

3) Provide clear and timely materials to ensure that the City Council, parents, and the community at large understand the budget goals, development process and documents that are integral to understanding the financial management of the district.

- Identify budget-related documents distributed to the community.
- Events targeting a diverse constituency
- Events with purpose of sharing ideas across constituencies

Priority Score: 2.57 Achievement Score: 3.43

Cole: Similar to previous comment-begin a process to look at what was deployed in this direction, and what should be added for the next year, while anticipating significant events, such as pending debt exclusion vote, and others.

Menin: The early start this year, and significantly enhanced use of web access for materials was a dramatic improvement in overall communication style and substance.

Bechtel: The SC had no extraordinary effort to the community at large to communicate budget goals or other financial issues.

Normally I would've rated this item and the one above as being very important to achieving our mission. However, it seems the importance of these items vary from year to year. This year, this item was not critical since we did not pursue a ballot question.

Weaver: Every step along the way, going back to December, the budget process (and documentation) has been shared with the community. An area of growth next year would be to reach out and have events that target the more diverse constituency. The events this year were definitely geared towards parents.

Hooper: Short on the Events portion of this goal

deKanter: Events not held

4) Utilize the Community Access Channel to the fullest extent to broadcast (a) school committee meetings, (b) special programs to inform the community on education issues in Newburyport

- Local access program schedule
- Staff assisting in video taping
- Video capability on the web site

Identifying the resources necessary to implement a monthly or bi-monthly cable program to (a) highlight positive aspects of our school district, including the achievements of teachers, students, and administrators, and (b) inform the public of budgetary issues and educational needs in the district. Present a project plan to the full committee for implementation.

Priority Score: 2.0

Achievement Score: 2.29

Cole: While the quality of telecasted school committee meetings has improved, special programs related to the school district and local educational issues have not been deployed

Menin: Community Access cable is just getting organized; plans put forward so far indicate a very aggressive and comprehensive vision for utilization by SC and Admin is intended.

Bechtel: We did a fairly good job of improving the telecasts of our SC meeting. The addition of lapel microphones made a big difference in making the meetings viewable on TV.

Communications made progress on the cable program, but was never able to get it off the ground. I believe it is poised to launch in this coming year. A potential goal for FY09.

Weaver: The quality of the broadcasts has improved, but there still is no "schedule" that we can post on the district web site. The bi-monthly cable program was talked about at length, however to date no tangible progress has been made.

Hooper: Subject was certainly discussed and to the extent we relied on one individual to make this happen, he did devise a "plan". Since it's not likely this individual will be able to accomplish the "plan", we are starting back at square one.

deKanter: Good plans, but not implemented. Need to find a new moderator who can consistently manage the show.

Curriculum and Instruction

1) Complete the learning "circuit" for students of Newburyport Public Schools by implementing a frameworks-aligned consensus curriculum and by developing non-MCAS learning assessments. A frameworks-aligned consensus curriculum clearly describes what our students should be learning, it is based on well-recognized State and Federal frameworks, and it enjoys teacher support because of the consensus-based process used to develop it. Non-MCAS learning assessments quickly and effectively quantify the level of student learning at regular intervals during the learning process. These assessments compliment the MCAS exams to provide information and data that helps to quickly identify and assist students having challenges, and to identify and adjust curricular or instructional hurdles to effective student learning.

- Investigate creative and cost-effective mechanisms for funding the curricular leadership necessary to achieve this goal. Insure that leadership funding is adequate to provide consistent leadership across budget cycles. Document a plan for funding.
- Provide funding for curricular leadership according to the results of the investigation in the FY09 budget.
- Superintendent and his staff develop and document a frameworks-aligned consensus curriculum for all subjects and all grades by June 30, 2008. Insure that the new curriculum includes recommendations and suggestions found in the DOR EQA report and Dr. Lyons' Entry Report.
- Superintendent and his staff complete an investigation into the best approach for establishing non-MCAS learning assessments. Provide a report and plan by June 30, 2008.

Priority Score: 3.0

Achievement Score: 3.0

Cole: While there has been considerable focus and effort in this area, more work needs to be done. Some positions in the FY '09 budget will help with this. Much needs to be done to raise student achievement at all levels. Currently, in terms of MCAS, the school district has scored well for a couple of exceptional cohorts (particular grades of students) when other results around the mean. The short term trend of improved scores is encouraging, and we will learn more, in Sept.

Menin: Administrative leadership and SC monitoring reflect a deep commitment to these items, and a clear understanding of the importance of these tasks to overall mission.

Identifying the need for and requesting funding for Curriculum support positions in math and literacy in 2009 Budget cycle reflects progress.

Bechtel: The District made great progress on curricular efforts this year, producing curriculum maps for all subjects in 6-12, and for ELA in K-5. The monthly ½ day working sessions provided the necessary time to accomplish this important task. In FY10 we need to complete the math curriculum at K-5.

The District established curricular leadership within its own ranks through use of the existing Director of Curriculum working in conjunction with lead teachers at

each building. In addition, the FY09 budget provides for literacy and math “specialists” who will be assisting and directing curriculum development and implementation in FY09.

The District did not achieve much in the area of non-MCAS assessment. Dr. Lyons did investigate and find a technical solution for offering easy and quick assessment on multiple choice exams, and will be trying it out in FY09. However, there was no wide push for improving formative assessment in our classrooms. Why? I believe that this goal was just too big for FY08. We overdid this goal for FY08. In future we should be much more realistic in what can be achieved in a single fiscal year.

Weaver: This was "briefly" touched upon in one of the SIP's, but not to the level at which I would expect.

Hooper: I am not 100% sure the extent to which these things have been done, but I do feel that the administration and staff have been fully aware of the need and are taking steps to establish various assessment tools.

deKanter: This goal tries to wrap up the work of the entire school district into a single paragraph, and as such can only be categorized as a partial completion - and would likely continue to be partially completed for years to come. There were points of significant advancement (such as funding the math and reading curriculum specialists / teacher coaches), areas in which I expected more progress and fell short of expectations (such as completing the aligned curriculum work - still in progress despite a year of monthly half-days) and areas we have not even begun to look at but hopefully will be a part of the strategic plan (moving towards multiple forms of assessment and using formative assessment.)

2) Increase time on learning and availability of challenging courses for all students at Nock Middle School and Newburyport High School. This includes increasing time in class, increasing the breadth of electives, and access to accelerated courses.

- Administration investigate scheduling options at the Nock Middle School and Newburyport High School in an effort to provide more time in class and a wider range of electives. Provide a report to the School Committee.
- Administration explore the idea of adopting the Virtual High School model, as well as any other ways in which current or acquired technology can be used to provide a wider range of electives, especially at class sizes too small to support a class offering in a traditional classroom model. Provide a report to the School Committee.
- Administration develops strategy on how best to encourage and support the entry and success of more middle school and high school students in accelerated courses. Provide a report to the School Committee.

Priority Score: 3.0

Achievement Score: 2.86

Cole Good progress has been made in this area. It remains to be seen how first year efforts will play out, such as this years 8th graders moving into accelerated courses at the high school, in particular, the supports that will be available to them.

Menin: In particular, addressing the schedule at the HS appears to be a significant priority for both the HS and some parents; while I can appreciate the need for a thoughtful investigation, there are compelling educational reasons for expediting the review. The implementation of the Virtual High School is long overdue and very welcome; it is also an indication of the improved working relationship b/t the SC and the Admin that the idea is moving forward after being on hold for several years.

Bechtel: We were not able to fully investigate scheduling options at Nock and NHS. The administration laid much of the groundwork for revising scheduling. Consultants have been retained and the key issues are well understood. Next year will bring real changes in scheduling. Again, another goal that was probably unrealistic for this year, especially at NHS where we have a new first-year principal.

VHS was adopted and its first class will be delivered in FY09. Dr. Lyons was instrumental in achieving this, and in finding funding from the NEF to support the program.

The entrance of more students into advanced courses enjoyed some discussion this year; however, we did not develop any plan or strategy. We did make progress in our math offering in 7th and 8th grades to support the entrance of 9th graders into geometry. Although it is related to participation in advanced courses, this program mainly resulted in simply moving the more advanced students up one year in the Math sequence.

The interesting thing about advanced courses was that the tone of discussion in this topic moved away from a “leveled” approach, which has been used traditionally, and toward a more common but differentiated approach. In other words, towards the idea of having all kids take college prep courses, and have the teacher differentiate instruction within the classroom to challenge the more advanced students.

Weaver: Progress was made at the Middle School level in terms of scheduling...it has just begun at the high school.

Hooper: Virtual H.S. in pilot mode next year. Scheduling to be studied next year

deKanter: Funding was obtained from NEF for VHS; this a major step forward, but a step which should have been taken YEARS ago. (The vision for participation in VHS existed when the High School was re-built, and we decided to include a distance learning lab.) I'm frustrated by the slowness on progress on reviewing the NHS schedule - I feel very little was accomplished here.

3) Establish a mechanism for broadly measuring student achievement in the Newburyport Public School District. The metric should include qualitative and quantitative measures. Policy subcommittee to establish a multi-component academic benchmark for measuring student achievement across all grades and subjects. Components should include both qualitative and quantitative aspects. Provide a report to the School Committee.

Priority Score: 2.71 Achievement Score: 2.71

Cole: Efforts to close the achievement gap between the highest achieving student and the lowest achieving student will do the most to help this objective be accomplished. With only a couple outstanding cohorts, more focus must be provided in this area to get greater across the board, improvement.

Menin: A very good beginning; the Admin has begun to outline a clear process, with benchmarks; more importantly, an over-arching and coherent vision for this very important idea.

Behtel: We made progress but again we were not able to complete a benchmark this year. This is a much tougher goal than it looks. It remains a good goal for FY09. It must be coupled with our strategic planning to measure our progress against our goals described there. Having a clear set of goals and strategies will greatly assist in establishing the benchmark. Perhaps the fact that we didn't have clear goals was the invisible hurdle preventing development of the benchmark.

deKanter: The Policy sub-committee has made some progress on defining benchmark communities and has established MCAS performance as a first benchmark. Data gathering here is in progress. Other benchmarks (from a list of almost fifty) now need to be initiated and added to our benchmark database.

4) Establish a five-year plan for improving student achievement.

Superintendent to provide a five-year plan to the School Committee detailing his recommended programs, materials, and services to improve student achievement. Plan should include all areas impacting student achievement, including class-size guidelines, and re-implementation of World Language programs at all grades. Report due: December 31, 2007.

Superintendent to provide cost estimates to go with the plan as part of the FY09 budget process.

Priority Score: 2.71

Achievement Score: 3.14

Cole: While the failed override in '07 was a setback in terms of this objective, it provided the committee and administration the directive to focus strategically on what we could do with what the city could further appropriate which helped lead us to a more successful '09 budget.

Menin: The process has begun; as with all things undertaken by this Admin, it is thorough and very thoughtful, and broadly inclusive. Engaging the community in the overall strategic planning is critical, and has been very successfully achieved by the Admin. Although a detailed report is yet to be delivered, there has been ongoing dialogue, particularly throughout the budget process, that has helped to keep the community and the SC informed.

Bechtel: The superintendent certainly did provide FY09 cost estimates to go with his academic planning. The superintendent spent most of the fall and winter talking with everyone in the District and significant portions of the community gathering input for his Vision statement. He produced a deep and informative Vision statement early 2008. Using this vision, the superintendent and School Committee vice-chair initiated and completed a large portion of a five year strategic plan. They organized approximately 30 individuals from the schools and community to help in this effort, and have organized their talents to produce a draft of the strategic plan. The plan will be completed over the summer and polished off in the fall of 2008.

deKanter: Long Range planning process is active, but behind proposed schedule.

5) Bring World Language back into the Core Curriculum of the Newburyport Public Schools.

Superintendent to provide an investigation and a long-term plan by June 30, 2008.

Provide funding for expansion of the World Language program in the FY09 budget.

Priority Score: 2.71

Achievement Score: 1.86

Cole: Over time, there has been much slippage in this area. Efforts to gain some traction have been minimal. Losing French as a language is very disappointing.

Menin: An "informal plan" (potential funding being available should the debt exclusion pass) has been discussed; funding for substantive restoration will not be available for the 2009 school year.

Bechtel: Although we did not make any progress directly on World Language, it was never far from anyone's mind. The plan for World Language will arise from the strategic planning effort in fall 2008.

As for funding, that did not happen. As best we know, it is expensive to offer a World Language program. The SC has made it clear that it would not like to offer any program in one year, only to take it away the next year. Funding must be established across many years for the program to have any significant academic impact on our students. This requires planning. This is why I ranked the importance of this item as only a "2." Right now, planning is more important than development of any specific program area.

Weaver: The reason we didn't touch it is because there was no money in the budget to do so.

deKanter: We have not been able to fund this re-introduction and we MUST do so if we expect to meet the needs of students in the 21st Century. Transition year to discontinue French was messy and exacerbated by large classes and lack of schedule flexibility.

6) Review current athletics programming, with an eye towards considering other models of curriculum delivery (such as intramurals), student participation and equity.
Superintendent and staff to provide a report by June 30, 2008

Priority Score: 1.71 Achievement Score: 2.71

Cole: Much work has been done in this area. Some focus should be on student leadership in athletics, captains working together, for example. Peabody high school has a program for their captains, for example. Such a program could help develop a peer led effort, if you will, that goes places that administratively led programs simply can't.

Menin: This is (as it should be) an ongoing process; thankfully initiated both as a process and on the policy development level.

Bechtel: The administration and SC laid the groundwork for an athletics study through discussions in Policy, through establishment of the SC athletic policy, and through establishment of the SC fundraising policy. The study will be undertaken in FY09.

Weaver: The policy changes made the SC were completed, but at the school level, this was only mentioned in SIPs...not any kind of report. I would think that a report on this subject would include survey data from students (in terms of what programs they might be interested in, etc.).

deKanter: Behind schedule. Some progress was made, however - such as working with community advocates to add freshman soccer, using P&L data to define sport fees, and defining an ends policy on Athletics and Physical Education.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

1) Establish and utilize a consistent and repeatable Superintendent evaluation process.

Policy subcommittee to develop and document the Superintendent evaluation process.
Process should include setting of annual Superintendent goals and an annual evaluation, based on these goals.

Policy subcommittee to coordinate establishment of Superintendent goals for FY08

Policy subcommittee to coordinate evaluation of Superintendent.

Evaluation forms to SC for review.

Superintendent completes self-evaluation

SC members complete Superintendent evaluation

SC vice-chair completes collation of SC member responses

Superintendent writes response to collated evaluation, if desired

Superintendent evaluation released to the public

Priority Score: 2.57 Achievement Score: 4.57

Cole: Having been through 4 of these cycles, the process has been getting better, with each.

Menin: This has been a significant accomplishment this year. Previous evals have been melded into a very utile template; the evaluation will be finished within the allotted time frame.

Bechtel: Although evaluations often seem like an unimportant waste of time, a good evaluation can be exactly the opposite. When used to accurately assess a person's performance and to highlight paths to improvement, they become very important and very useful. I think that this year's evaluation achieved these higher goals. All SC members took the necessary time to provide thoughtful analysis, resulting in an evaluation that Dr. Lyons can use to move up his performance as a superintendent and as a person yet another notch.

In addition to helping an individual improve their performance, a good evaluation sends a clear message that an organization cares for the person it is evaluating. This year's evaluation achieved this, too. In these times of limited financial resources, this is one item we can offer our superintendent.

Weaver: The new form is great to work with. It's the setting of the goals that wasn't done that well. I still have to give high marks in terms of completing the evaluation process on time...that was a big improvement over last year's timing.

deKanter: Good process, expected to be complete on time!

2) Establish a consistent process for conducting an annual School Committee evaluation focused primarily on the governance process. Evaluation shall include a mechanism for including SC self-appraisal, as well as a mechanism for "structured stakeholder feedback" on the performance of the School Committee.

- Policy subcommittee to develop and document the School Committee evaluation process. Process should include setting of annual goals and an annual evaluation, based on these goals.
- Policy subcommittee to coordinate an evaluation of the School Committee
- Evaluation forms to SC for review
- Evaluation forms made available for public input (in several formats)
- School Committee completes self-evaluation
- Policy subcommittee completes collation of evaluation materials
- School Committee evaluation released to the public

Priority Score: 2.14

Achievement Score: 3.71

Cole: As a committee we are often focused on contemporary issues and situations that chronically appear. As a result, it would be helpful to build in periodic review of our progress on macro goals, not just status updates of to-do lists, but quarterly reviews of what we have accomplished or not, to include discussion of a certain goal that might need to change due to certain environmental factors such as state of federal legislation regarding new requirements, revenue gain or loss, etc.

Menin: Significant progress has been made. The form and format have been redesigned to reflect a more dynamic understanding of SC roles; the eval is much more closely wedded to goals, and a genuine attempt has been made to reach out to the community for feedback.

Bechtel: An evaluation is critical and the SC got it done this year. Not only did it complete a self-eval, the SC also implemented a community evaluation of the SC in the form of a survey. This is a huge step forward, and will help dramatically in the FY09 goal setting process.

Weaver: The form is great; again, the formulation of the goals is an area that could be improved

deKanter: Implemented for first time - need to learn from this experience

3) Establish a comprehensive Benchmark for measuring and tracking the overall quality of the Newburyport School District. Benchmark to include metrics on Resources for Education, Student Health, Climate, and Student Achievement as described in the Curriculum and Student Achievement section of these goals.

Policy subcommittee to provide a Benchmark for the district by 30 Jun 2007.

Priority Score: 2.83 Achievement Score: 3.17

Cole: Such an effort would entail defining criteria and critical indicators which, to my knowledge, do not exist. If it does exist it should be shared with all committee members so that we can better understand and articulate the metrics that we are comparing ourselves with other selected school districts. Consequently, if all don't know them, we may not all agree with them, and at least this would merit some further public discussion. Similarly, these metrics, or critical indicators may need to change or be rotated to allow more data, and more thorough benchmarking.

Menin: This process has been underway for the better part of a year; our understanding of the information we are seeking has evolved, resulting in changes to the form and approach. At this point, all indications are that the resulting product will have great utility in helping the SC and community to implement a vision that is grounded in both best practices and in the unique nature of the resources and challenges we face in Newburyport.

Bechtel: We made progress but again we were not able to complete a benchmark this year. This is a much tougher goal than it looks. It remains a good goal for FY09. It must be coupled with our strategic planning to measure our progress against our goals described there. Having a clear set of goals and strategies will greatly assist in establishing the benchmark. Perhaps the fact that we didn't have clear goals was the invisible hurdle preventing development of the benchmark.

Weaver: This is progressing nicely but work still remains to complete the project

deKanter: The Policy sub-committee has made some progress on defining benchmark communities and has established MCAS performance as a first benchmark. Data gathering here is in progress. Other benchmarks (from a list of almost fifty) now need to be initiated and added to our benchmark database.

ADMINISTRATION

1) Convene an Ad Hoc Task Force, with invited seats for members of the City Council, School Committee, and the outside community to review our Administrative structure. After a thorough review Dr. Lyon's Entry Plan and the report from the DOR Department of Education Quality Assurance, the task force should consider potential efficiencies, bottlenecks in the workflow, and the workload of individuals in their respective administrative functions. Prioritize specific subtasks such that there is potential for some recommendations to impact the 2009 budget.

Priority Score: 2.29

Achievement Score: 2.43

Menin: While a sincere effort has been made to look honestly and creatively at this issue, my personal opinion is that the scope of the review could have been wider- a more thorough look at how administrative tasks are organized across the district, throughout the schools themselves, and not just central office. Such a review would have finally addressed longstanding community concerns regarding the amount of administrative infrastructure at all levels in the schools.

Bechtel: The administrative task force has made some progress this year, but has not completed its full mission. This is a goal for FY09. It could do with more focus and attention to organize the effort and drive towards completion.

Weaver: No formal comparisons/evaluations have been shown to date (6/11).

deKanter: Internal task definition will be complete by the end of the year. Debating how to benchmark versus other communities.

2) When approving School Improvement Plans (SIP), Ensure that SIPs include student achievement goals that are specific, measurable, and based on assessment data generated from multiple sources (based on available assessment data), not just summative reports of MCAS test results.

- Improved alignment between curriculum and state frameworks
- Increase in the implementation of program and instructional changes to improve student achievement

Priority Score: 2.57 Achievement Score: 3.86

Menin: There has been substantive improvement in the SIPs, especially in the rigor and comprehensiveness of the plans. There is a clear focus on student achievement, and aligning instruction and resources to that end. This will be an ongoing growth area, and will embody curriculum mapping, the development of alternative assessment tools; all of which have been articulated and begun.

Bechtel: The FY09 SIPs are all very achievement oriented, and clearly aligned with Dr. Lyons' three main thrusts: curriculum, literacy, and inclusion. They are also in a very useful and straightforward format this year.

Weaver: This was written into the SIPs

deKanter: SIPs generally were aligned to student achievement, but were weak on defining the "assessment data generated from multiple sources.

FINANCE & REVENUE

- 1) Utilize, and modify as needed, the expense forecasting model/tool for use by the SC in preparing budgets and planning fiscal expenditures;
- Set up a community forum before the budget process begins to explain the model to the rest of the community
 - Offer to do an orientation to the model for any interested City Councilors

Priority Score: 2.14 Achievement Score: 2.57

Cole: It appears that strategic diligence, based on recent budget history and current revenue availability and forecast is a more effective route than the proposed forecasting model. While the model may be maintained so that it is available for input, efforts like the mayor's task force and the product of that report would seem to be a tool with more utility, right now. The report represents a collaborative municipal effort which may be most beneficial for the next year, especially.

Menin: The model has been developed, and is still in "beta" mode. It has begun to have a significant impact on planning for next year and the future. Dialogue with the community and the City Council has been initiated; and a clear process for moving forward has been articulated.

Bechtel: The tool reached the first level of completion but still requires verification with the FY09 budget in order to insure it's viability for predicting costs of future years. This will largely be completed during the summer of 2008.

Regarding orientation and explanation to the community and the CC, this is probably best done as part of the strategic planning process. The model is a tool for assisting and improving the strategic plan. It's probably best to describe it in that context.

Weaver: A brief explanation was given, but nothing was "demonstrated" as of yet. When there is time, it would be great to sit down with the City Councilors and give them a demonstration.

deKanter: Not used yet.

2) Implement approved recommendations of the Revenue Task Force to ensure that the FY09 budget adequately address student achievement.

Utilize the recommendations of the report to activate and create an engaged and informed community in the process of adequately funding schools

Continue to consider a broad range of options for increasing funding that will support and supplement student achievement.

Priority Score: 2.71 Achievement Score: 3.0

Cole: A task force subcommittee should be assembled to ensure that as many of their approved recommendations are implemented or otherwise utilized.

Menin: To the extent possible, the SC has addressed and begun to implement relevant findings from the Task Force report.

Bechtel: The School Committee has officially endorsed the RTF plan as part of its position statement on funding. It has also advocated in person and on paper to our legislators for increased funding. Unfortunately many of the recommendations made in the report are not items the SC can accomplish. Many of them (ballot questions, fees, etc.) are only implementable by the City. The City is moving forward with a ballot question, with full support from the School Committee.

One area that the SC could work on in FY09 is to increase the awareness and support for the Educational Fund account. This is an account to which citizens can make donations. These go to general use in the school budget, according to our standard budget process.

Weaver: While there were recommendations made from the RTF, the SC (as well as the City) has not implemented anything to date.

deKanter: Mayor's plan addresses this item; also position paper to inform community of our status. School Committee should quantify and prioritize recommendations that fall within its purview (as opposed to City initiatives).

- 3) Negotiate a contract with the NTA that holds down costs and retains flexibility
- Use a framework of enhanced student achievement as a framework for negotiating a contract
 - Share all fiscal data collaboratively with NTA

Priority Score: 2.86 Achievement Score: 2.86

Menin: The SC initiated negotiations with the NTA in a timely fashion, with the goals, intentions, and process as articulated. It does not appear that the negotiations will conclude by June 30th.

Bechtel: In progress.

deKanter: In progress

4) Review budget development, format, time-table and deliberation process annually. Modify as needed to improve transparency and accessibility for the community.

- Set aside a Forum in late Spring, early Summer 2008 to meet with Community to assess the efficacy of the new process, looking to ensure that it integrated community input (SIP) and that it reflected identified student achievement strengths and challenges

Priority Score: 2.43 Achievement Score: 3.14

Cole: High marks on the effort for this fiscal year.

Menin: The annual budget process is one of the best examples of the principle of continuous improvement embraced by the schools. This year, by starting early, we were able to keep an ongoing dialogue with community and also keep the CC informed in "real time"; the net effect has been a decrease in tension, and deepening of trust, a community that understands that the process evolves and that it can shift dramatically on the basis of new information.

Bechtel: The SC did no formal review of the budget process. Informally, however, there have been many comments that the budget process went well this year. It's hard to tell whether this is because the process really was better or because the financial climate wasn't as dire this year. Probably, it's a little of both.

Weaver: Other than the SC survey, there's been no forum for folks to assess the efficacy of the new process.

deKanter: Modified schedule and approach to budgeting to reinforce student achievement.

CAPITAL NEEDS

1) Evaluate on an annual basis the capital needs of the District for recommendation to the Mayor for funding

Priority Score: 2.29

Achievement Score: 4.29

2) Continue to work with the MSBA on the Statement of Interest (SOI) for the Nock Middle School

Priority Score: 2.14 Achievement Score: 4.29

Menin: In spite of the profound frustration inherent in this process, the School Admin and the SC are in full accord and in perfect sync with the timeframe demands.

Bechtel: The District did everything it could to work with the MSBA. The MSBA, in contrast, was apparently swamped with an unplanned and unprecedented amount of work. They were very unresponsive, especially in the latter half of the year, following their initial evaluation of our SOIs.

Weaver: Didn't have to re-apply

deKanter: Waiting for progress on the "hold" status from the MSBA

- 3) Create a taskforce to analyze, evaluate and explore the Long Term Building vision of the district, particularly in light of the new elementary and middle school reconfigurations.

Priority Score: 1.86 Achievement Score: 2.43

Bechtel: The new building and capital subcomm took up this task and began formation of this vision. Their work will continue next year. Focus and organization will be the key to completing this task.

Weaver: We've started on developing a survey, but task force hasn't been talked about in 2008

STRATEGIC PLANNING

1) Begin a *superintendent-led*, community-based strategic planning process to develop a new strategic plan effective September 2008. Each year, the strategic plan will be reviewed and adjusted as necessary to provide input to the next years planning cycle.

Priority Score: 3.0 Achievement Score: 4.0

Cole: I am optimistic that the project will be completed this year.

Menin: A legitimate process has begun, and broadly engages the larger community.

Bechtel: The superintendent certainly did provide FY09 cost estimates to go with his academic planning. The superintendent spent most of the fall and winter talking with everyone in the District and significant portions of the community gathering input for his Vision statement. He produced a deep and informative Vision statement early 2008. Using this vision, the superintendent and School Committee vice-chair initiated and completed a large portion of a five year strategic plan. They organized approximately 30 individuals from the schools and community to help in this effort, and have organized their talents to produce a draft of the strategic plan. The plan will be completed over the summer and polished off in the fall of 2008.

Weaver: Excellent progress has been made.

deKanter: To be completed by fall of 2008

2) Ensure alignment of all district planning documents with the Strategic Plan, including School Improvement Plans, and the District Improvement Plan, with primary goals focusing on student achievement.

Priority Score: 2.86 Achievement Score: 2.57

Cole: It is important to realize that when going from an active strategic planning process where opinions are voiced, that you lose some of that when you pare the information down into documents like SIPs AND DIP. Regular, in person reviews of the strategic plan are a must.

Menin: Alignment is in progress.

Bechtel: This is a goal for FY09, once the strategic plan is complete.

Weaver: Can't do this until the SP is complete.

deKanter: NA. No strategic plan yet

COMMUNITY SURVEY DATA AND ANALYSIS

How do you feel about Newburyport Public Schools? Please rate these statements according to how they represent your thinking; if you have no basis for answering a question, please leave it blank.				
Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Newburyport has a good school system	6 2%	49 19%	178 70%	21 8%
In general, I am not aware of what is going on in our schools	86 33%	134 52%	31 12%	6 2%
Newburyport Public Schools are adequately funded	128 50%	84 33%	37 14%	7 3%
One of the roles of the School Committee is to fire underperforming teachers	54 23%	97 42%	52 22%	30 13%
The School Committee works well with the Mayor and the City Council	11 5%	60 27%	147 66%	6 3%
Our schools are lagging behind other districts	7 3%	84 34%	114 46%	41 17%
It is clear how our schools are spending their money	33 13%	96 39%	105 42%	15 6%
School Committee meetings offer a good forum for community members to voice their points of view	17 8%	52 23%	144 64%	12 5%
The School Committee decides which math program we should be following in the Middle School	45 23%	112 58%	36 19%	1 1%
The quality of our schools has slipped as a result of budget limitations	11 4%	24 10%	85 34%	131 52%
The School Committee ensures the School Department uses its available resources effectively	25 11%	64 29%	119 54%	12 5%
I understand the differences in the roles of the School Committee and the Superintendent	3 1%	66 28%	122 52%	45 19%
The School Committee listens and responds to the concerns of the community	23 10%	45 20%	151 66%	10 4%
It is fair to ask parents to pay fees for transportation or athletic participation	35 14%	53 21%	134 53%	30 12%

Please check any of the following that apply to you over the past school year:		
Attended a school concert	170	66%
Read about the schools in the Daily News	243	94%
Watched a School Committee meeting on the local cable channel	117	45%
Visited a school	245	95%
Took an Adult Education course in the Newburyport Public Schools	18	7%
Volunteered in the schools	166	64%
Attended a school athletic event	150	58%
Attended a school play	135	52%
Read about the schools in the Newburyport Current	204	79%
Visited the district website	194	75%
Visited a school website	231	89%
Watched a City Council meeting on the local cable channel	89	34%
Made a contribution to our schools through the NEF or NEBC	106	41%
Attended a School Committee meeting	79	31%
Received e-mails as member of a school listserv	204	79%
Called the district office for information	77	30%
Spoke to a School Committee member about my concerns	76	29%
Attended a PTO meeting	91	35%
Tell us about yourself by checking all of the following that apply to you:		
NHS graduate	34	13%
Parent of children in the Newburyport Public Schools	225	88%
Parent of children who graduated from NHS or are no longer in our schools	43	17%
Parent of children yet to enter our schools	38	15%
I chose to move to Newburyport in part because of the reputation of its schools	64	25%
My children attend private or parochial schools	18	7%
My children graduated from another school system	10	4%
I am a Newburyport resident with no direct connection to the schools	5	2%

Communications:

Grade **B-**

Comments:

- There is a huge lack of communication from the Bresnahan
- Improved
- Again, appears to be very good
- Unable to comment on these items for lack of information -- likely my own fault but it does seem there should be a specific newsletter issued by the school committee.
- More short bits of information needs to get out...with the option for residents to learn more should they choose"
- it's getting better
- Better as a whole, than in past years
- I am able to follow what is happening in the schools through the media form that is most affective for me.
- none that I am aware of or I would have an idea on how to answer the above questions
- Very good
- average to poor
- the relationship with the City Council is dysfunctional and needs to be repaired.
- I feel that the school committee only communicates with the residents when they want something. I also feel that the school's use of the reverse 911 system is used for school department gain (i.e. notification of meetings for potential overrides and budgets)
- I would recommend that you start a "column" like the one the Daily News offers for Gardening. Given the significance of the school system, a weekly column would be a great, (free!) communication tool.
- Better than ever before and there appears to be a sincere effort to improve in this area.
- don't know
- I don't really see communications from the school committee. This was the first one in a long time.
- I like that you go to PTO meetings, and I see you at all the student events, I think it's great.
- Nice articles in the paper regarding budget material.
- always room for improvement.
- These surveys are a good start.
- Vastly improved over the last year. I have noticed much more school information in The Daily News and The Current.
- adequate to those who care - unknown how to reach those taxpayers w/out children

- I don't go to the meetings, but feel the information is offered openly and disseminated to the public via the Daily News. Of course, a Superintendents Bulletin would be nice, as Triton puts out.
- could be better The newspaper is horrible at this point - it is hard to get people to any meeting not involving sports
- very transparent,
- cable, newspaper , website - open meetings"
- What I know is what I read in the paper.
- In terms of the override and most other communication, I think the School Committee does an effective job of making information available to the public. I think that the MA (and perhaps the entire US) public education system is broken.
- A great newsletters from the committee and superintendent and news coverage in the paper though uncertain if the information in the paper was accurate.
- The School Committee could do a much better job of explaining concrete reasons for existing policies and providing evidence of their effectiveness, etc., rather than just relying on traditional practices, e.g., we do x, because we have always done x, or we believe x is best
- getting better
- not sure
- excellent!
- Getting better
- I don't know what more you could do except come over for dinner.
- There is no communication with the community. The Daily News coverage is atrocious, the Current coverage fawning.
- Insufficient engagement with nonparent community.
- As mentioned in question #6. Long meetings with out direction or lack of follow up. Pre-conceived outcome to meetings.
- Good job.
- You work quite well with the mayor.
- still feels a bit "behind closed doors".
- B for the web site based communication and D for the pro-active general communications- progress is being made but more is needed.

Responsiveness to the Community:

Grade **B-**

Comments:

- Appears to be very good.
- I feel that the school is trying their best to find out what the community wants and put it in place.
- Very good
- puts on a happy face
- I understand more than most what is going on, but to those with only a peripheral view of the schools, responses seem dismissive at times.
- I have had direct conversations with School Committee members (particularly the newest ones) and have found them to be open and responsive.
- Always responsive when in agreement, less responsive on issues the committee does not agree with.
- Awful. A lot of great ideas have been ignored. I also expect nothing to come out of this survey! It is just something that is required.
- Haven't seen any
- I think you ALL are great responders to ALL of our concerns. THANK YOU!
- Closed Kelley School. Started process as forgone conclusion without really looking for what community wanted or other alternatives. Committee should make it clear that they and Dr. Lyon work for the people. Committee appears to work for Dr. Lyon...who voted for him???
- Stephanie Weaver and Nick DeKanter bring SO MUCH TO THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE membership!
- you're really trying, keep it up
- I have more of a sense that the Committee really cares about the community opinion and is at least listening.
- I can't really comment on this one.
- you listen to the community but can't always follow through
- I only fault you in failing to campaign the thousands of residents without children in the school, and get them to pass the override. It was a valiant effort however, and a stiff slope to climb.
- Anyone who volunteers deserves respect - I applaud those on the committee
- trying... need to listen to some of the softer voices - loud voices seem to be heard
- Unable to respond.
- I know that many parents have been heavily involved with school committee members and feel free to share ideas.
- The SC seems to respond best to the segments of the community that are already in accord with them.
- I think they're sensitive to voiced concerns. But the challenge is to get the community responsive to the schools needs.
- Getting better

- Great! If anyone says otherwise they aren't listening (probably Kelly people - they still need to get over it)
- The committee is responsive only to the same people (e.g., [REDACTED]) the same "involved" parents who attend meetings and serve as an echo chamber for the committee.
- Insufficient engagement with nonparent community.
- little direction, a feeling of excluding, a feeling of a hidden agenda from committee members rather than a non-judgmental approach to do what is best for the community.
- I was glad to finally see the Kelley school close. This needed to be done years ago."
- As opposed to the last few years, the committee seemed more organized and focused on the issue at hand.
- Good job.
- You seem to work well with the community and involve the students.
- answer email communications
- The system is responsive to the community, but I question whether you truly listen to what is being asked of you.
- Mixed--person to person.
- I do believe that there is significant education required on an ongoing basis. In terms of strategy, I would not expect the average person to go to a web site to find out what you have done with an issue.
- I think this school committee is particularly open to change and responsiveness – after the restrictions apply. Thank-you so much for your dedication.

Fiscal Management:

Grade **e+**

Comments:

- Job well done.
- given what was budgeted the students did not suffer directly
- getting everything to a
- These are tough times and schools are impacted. Sped cost continues to climb. We need to be creative with schedules and ideas to help lessen the impact on our kids."
- I am not knowledgeable enough to know how the money was spent.
- I have no basis to comment. I know you are trying
- over half the city budget and most contractual fees. Little for maintenance. DO NOT NEED NEW SCHOOL
- lacking
- I believe most of our school problems come from budgetary issues. The community overall needs to agree on the value of a solid school system.
- I feel like the schools are handicapped by unfair special ed. Funding requirements.
- You do the best you can with what you have - but what about trying to get more grants for specific programs?
- It's my understanding that the school committee passed an unbalanced budget for the upcoming fiscal year. If so, I consider this irresponsible.
- I was happy to see the results of this budget process and the strategic re-building of the school system. I believe that Dr. Lyons has show exceptional leadership and the School Committee has shown good judgment in supporting this.
- my impression is that the SC does its best to manage spending efficiently
- Not as good as it could be. There is a strong unwillingness to do things any differently with \$ than we have as a community for the last 40 years. Times have changed, finances have changed and it is time the school committee recognizes this and respects it. Not everyone in this community can afford more and yet that does NOT mean they do not support education. Perhaps they are financially supporting as best as they can. Respect for that would go a long way with the community."
- An absolute mess!
- don't know
- I like the mission budget. Concern about where we will be in year 2009-2010!!!
- I think you made a tremendous leap from last year. It is transparent and realistic.
- A lot of items outside of board control at city and state level. In general a disaster in terms of degradation to schools that is costing residents millions in reduced property value, but not necessarily committees fault.
- I know we are doing the best we can with what little we have...we need more funding in order to get a better grade

- I realize how difficult it is but we need more money for the schools. I can't comment with any knowledge re your efforts at cutting waste but I want to see the schools restore all programs that had been previously cut and more toward improving those already in place.
- School Committee and District and Mayor and City Council are moving in the right direction and at an acceptable pace given the budget constraints. Keep on working!
- I realize that the School Committee is restricted in some ways. I feel they listen but cant often satisfy people – mostly because of budget constraints.
- Get rid of over-paid overseers and go back to basics
- The School Committee seems to have made a lot of progress in this area with the forecasting system that was developed to do school projections.
- Good, again, given budget constraints
- seems to be per recommendation of Asst Supt
- C for showing improvement - finding the dollars to restore some of the programs cut last year. Now bring back Spanish in the middle school please.
- priorities seem to be correct
- It is interesting how money is just "found" to fund things
- not bad... but could be a little better
- Not enough information to respond. My general sense is that schools continue to be less of a priority than they should be in the life of the city. For instance, I believe that before spending millions of dollars on a senior center, our schools should have the money they need to assure stability on the job for our teachers. Another area that needs stable staff is school counseling, the arts and foreign languages.
- I think you have tried to keep the budget in-line. Just not sure what you can do with costs spiraling out of control.
- Approving a mission budget rather that status quo was a relief
- I don't think the problems in funding our schools were created by the school committee, at least not for the past couple of years.
- continuing to improve
- need to better manage teacher and union contracts
- Found more resources. that is good
- The Kelly people need to get over it.
- Excellent short-term; please step up efforts for long-term by looking for new ways to get things done.
- IF BUDGET CUTS NO ONE SHOULD GET RAISES"
- Until we see a line by line budget in place we will never really know where all the budget goes.
- Kids are getting less and less. As a former student, we had much more available to us. Large numbers of parents should not have to be paying for tutors as the kids don't understand material presented in class.
- Good job.
- I think that the School Committee is doing a pretty good job on the whole.
- I don't understand enough about the budget to comment.

- B+ for squeezing water from a stone. C- for finding creative innovative ways to fund the school, including the process it takes to change people's minds about the necessity of using tax revenues to build strong schools.

COMMUNITY SURVEY GENERAL COMMENTS

- The quality of the city's school system is middling, at best. The school committee understandably spends a lot of time with finance, capital, administrative and other oversight issues. But it has not successfully set a standard for excellence in college preparatory education. We may compare favorably to the "region," but we are no where near the top or even competitive with the state's top tier schools (Brookline, Newton, etc. etc.) I was told yesterday by someone whose child graduated from the high school this year that there was one (yes, only one) senior from this year's graduating class admitted to an Ivy League school. If this is true, it's nothing to brag about (as was reportedly done at the graduation ceremony). I'm not a snob. I did not go to an Ivy League school myself. Wasn't smart enough and didn't work hard enough. However, it does seem to me that if the Newburyport School system was truly excellent, then more of our very best students would be admitted to more of the very best colleges. There's no list (as far as I've been able to find) of what schools our graduating students have been admitted to. Why not? Could it be that the list is really nothing to brag about? I'm sure that Newburyport's brightest students are as innately bright and motivated as those enrolled in the top tier systems. But from K to 12, they simply haven't been prepared to be truly competitive. I was told when my eldest child was entering the high school that academic excellence was not the goal; molding well rounded citizens was. If true, that's a feel-good cop out. We opted out of the Newburyport school system.
- I am concerned about continued timidity towards increasing fees. we are sacrificing core programs to subsidize non-mandated transportation of students.
- I did not do the grading as I don't feel I have enough information to be fair.
- NHS seems weak academically compared to other schools in the area and so many residents have to send their kids to private schools in hopes of getting them into good colleges.
- I would like an enrichment program
- To the extent the SC can help alleviate the perception -- or the reality -- that this school system still operates based on who you know, pulling strings, and getting what you want by making noise (squeaky wheel issue), and can work towards making things more transparent and fair, that will go a long way towards getting more parents to trust the system and to feel good about being a part of it.
Example: at kindergarten orientation, it was disclosed that, although the half day registration forms did not have a spot for preference (AM or PM), "some people have expressed a preference and we have tried to honor that." This caused an audible gasp among some attendees. The reality may be that all of those stated preferences were for PM kindergarten, and since that is the less popular session, anyone who WANTS PM kindergarten will get it, but that clarification was not made (if that even is the case) and so it just adds to the general feeling that certain families are granted special treatment and there are unwritten rules and policies in place that only some folks are privy to. Second example: the process for placement in specialized classes, whether AP/Honors at the high school, or the multi-age classes. Again, the perception, if not the reality, is that folks who are

- willing to pull strings and/or make noise will get their children placed in these classes.
- The School Committee should lead the community in rejecting MCAS as an assessment tool. Our schools are suffering due to budget constraints and yet we continue to use this expensive flawed tool to measure teacher performance, and allow the tool to guide our narrow, uninspired curriculum. Usher MCAS out along with the No Child Left Behind fiasco!
 - Dr Lyons was a major positive addition to the team and the Committee should support his ideas 100%
 - response to and support of children with needs for special education are less than desirable.
 - things are moving in the right direction - we just need more money
 - you have done an excellent job informing the community and are a very dedicated determined bunch who I appreciate very much
 - "The School Committee seems to be an ineffective group.
 - Please make note that we moved to Newburyport 11 years ago when the school did have a good reputation. This is no longer true."
 - I hope this survey is useful rather than just a requirement. I would have never really known much about any of this had you not made me aware through this survey that I have no idea about anything that you actually do (or are supposed to do). I suppose it would be different if I had attended a meeting, but I am not informed about the schedule of meetings or the issues to be discussed, so seeking this out seems remote
 - I believe there is a popular perception in the community that increased funding for the schools does not translate well into a better education for the kids; call it a lack of trust if you will. I believe that part of this is fostered by the perception that teachers enjoy, via their union, excessive health benefits that most in the community do not enjoy, and that union work rules in general. i.e. the inability to replace ineffective teachers, etc., make running an efficient school system difficult to impossible. If there were a way to demonstrate to taxpayers that a majority if not all of the extra money they are being asked to come up with to fund the schools is actually translating into better schools, and not just going towards the 15% or more annual health benefits increase, or going to support teachers who perhaps aren't doing a good job, that would be huge in winning over the public. The hard reality of course is that those health costs do go up and must be paid for, and most reasonable people don't begrudge teachers their health benefits. However, I am referring to the perception, not necessarily the reality, of the situation.
 - I am extremely worried that our children are not receiving a foreign language until high school. It put the Newburyport children at an extreme disadvantage. I hope the committee will be able to try to portion the meager funds the school does get to allow languages back into the school system
 - You must find a means to reinstate foreign language, more electives in the HS and more opportunities for civic engagement/service learning and internships.
 - I think it's a difficult task you all undertake, and I'm thankful you do it - but I think more needs to be done to reach out to the constituencies which don't have

kids in the schools to emphasize the importance of good schools to maintain a high quality of life in our community. I cringe every time I see a letter in the paper about the "one room schoolhouse being good enough" in this age of global information and internet technology! Yikes. We are preparing our kids for jobs at McDonald's with that kind of thinking!! More work to be done there.

- Like any business - there are some the school department has some very good people, and some very bad ones too. But it appears that not even the school committee has the authority to rid the system of bad employees which hurts the "school experience" for the students/future taxpayers
- It seems that it would be helpful to understand the role and responsibilities of the school committee vs. the responsibilities of the administration. Thank you.
- If one doesn't attend school committee meetings then there is no way to know what you do.....what about posting meeting summaries on a list serve?
- I think having the meeting live on TV is great. I would publicize that more.
- Thank you all for your service; this is a hard job that is so important to all of our children. Thank you for stepping up to fight for them. Even when we don't all agree, I know you have their best interests at heart and really, that is all we can ask for. Again, Thanks!
- "We moved here largely for the Newburyport quality of schools. We are terribly disappointed with the community in general that they have failed to improve, and in fact, allowed schools to degrade. The community lacked the creativity to do anything but retreat into the trenches and bury their heads hoping the 'budget issues' would fix themselves.
- In areas we are familiar with where the schools were a priority, property values have maintained positive growth and tax revenues increased...it's too bad Newburyport doesn't get that making poor decisions saving the city money costs residents much more and decreases city revenue.
- Largely because of the degradation in the quality of the schools in our short 5 years here, we are moving. "
- This may be directed more towards Dr. Lyons, but I encourage that the teachers at the Middle School be looked at closely. For the most part there are fantastic dedicated teachers that truly care about the students and inspire students to love learning, but to tell you the truth there are some that seem to have little interest in what the students learn. They seem angry and resentful of having to teach the children and give the impression that teaching is a burden and they are not interested in the success of the students, but interested in just moving them along.
- we have not had direct interaction w/ the school committee-just one pto mtg & convos w/ the superintendant-
- In a very interesting conversation I had with some teachers, I asked why the music program, particularly at the High School is suffering. I was told that until administrations are as invested in music as they are in sports things will never change. Another blow for the non-sports kids. Please take some time to review where the music and band kids fall on the pecking order. Their uniforms are 20 years old!!! They are required to be in marching band to play an orchestral instrument, which most pay for private lessons. Is the marching band just more support for the Football team?? It leaves the kids with a little bit of a used taste in

their mouths. They were not even represented in the year book this year!! Sort of says it all. Also, why is Ipswich capable of running a fabulous music program with limited funds and NO marching band??? Is it perhaps that their community values and understands the music, brain connection? Have we allowed the sports culture in NBPT to completely rule our choices? School committee-please address that!!!!

- Hang in there.
- Take out programs for children who are excelling or struggling in a subject. Math superstars - a group that might leave the group for an hour, one day a week to work on tougher material would be a great way to boost your math scores, and engage those talented kids who might not be acing another subject.
- The school committee and the school department need to challenge themselves more - fiscally and organizationally. There seems to be some smart people engaged, but the answer can't continue to be status quo. Perception is reality. Start with changing the perception that you are ineffective financial stewards and afraid to make the difficult organizational changes...
- Thanks for asking.
- "I think the teachers at the high school are doing an amazing job. My daughter is getting a very good education in her core academic classes. She is being challenged and supported. I would say much the same regarding the athletics programs. I would like to see more attention paid to the arts and world languages. Programs need to be stronger."
- It is curious that we had such a huge budget deficit last year and not so much this year. Although I am thrilled, it is not clear to me how this happened so it makes me question why the talk of the huge budget deficit last year.
- Thank you for all your hard work, I know it's not an easy job!
- "Number 1- Many people have switched to satellite TV and can no longer receive cable access. How can you address those people who want to watch meetings?"
- Please take a hard look at the competence of the weaker 7th grade science and LA teachers. I believe that there are two good ones and two horrible ones. I do not think that the weaker ones should be allowed to teach our children. I am sure that you know which ones I am talking about. Also please re-evaluate the 6th grade science and math teachers. Please do our kids a favor and do not let this continue. I know that a private school would not let this happen. Thank you.
- Thanks to all on the school committee
- "I need to be more attentive to the School Committee & City Council to really know what's going on. I do find, when I attend meetings or try to keep up, the information, particularly about the budget, is overwhelming. There seems to be this dark, doomsday cloud over everything all the time.
- The funding/budget problems Newburyport faces are not unique; we need to band together w/ other communities to work on the state level and with the teachers union in order to deal w/ the challenges of providing world-class education.
- School funding will get worse not better in the future. Teacher contracts need to reflect this reality. Union healthcare should be more in line with private companies. Retirement plans should be eliminated and replaced with 401K's.

- The resources for teachers are not enough. Some of the teachers are not very good about class room management or education issue. Newburyport does not have a good phonics program. Like all schools lots of funds are spent on disabled students but similar amounts need to be spent on students who do not qualify for IEP, i.e. some students have mild disabilities while others are gifted. Society needs to support all of our students.
- School committee needs to be more proactive about implementing the tools our children need to succeed in an uber competitive academic world; such as ensuring more AP courses; Chemistry AND Physics not either/or; keeping more than TWO languages, the world is becoming more global not less; having guidance beefed up so freshmen and sophomores are having one on one meetings to plan their college path, and really analyzing how their courses will impact their potential college aspirations.
- I have little faith in the system's ability to provide more than a baseline education to my children. Apparently, several committee members agree, given the number who send their children to private schools rather than to Newburyport's. This is hypocrisy to the highest degree, and serves only to undermine members' standing in the community when they try to shame us into giving them more money.
- We NEED the foreign language programs back in the schools!!!
- Very pleased
- "I don't want to just fire off complains and concerns. I have made suggestions at meetings where and to offices where I have been consoled and left to my own. I have attempted to create solutions on a local/community level but it has been made clear my solutions are best kept to myself because status quo is the way to go.
- We did move here 5 years ago due to the schools and now we are looking to move to NH because of the schools. Out of 5 neighbors, 3 send their kids to private school and they are 6 very involved, highly educated, good parents. Nbpt is losing a great resource. This makes me very sad and worries me further about the state of our schools when great volunteers give up."
- Someone needs to clarify what the roles of the school committee, school council, principal and superintendent are. I am of the impression based on Massachusetts general laws and the district handbook that the school council is responsible for recommending changes in the Clippers Compass regarding discipline and that the school committee has oversight over educational policy. Yet the principal sent letters out about a change in the chemical health rule, and stated that it was unanimously approved by the school committee. I think that all parties need to review who is responsible for what.
- "The effect of the MCAS on teachers and students is a shame. The creativity in the classrooms limited due to forced focus on memorization of facts and figures to later record on a standardized test. Such a system is a disadvantage to bright yet learning challenged kids. I understand that it is not by choice of this district, but I think it is having a dramatic negative effect on the education of our children.
- As a side-note, what happened to all the great gymnastics equipment and shows that we held back in the late 70's?????????"
- Thank you for actively soliciting community input.

- I don't feel that I could grade the current school committee. I have regularly attended meetings in the past and have been so aggravated and disappointed that I had to stop attending for my health. Mentally I couldn't take it anymore and stopped attending meetings this year. I have been happy with the changes that Dr. Lyons has made to the school system and I am very happy with the individual teachers I have worked with in the school system. The meetings I attended in the past were not friendly to the community; the public comment was just that and seemed to be disregarded by the committee. All the committee ever did was complain about needing more money which I will never vote to give them.
- From my perspective, the high school is in danger due to severe staffing and course cutbacks. I worry about how colleges view our high school: are they wary about the strength of the education our students are getting and thereby passing on our students in selection? The Molin evolution seems to have been pretty smooth. The Bresnahan is a mess. Communications among faculty and staff seems poor and crowd control seems more of a priority than academic achievement or the creations of community.
- I think that the Committee and Dr. Lyons are stuck in an unenviable position, needing more money to do the job. For many years, in my opinion, NHS has let students fall between the cracks if they are average. More excellence could be demanded. Our kids have been out of the system for nearly a decade, so my opinion may be a bit out of date. Grade schools are fine. But NHS should demand that its students do their best, and I haven't seen that happening, as a rule.
- Let's fund our schools so that all young people in NBPT can be educated for successful futures regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds or career directions. We need outstanding education that prepares people for the realities of the 21st century, and we can't take "no" for an answer anymore.
- I believe that the committee has a more difficult job then ever given the budget and the lack of necessary funding. With that said I believe the committee is doing as well as can be expected.