

Newburyport Public Schools FY09 Strategic Plan
2008 – 2013

Approved December 1, 2008

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Letter of Introduction

Dear Newburyport citizens, parents, teachers, administrators and, most of all, students:

The 2007-2008 school year was a tumultuous one for Newburyport Public Schools. It was the first year in which the schools operated in a completely new configuration. The massive budget cuts put in place during the 2006-2007 school year forced this reconfiguration. Teachers, parents, students and administrators all used the year to redefine themselves and their role in the school system. Many teachers were in new classrooms, and were surrounded by new and different colleagues. Many students – especially at the younger grades – were in new school buildings and were surrounded by new kids. Parents, too, were surrounded by new people and many were driving farther in the mornings and afternoons to transport their children to several school buildings. Out of this turbulence grew new communities. Each school building created its own new personality and community of students, teachers, parents and administrators. The PTO redefined itself. By the end of the year, these new communities had taken root and begun to grow and flourish.

In this midst of this redefinition, the staff and administration embarked on several new programs. They instituted a new literacy program, where teachers began learning and implementing new techniques for instruction and assessment of literacy, especially at the younger grade levels. The District also began study and training toward creating an inclusionary instructional philosophy and practice. Of course, everyone continued to strive for academic improvement for all our students, with our eye on improved MCAS results. The superintendent commissioned a team of teachers, health professionals, and parents to create a new Wellness policy for Newburyport's school community.

Turbulent growth is a good descriptor for the 2007-2008 school year. There were many, many changes occurring and simultaneously everyone was striving to grow and improve the education for our students. However, the ultimate direction was unclear. Newburyport Public Schools' five-year strategic plan expired in June 2008. That plan had not been updated in several years, and, although a strong and visionary document when it was originally created, it had little applicability to the schools' current situation. The schools clearly lacked direction. Efforts to improve student achievement, health and wellness, safety, and to create a supportive educational environment were all good, but ad hoc. The District was “playing things by ear.” It lacked clear vision and direction.

Recognizing this, the School Committee made it a goal to complete a new strategic plan for use in the 2008-2009 (FY09) school year. Dr. Lyons began the process by sitting down with educators and administrators throughout the district in the fall of 2007 and asking them for their vision of the future. He conducted hundreds of interviews individually and in groups, took reams of notes, and created his Aspirations document.¹ The strategic planning effort then used this document as the basis for its work. The Aspirations document would provide direction and long-term vision; the strategic plan would provide the concrete steps for achieving the vision. In March of 2008, the two of us began the process of strategic planning by establishing a working and an oversight group. We kept the working group small in order for it to make quick and effective progress on the plan. In contrast, the Oversight group

1 Kevin M. Lyons, Ed.D., Newburyport Superintendent of Schools, “Aspirations for the Newburyport Schools,” Spring 2008.

was larger, and included representatives from all corners of Newburyport: parents, teachers, seniors, city leaders, business leaders, and educational experts, to name a few. In April we convened the first group meeting. The groups worked steadily through April, May and June 2008, and completed a rough construction of the strategic plan's components by the end of the school year. After taking the summer off, the groups finalized the document during September, October, and November. They completed the final version in November 2008.

The strategic plan captured on these pages is a condensation of the wisdom from each individual in both these dedicated groups. We always used a group process. The groups identified our values. The group articulated goals. The group zeroed in on root causes, and strategized together to solve them. The result of this collaboration is collected here. It was a pleasure to be a part of this team, and we would like to thank these individuals for all their hard work, and congratulate them on a remarkable result. They are:

Working Group

Dave Archambault	Principal, Molin Elementary
Gordon Bechtel	Vice Chair School Committee, parent
Lori Clemens	NHS Math Teacher
Kristina Davis	Principal, Bresnahan Elementary
Shawn Flaherty	Middle School Teacher, NTA Pres.
Lisa Furlong	Middle School Teacher
Pamela Jamison	Elementary Art Teacher
Penny Lazarus	Parent
Kevin Lyons	Superintendent
Ralph Orlando	Doctor, parent
Mark Wright	NEF board member, parent

Oversight Group

Thayer Adsit	NHS student
Dale Bishop	Director, River Valley Charter School
Mary Anne Clancy	Institution for Savings, parent
Nancy Colbert	Newburyport City Planner
Steven Cole	School Committee member, parent
Art Currier	NEBC, past President
Cynthia Curtis	Reading specialist No. Andover Schools, parent
Nick deKanter	School Committee member, parent

Andrea Egmont	Director of Youth Services
Ginny Eramo	Parent, owner of Interlocks
Deirdre Farrell	Asst. Superintendent
Alice Gould	Director of Curriculum, retired
Donna Holaday	City Council member
Irene Jacqz	NHS student
Walter Klein	Boston College, Prof. Emeritus of Strategic Management
Dorothy LaFrance	Newburyport Head Librarian
John Landergan	Youth Council member
Ted Nelson	Parent, partner at Mechanica
Brenda Palmisano	Parent, Mother's Club member
Mike Parent	Principal, NHS
Grace Pezella	Youth Council member
Paula Sable	Educational consultant
Greg Smith	Director, FireHouse
Joe Wennik	Member of Council on Aging
Richard Welch	Parent, Superior Court Judge

Hopefully this strategic plan sets the stage and provides the direction for the large amount of work in front of us. Newburyport's schools have set some difficult but important goals in these pages. Their achievement will require hard work and perseverance. We look forward to working with each member of the Newburyport community to achieve them.

Sincerely,

Gordon Bechtel
Vice Chair
Newburyport School Committee
November 6, 2008

Kevin Lyons
Superintendent
Newburyport Public Schools

Newburyport Public Schools' Mission

Core values of the Newburyport Public Schools are expressed in our Mission Statement below. The Strategic Planning Working Committee began its discussion of a new strategic plan for the years 2008-2013 with an exploration of values. The existing mission statement and values, adopted in 2003, were reviewed and debated. Committee members put forward their own priority values and purposes for our school district. These values and purposes were shared over several weeks' time and strong consensus was reached on the adoption of a values list.

Committee members next reviewed the Superintendent's *Vision for The Newburyport Schools* document and created a draft list of strategic goal areas for a new strategic plan. These goal areas reflect specific school system improvements from the vision document, for example, improving crisis response, increasing time on learning, improving school facilities, and increasing student participation in community service. Additional goal areas were identified.

The Committee then created a "rock and lever" matrix that compared the agreed upon core values to the draft strategic goal areas in order to identify true priorities. This process resulted in the identification of three distinct sections for a strategic plan: Learning, Community, and Wellness. These concepts also led to subtle but important changes to the District's Mission Statement that now reflects the most important core values and the three major themes of this new strategic plan. The Mission Statement perspective was also changed from an "our schools" orientation to an "our students" point of view.

Mission statements can focus an organization on what really matters--to itself as well as to its stakeholders. Our hope is that this Mission Statement will be not only a guide to strategic and operational decision-making, but also a glue that binds our community in purpose and action.

Mission Statement

The Newburyport Public Schools are committed to the intellectual, physical, social development and engagement of every student.

Within a culture of high expectations for individual and group learning, our students experience rigorous academic challenge, are intellectually curious, and express themselves creatively.

Our students enhance their well-being by applying knowledge and skills about nutrition, fitness and healthy behaviors.

Our schools are an inclusive and supportive community. As part of this community, our students demonstrate values of personal integrity, sensitivity and social responsibility. Our schools partner with parents and community in significant ways to help achieve this mission. Members of our school community - teachers, parents, staff, and administration - support this mission every day, in every classroom, on every field of play, and in every activity.

Goals of the Newburyport Public Schools

Our goals are categorized into three areas: Learning, Community and Wellness.

Goals for Learning

Improved Literacy Skills

All students demonstrate improved literacy skills.

Vision Statement

Literacy is defined much differently today than in past years when literacy meant having basic reading skills. Today we mean reading complex text for deep understanding, writing and speaking persuasively, listening and thinking critically, and using literacy skills effectively to solve problems. We also speak of print literacy, digital literacy, information literacy, visual literacy and cultural literacy. This goal focuses mostly on reading, writing, listening, speaking and thinking critically.

We envision that literacy instruction at all levels is based in research on effective strategies and reflects state-of-the-art practices. Every teacher, PK-12, is a teacher of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and critical thinking. Learning in the content areas is greater than ever because of the solid foundation and priority of literacy throughout the school system and the integration of content learning goals.

At all levels, teachers model literacy strategies and skills and engage students in lively discussion of print and media selections. At all levels, students are matched by teachers to print materials at levels of difficulty that support learning. Middle School and High School content area teachers are becoming increasingly expert at incorporating literacy strategies into daily instruction and they are seeing student performance in the subject areas increasing as a result.

Opportunity for Improvement

Newburyport students are scoring below expectations on the state MCAS tests in English Language Arts in grades 4-8. Our elementary school reading program is transitioning from a thirteen year old program that is not based on current research-based strategies. A new research-based approach is in initial implementation. Our Middle School literacy program has lacked definition and has been mostly limited to the English/Language Arts area. Our High School literacy efforts reflect some training in “reading across the content areas” but the practice is inconsistent and strategies do not reflect current researched-based strategies. Middle and High School teachers report that students entering both levels are not prepared, as a group, for the reading and thinking tasks necessary at these levels.

Root Cause: Stuck in old practices

Current teaching practices need to be expanded to meet the needs of all students.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Implement a comprehensive literacy instructional	Match each reader to appropriate level of book

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
<p>model for literacy instruction grades PK-8. A comprehensive literacy model provides a researched-based learning framework that focuses on helping learners construct meaning through reading, writing, listening, speaking and critical thinking. The model provides a conceptual tool for organizing instruction. Assessment is used to drive instruction to meet the needs of all learners. (see appendix #)</p> <p>Implement literacy practices at NHS that enable all teachers to be teachers of literacy in their disciplines meeting 21st Century skills expectations. FY 10 Articulate literacy model for grades 9 through 12 and write 3-year implementation plan.</p>	<p>difficulty with individualized assessment in grades K-6</p> <p>Integrate comprehensive literacy components into ELA curriculum maps, grades K-6.</p> <p>Provide teachers K-6 with “look fors” or expectations for implementing comprehensive literacy components</p> <p>Gather data on program implementation with “walk-throughs” (all administrators) and coach/specialist data gathering and evaluate May/June 2009 Include teachers on walk-throughs to the extent possible.</p> <p>Articulate literacy model for grades 7 and 8 and write 3-year implementation plan.</p>

Root Cause: No literacy performance baseline

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
<p>Establish metrics for literacy performance and decide what tools and processes to use to measure them, and begin measurement. Consider both year-to-year tracking and cohort-based tracking.</p>	<p>Establish metrics that are measurable in FY09, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequency at which data is gathered on literacy program implementation • Degree to which school budget supports training and material needs for 5-year implementation • Teacher planning time for literacy • Amount of team-based literacy planning and development • Percentage of students with completed benchmark and DIBELS assessments

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent understanding of “comprehensive literacy” and the strategies that teachers are using • Parent knowledge of how to help their children develop strong literacy skills at home <p>Assess these metrics by the end of FY09 to establish a baseline.</p>

Root Cause: Lack of leveled books and source materials

Leveled books and source materials are lacking or non-existent.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Acquire leveled books and source materials in multiple genre including fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and drama to fully support instruction at all levels.	<p>Complete the acquisition of the second third of leveled books and source material for grades PK-6.</p> <p>Actively support NEF campaign by participating in and supporting fund-raising activities</p>

Root Cause: Hard to maintain best practices

Best practices are hard to keep up and sustain

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Provide on-going professional development (PD) and train all new staff thoroughly.	<p>Provide off-site training on Continuum of Learning program to teacher and administrative teams. Fund through grant monies.</p> <p>Provide week long training sessions to administrators on how to lead comprehensive literacy programs.</p> <p>Provide literacy coach training to Literacy Coaches through college affiliated, in-depth, and</p>

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
	<p>expert taught program.</p> <p>Send selected teachers and administrators to the Literacy for All conference, Providence, RI.</p> <p>Provide job-embedded professional development to every K-6 teacher.</p> <p>Support teacher directed and designed study groups on important areas for professional development in literacy instruction.</p> <p>Make workshops and courses on literacy best-practices available to all PK-6 teachers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide college credit options for courses. • Provide substitutes to allow time for teachers to participate in training as a grade-level teams.
Budget appropriately to sustain a literacy program.	Budget in the FY10 budget to sustain and expand literacy programs, including materials, personnel and professional development.
Find grant opportunities.	Investigate Expanded Learning Time grant opportunities with goal of increasing teacher common planning time.

Root Cause: Teacher mentoring needs improvement

Current mentoring and training programs need to be better utilized and expanded.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Expand mentor program and improve matching of teachers with high skill levels in literacy instruction to new teachers. Provide literacy coaching/mentoring to every teacher on a regular basis.	Develop recommendation to revise 2nd year mentoring to better support literacy by utilizing highly skilled (literacy best practices) teachers as mentors.

Root Cause: Professional development requires improvement

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Teachers collaboratively determine best way to accomplish professional development in literacy.	Gather teacher feedback on literacy professional development programs in May/June 2009.
Budget sufficient professional development resources.	Brainstorm ways to improve professional development in FY10.
Provide needed time for teachers to review data and student work and to share effective practices and strategies.	Investigate Expanded Learning Time grant opportunities with goal of increasing teacher common planning time.

Root Cause: Configuration with separate buildings hindered progress; better now

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Capitalize on grade configuration by providing time for teachers to work together on literacy goals.	Provide at least ½ day per month for teachers to work together on literacy/ELA curriculum maps (PK-5 and Grade 6 ELA teachers).

Root Cause: Absence of consistent continuous and dynamic student assessment

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Implement continuous and dynamic assessment systems at all levels.	<p>Complete Benchmark Assessments for every student K-5. Continue DIBELS and DRA assessments for every student, K-1.</p> <p>Utilize literacy coaches to support individual assessment of students.</p> <p>Literacy assessment calendar distributed to teachers K-6.</p>

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Establish a system to “move data forward” with students as they progress grade to grade.	Establish literacy assessment folders for each student, K-5 and targeted students in grade 6. Develop a strategy to leverage technology for collecting, maintaining and communicating student literacy data.
Provide staff with time to build assessment skills.	
Regular reporting of student progress.	Provide reports to parents on literacy assessments being implemented in FY09, grades PK-6.

Root Cause: No in-house literacy experts

There is a need for in-house literacy experts to help train staff.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Hire in-house literacy experts to help train staff.	Hire 2 full-time Literacy Coaches to provide job-embedded professional development for teachers PK-8.
Use grants to support ongoing consultancies.	

Root Cause: Parent knowledge about literacy strategies is low

A low level of parent knowledge of literacy strategy undermines complete success of the literacy program. In many cases, more parental support to work with children at home will assist individual students in moving forward.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Establish metrics for determining parent knowledge of comprehensive literacy practices and parent confidence in assisting students with literacy at home. Conduct annual survey or assessment.	Establish baseline of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent understanding of comprehensive literacy practices. • Parents’ confidence in assisting their

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
	children with literacy learning at home.
Get parents into the buildings. Provide parents with specific training on ways to help children read and write.	Provide parent education through a “literacy night” and other communications.

Improved Mathematics Knowledge and Skills

All students demonstrate improved mathematics knowledge and skills.

Vision Statement

Our students are deep mathematics thinkers that have mastery, also, of basic and procedural skills. They use multiple strategies to solve real world problems. Our students value the practical application of math. They understand that effort counts greatly toward their success in math learning. Our students are motivated to achieve automatic recall of facts and fluency with math procedures. Students develop and apply critical thinking as they progress in the mathematics curriculum.

We envision a rigorous streamlined math curriculum that focuses on depth of understanding that is based on a coherent progression of topics of ascending difficulty from preschool through high school graduation. To prepare students for Algebra, the curriculum must simultaneously develop conceptual understanding, computational fluency, and problem-solving skills. These capabilities are essential for higher level mathematics beyond algebra.

We use a balanced instructional approach that incorporates student centered learning and teacher directed instruction, providing students with opportunities to learn independently and in a group. Instruction is differentiated to ensure access of the curriculum for all students. Technology is used appropriately to support instruction and learning. We envision all students engaged in a minimum of 60 minutes of math instruction each day.

The Newburyport community understands the importance of life-long math learning from birth through college and beyond. Our parents believe that effort is more important than ability in determining a child's math performance. Literacy in mathematics is as fundamental to individual success as reading and writing. A strong mathematics education is essential for any citizen who is to be prepared for the future. Our student's parents understand this and support the schools and their children in this learning process. Effort counts

Opportunity for Improvement

Newburyport students are scoring below state expectations on the state MCAS test in mathematics in grades 4–8. The Newburyport School district uses three different math programs in grades K-8. A written curriculum is just beginning to emerge, but program specific thinking still dominates.

Currently, too little time is spent on mathematics instruction on a daily bases and there are inconsistencies in instruction from school to school and classroom to classroom. The absence of a fully articulated curriculum leads to redundancy and inefficiency in instruction. Newburyport like many school districts must continue to deepen the content knowledge of all teachers of mathematics as supported by research reported in the National Math Panel 2008. The current instructional approach in math needs to achieve more balance between student centered learning and teacher directed instruction. There are inadequate supports for struggling students and students who are ready to accelerate. Parents and the community in general are not aware of the increasing importance of high level math literacy that will be required of students in the new global economy and work place.

Root Cause: Absence of a complete Pre-K – 12 curriculum has lead to a dependence on programs and texts to define what is taught rather than a defined curriculum

Long Term Strategies	FY010 Specific Actions
Develop a robust math curriculum that ensures	Identify the most critical topic at each grade

<p>the coherent progression of topics Pre-K - 12</p> <p>Reduce elementary math programs from three to two</p>	<p>level and the relationship between grade levels</p> <p>Identify the learning benchmarks at each grade level and develop assessments to evaluate individual and class achievement.</p> <p>Implement Investigations in Grade 2</p> <p>Prepare Grade 1 with professional development for Investigations implementation in FY11.</p> <p>Continue release time for curriculum development work</p> <p>Support math programs at all levels by providing budget to update texts and materials</p> <p>Continue support for math coaching in the district</p> <p>Establish team to develop strategic goal for STEM-- Science, Technology, Engineering, Math for inclusion in the spring 2010 Strategic Plan update.</p>
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Root Cause: Insufficient time is provided for mathematics instruction district wide and large variations occur between schools and classrooms.

Long Term Strategies	FY010 Specific Actions
<p>Establish minimum of concentrated ‘time on learning’ standard for daily math instruction at each grade level.</p>	<p>Implement minimum of concentrated time on learning standard for daily math instruction grades 1-8 and full day kindergarten.</p> <p>By 2010-2011 school year the high school will implement a schedule that includes a minimum of 60 minutes of daily math instruction.</p> <p>Block schedule elementary mathematics instruction to ensure consistent time on task with mathematics.</p> <p>Maintain current Middle School commitment 60 minutes of daily math instruction.</p>

Root Cause: Teachers and administrators need sufficient content knowledge and best instructional practices in mathematics as suggested in current research.

Long Term Strategies	FY010 Specific Actions
<p>Provide professional development for educators at all grade levels to deepen content knowledge and knowledge and skills in best instructional practices.</p> <p>Investigate concept of specialized elementary math teachers and design pilot program for FY11.</p> <p>Hire and retain highly qualified math teachers K-12.</p> <p>Ensure that teachers new to the District are given initial training in Newburyport’s curriculum and program.</p>	<p>Provide teachers new to the District with initial training embedded in mentor program.</p> <p>K-8 math coach/specialist and High School Department Chairs and members will coordinate support of new teachers</p>

Root Cause: Insufficient support for students on either end of the learning continuum—those requiring intervention and students who demonstrate mastery beyond the grade-level curriculum.

Long Term Strategies	FY010 Specific Actions
<p>Develop assessment plan that provides data on each student’s knowledge and understanding of math concepts and skills.</p> <p>Determine and implement Tier 2 and Tier 3 math interventions.</p> <p>Develop philosophy and practices to address students who demonstrate mastery beyond the grade-level curriculum.</p> <p>Budget personnel and resources, if needed, to provide high quality interventions and curriculum for students at both ends of the continuum.</p>	<p>Begin implementation of research-based best practices program of instruction with required professional development for implementation.</p> <p>Develop common assessments and provide time for teachers to evaluate and discuss data.</p>

Root Cause: Lack of appreciation among community members for high level math literacy and a lack of knowledge of the significance of effort (as opposed to natural ability) in student’s math performance.

Long Term Strategies	FY010 Specific Actions
<p>Educate parents and community on the importance of mathematics learning and the critical nature of ‘effort expended’ on math learning and the time spent on task.</p> <p>Parent education programs will provide information and skill development for parents of pre-school children that will ready students for school learning.</p> <p>Parent education programs and activities will familiarize parents with the curriculum, instructional strategies, and learning expectations at each grade level</p>	<p>Continue to hold elementary math/literacy nights.</p> <p>Develop list of best practices for circulation to teachers by year’s end related to teacher “send-homes” and communications in regard to math and helping parents to help students and shape student attitudes toward math.</p> <p>K-8 Math/Coach Specialist and NHS Mah Department Chair will collaborate to communicate concepts from the 2008 National Math Report to teachers, parents, and community.</p>

Equal Access to a Common and Differentiated Learning Environment

All students learn the same curriculum in the regular classroom environment from a transdisciplinary team with instruction and assessment differentiated for the student's individual needs.

Vision Statement

We envision all of our classrooms are truly inclusive! One size is never presumed to fit all. Multiple points of access allow students with disabilities or gifts to learn challenging content at the appropriate level. Special educators and regular educators are experts in the art of co-teaching. High levels of differentiated instruction and assessment exist in every classroom.

The District and schools are organized, and staff is assigned, in a manner that best supports inclusionary practices.

All District staff is receiving the professional development and administrative support necessary to ensure high levels of inclusion and high learning expectations for all students in the general curriculum. Inclusion is seamless and the cultural norm.

An inclusive classroom is a learning environment in which all students participate, each with their individual strengths and weaknesses, together with a team of teachers, including regular educators, special educators, speech and language therapists, physical therapists, and other specialists, as appropriate. We believe that an inclusive learning environment provides the most effective educational outcome for all students. Inclusion increases the educational outcomes for ALL students.

When special educators join the classroom teacher to collaborate and instruct as a team, student-to-teacher ratios are dramatically reduced and instruction is more effectively customized for each student in the classroom. When special educators and regular educators co-plan and co-teach, best instructional practices are demanded and supported by a team approach. This approach allows all students to access the classroom curriculum. Inclusive classrooms encourage and, in fact, require differentiated instruction and assessment that benefits every student in the classroom. This benefit extends to students who have academic difficulty but who have not been identified as disabled and also benefits students with greater than average skills by providing more challenging content and assignments.

Opportunity for Improvement

Our current “pull out” practices do not meet the requirements of law, but more importantly, their continued existence denies all students the better instruction that can be provided in an inclusion model with its benefits of teaming, smaller student-to-teacher ratios and the higher capacity that teams and teachers can develop to better differentiate instruction and assessment.

Root Cause: Inclusionary practices are not yet common

Educators as a whole have not yet developed a commitment to inclusion, and the necessary co-teaching skills and teaching practices.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Provide a clear vision for an Inclusionary educational model.	District and School Committee set a clear direction for an inclusive learning environment anchored by transdisciplinary teams.
Build effective transdisciplinary teams (special educators play equally important role in teaching all students).	Increase co-teaching of regular education teachers, special education teachers, and therapists.
Provide professional development to all teachers in co-teaching and integrated therapies approach and continue to spiral training indefinitely.	For FY09, 75% of regular educators and 100% of special educators will participate in formal co-teaching training.
Provide co-planning time for co-teaching and differentiation.	Apply for an Expanded Learning Time grant (a new Patrick Administration program.)
Provide professional development on differentiated instruction and the continuum of students' learning styles, abilities, strengths and weaknesses.	Ensure that Differentiated Instruction is emphasis of professional development on inclusionary practices, co-teaching, and integrated therapies.
Fully utilize all assets and human resources to support inclusion.	Restructure school and staff schedules to insure special educators work to the maximum degree in classrooms.
Increase clerical support to make better use of SPED teachers' time.	Train STAT (Student Teacher Assistance Team) teams to work in an inclusive environment Using a 3-Tier approach to classroom intervention for learning difficulties. (see appendix #)

Root Cause: Lack of specificity in School Committee planning to support inclusion

Insufficient long-term planning and vision regarding inclusion. Newburyport community doesn't fully

appreciate the value or need for an inclusionary model.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
<p>School Committee sets vision and expectations through planning and goals documents and serves to educate community on value and necessity of inclusionary practices in our schools.</p>	<p>Complete a detailed planning exercise regarding common, differentiated instructional model. What do we want to achieve each year? What will it cost? A detailed and clear plan will help increase knowledge about the idea and therefore increase chances for sufficient funding.</p> <p>The School Committee runs a communication and education program on inclusive learning environment and multidisciplinary teams for the Newburyport community.</p> <p>The School Committee adopts equity policy.</p>

Root Cause: Not all students have sufficient challenge

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
<p>Differentiated instruction and assessment provides appropriately challenging work for every student.</p>	<p>All actions as above in <u>Inclusionary Practices Are Not Yet Common Practice</u> and as below in <u>Differentiated Instruction is More Difficult When the Number of Students in a Class Increases.</u></p>

Root Cause: Differentiated instruction is more difficult when the number of students in a class increases

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
<p>Maximize co-teaching potential to lower effective class size..</p>	<p>For those classes that implement co-teaching in FY09, evaluate the approach's effectiveness, especially as it impacts effective class size and teacher-student ratio.</p>
<p>Make better use of existing staff</p>	<p>Block schedule special educators to maximize opportunities for co-teaching.</p>

Root Cause: Shortage of formative assessment data for students limits differentiated instruction

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
See strategies for differentiated assessment, above.	Focus curriculum map work on development of common formative assessments
Develop comprehensive and clear expectations for learning or learning outcomes in all curriculum maps.	

Root Cause: Areas of disconnect between grades and standards-based Performance

Parents and teachers cite a lack of congruence between report card grades and actual performance. Notably this occurs when students with high grades in a subject score poorly on MCAS or other standardized tests.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
<p>Assess progress towards performance-based learning outcomes and grading.</p> <p>Have Middle School and High School administration and leadership consider problem and brainstorm solutions for future School Improvement Plan (SIP).</p>	<p>Have administration, staff and parents of grades PK through 12 establish goals to assess the effectiveness of grading and their grade reporting system, with the goal of having grading and report cards reflect the actual progress of the student. Assessment should pay specific attention to the correlation between grades and performance on standardized testing, including MCAS. Place specific goals into FY10 School Improvement Plans (SIPs).</p>

Root Cause: Multiple strategies that differentiate learning are not used consistently across the District

Instructional strategies are not sufficiently differentiated to allow students to utilize different learning styles and “brain styles”, and to pursue unique interests and projects that foster engagement.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
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Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
<p>Encourage use of a variety of differentiated instructional strategies, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple intelligence learning and visual/listening/kinetic • Professional development and peer-to-peer teacher coaching • Student-centered instructional groupings that encourage peer teaching • Project based learning groups 	<p>Administrators and teachers use “walk-throughs” to encourage and support these practices by providing feedback to teachers.</p> <p>Provide professional development for instructional supervisors on research-based best practices that support learning, especially differentiated instructional strategies.</p>
<p>Consensus curriculum maps are richer in description of differentiated assessment and variety of assessments.</p>	<p>Focus curriculum map work on common formative assessment.</p>

Equal Access to a Balanced, Standards-Based Curriculum

All students have access to the same standards-based curriculum that balances content coverage with the need to provide sufficient time for students to develop deep understanding of the most essential concepts and skills.

Vision Statement

We envision that all Newburyport students participate in a guaranteed and viable curriculum. A **guaranteed** curriculum means that every student will be instructed in the same content and skills, these being agreed to by all teachers at the grade level or in specific courses. It should not matter which teacher to whom a student was assigned, the same instructional goals and learning expectations would guarantee a consistent curriculum for all students. A **viable** curriculum is one that is focused on a limited number of standards and topics, this focus allowing for instructional depth, as opposed to the “coverage” of too many standards and topics. Making a curriculum viable requires teachers to prioritize and select from state standards and topics that may be suggested in the state curriculum frameworks or presented in a program or textbook. A viable curriculum helps to ensure that students learn the most important standards with a depth of understanding as opposed to simply covering too many standards with little depth of understanding. The guaranteed and viable curriculum is supported by strong curriculum documents with clear and high student learning expectations in all subject areas and grades. Curriculum is aligned with all state curriculum frameworks.

Our curriculum identifies key learning outcomes and emphasizes depth of study over covering too many topics or spending too much time with less important state curriculum framework standards. Our curriculum is rich with examples of assessments and strategies, samples of exemplary student work, and has clear learning expectations for each grade and subject area.

Formative (curriculum-based assessments) classroom assessments are administered frequently, giving teachers weekly and sometimes daily information about how to plan instruction. These assessments allow teachers to adjust instruction for the class and for individuals to help ensure that all students meet learning objectives.

Opportunity for Improvement

The school system has only recently initiated a process to develop a written consensus curriculum for all grades and subject areas. The absence of a written consensus curriculum has contributed to a lack of instructional cohesion and consistency across grade levels and subject areas. Basic curriculum maps of content were completed in June 2008 for English Language Arts in grades K-5 and in each subject Grades 6-8. All core High School courses and some elective courses were mapped as of June 2008.

The absence of consistently written curriculum has also negatively impacted:

- How teachers view their grade or subject in the context of other grades and subjects
- The development of common formative assessments that support instruction and learning
- Having a common base from which teachers can review data and student work

- The incidence of redundancy and omission, and
- The ability to improve alignment with state Curriculum Frameworks
- The tendency for teachers to try to cover too many standards and topics at the expense of instruction that is a mile wide and only an inch deep.

The curriculum is not yet clearly articulated and lacks depth in description of differentiated assessment, differentiated instructional strategies, and learning expectations for students.

Root Cause: Curriculum maps are yet to be written with sufficient depth needed to progress instructional consistency and cohesion

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Complete the “grass-roots” development of a written curriculum at all grades and in all subjects.	<p>Complete integration of comprehensive literacy, and begin integration of common formative assessment into ELA curriculum maps at grades PK-6. At grades 7-12, include common formative assessments with clearly stated learning expectations in all existing curriculum maps.</p> <p>Review and revise as necessary the long-term plan for curriculum mapping work.</p>
Continue to use early release days for curriculum development.	Continue to provide monthly release time for teachers to extend curriculum maps and to better establish the right balance between content coverage and teaching for understanding.
Train teachers to understand the curriculum they specialize in at deeper levels.	
Provide necessary curriculum materials.	

Root Cause: Insufficient professional development on instructional design

Insufficient professional development focused on design of instruction that supports student understanding has limited teachers’ ability to complete and implement the necessary curriculum.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Provide more professional development on teaching for deep understanding and designing curriculum that provides access for all students.	Provide professional development in integrated therapies, co-teaching and differentiated instruction and assessment. Include all classroom staff (including special education teachers, therapists, counselors, etc.) in the curriculum mapping and design exercises.
Provide more professional development for teaching critical thinking skills.	
FY10 and beyond: Provide training and time for development of alternative forms of assessment.	
See strategies in the “Equal Access to a Common and Differentiated Learning Environment" goal.	

Root Cause: There is a need for more instructional innovation to prepare students with skills needed for 21st century

The need for more innovation in teaching techniques, different pedagogies, new instructional approaches, or interdisciplinary teaching diminishes student excitement for learning and limits improvement in student achievement.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
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Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
<p>Encourage "21st Century" instructional approaches and celebrate best examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collaborative learning • interdisciplinary units • project based learning • community-based learning 	<p>Use instructional walk-throughs to encourage and support examples of best practice and inclusion of "21st Century" learning strategies. Use the teacher evaluation process to encourage more 21st Century approaches to instruction.</p> <p>Support teacher education in 21st Century instructional strategies through tuition reimbursement program.</p> <p>Connect teacher and administrator Individual Professional Development Plans (IPDP) to these District goals.</p>
<p>Allow for some of early release planning sessions to be used to brainstorm teaching approaches across departments. How can a PE teacher support the objectives of an Arts teacher? How can a science teacher and social studies teacher collaborate?</p>	

Expand Variety and Breadth of Learning Opportunities

Students have more access to a wide variety of organized learning activities. We strive to expose our students to a wide variety of organized learning activities.

Vision Statement

We envision our students to be highly engaged in a rich curriculum and diverse co-curricular and extra-curricular organized activities. Opportunities are roughly equal to student interests and demand for courses and after-school learning experiences. The Newburyport Public Schools allocates available resources to support diverse offerings and partners with others in the community to provide, support, and expand healthy activities that engage our students outside of school.

Opportunity for Improvement

Budget reductions over the past six years have diminished curricular opportunities including High School electives, and Middle School foreign language and theater arts programs. Community members have, for years, recognized that too few programs are available to meet the interests of students after school, especially for middle school students. As a result, students do not have opportunity to challenge themselves in as rich an environment as existed several years ago. Too many students in grades 6-12 are not engaged in organized or structured learning experiences after school. Many students do participate in High School athletics and co-curricular activities and many High School and Middle School students participate in a variety of community sponsored activities in Newburyport and surrounding towns. Many students do not. Results of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and the Assets Survey given to Newburyport students suggest the strong need for programmatic interventions to reduce risk behaviors and build developmental assets. The findings clearly point to the need for more programs after school to build developmental assets and to reduce idle time that contributes to risk behaviors.

Root Cause: Offerings limited by years of budget reductions

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Investigate the best high school and middle school schedule design to maximize the number of courses offered.	<p>Complete a study and recommend a High School schedule that best supports the mission of the NHS.</p> <p>Build results of NHS scheduling study into the FY10 budget.</p>
Increase the number of educational opportunities in creative realms including art, theater and music.	

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Increase the number of high school faculty in a manner that will result in the most courses possible being offered.	
Develop on-line learning opportunities like Virtual High School® and Moodle or BlackBoard®	<p>Begin offering Virtual High School at the level of 25 seats per semester. Plan expansion of program into the FY11 budget.</p> <p>Assess online and alternative learning programs and how they best serve students at NHS. Place specific goals in NHS's FY10 School Improvement Plan (SIP).</p>
Investigate cooperative programs with others that may increase learning opportunities.	Work with Newburyport Youth Services to investigate and possibly offer an after-school foreign language program. Programs should not compete with offerings in Newburyport schools. Programs should have as small an impact on school operations as possible.
Determine student interests through informal and formal assessment in regard to career interests and course offerings, especially for students who are at risk for dropping out of school or students losing interest in school.	
Recruit high school faculty for open positions who can teach “out of the box” courses to meet needs and interests of students.	
Investigate extended learning day grant opportunities to provide an after school enrichment curriculum of academics, arts, athletics, special interests.	<p>Investigate Expanded Learning Time (ELT) initiative by attending the Massachusetts state summit in December 2008.</p> <p>Participate with Mass 2020 to assess Newburyport community readiness for an expanded school day.</p>

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Investigate ways to expand our foreign Language offerings.	Brainstorm, assess and choose cost-effective ways to offer more foreign language. Consider which foreign languages are most appropriate, what topics of most interest and value. Include consideration of long-term plan for foreign language.
Use focus groups/surveys of parents, teachers, staff, community members, and students to develop plans and priorities.	
Better utilize community resources such as NECC, UMASS Lowell, Salem State, Whittier Vo-Tech, MA Audubon, and the Greater Lawrence Collaborative.	

Expansion of Authentic Learning Experience

Expansion of authentic learning experience for all students and increased authentic assessment of student work consistent with 21st century learning frameworks.

Vision Statement

We envision our students enjoying and benefiting from learning experiences that are relevant to real-life. These experiences should be in the classroom and outside of the classroom in internships, work study opportunities, and other community connections. These experiences help motivate students and increase understanding. Relevant learning experiences also improve students' ability to think critically, allowing them better confidence and ability to learn skills and adapt to new situations. 21st Century learning skills are embedded in our curriculum at all levels and in all subjects.

The advancement of 21st century skills, according to leading educators and authors, depends on schools making learning more relevant and giving students opportunity to apply classroom learning in "real world" settings and situations. Knowledge relevance changes quickly. Skills and knowledge that are important today may not be important tomorrow. Job competition from the global community is much higher.

The partnership between the Newburyport Education/Business Coalition and the Newburyport Public Schools has established an exemplary model for expanding authentic learning opportunities with businesses and in the community. Strategies can build upon this model to develop explanations and examples of 21st century skills and the teaching strategies that promote authentic learning.

Opportunity for Improvement

In today's schools, many students are bored, many don't feel connected and, for some, learning lacks any relevance to life. A large national study (Aspirations- GISA) recently demonstrated the validity of these assertions and concluded that as students advance through grades 6-12 they progressively report less connection to what they are being taught and progressively report that school has less connection to their lives and futures. Further development of the NEBC program model is a unique opportunity to expand authentic learning opportunities.

Root Cause: Standards-based curriculum perceived to Impede authentic learning

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
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Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
<p>Provide professional development for developing authentic and performance-based assessments that take place in the classroom and fit naturally in a standards-based curriculum.</p>	
<p>School Committee and administration should strengthen message about the need to reduce the “coverage” of too many standards and topics (See goal for <u>Equal Access to a Balanced and Standards-Based Curriculum</u>).</p> <p>Support efforts of 21st Century Skills coalition to require DESE to embed 21st Century learning objectives in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks standards.</p> <p>Advocate for changes in MCAS to include local options or requirement for authentic assessment of student learning.</p> <p>Better utilize community resources such as NECC, UMASS Lowell, Salem State, Whittier Vo-Tech, Audubon, and the Greater Lawrence Collaborative to increase authentic learning opportunities.</p>	<p>School Committee and administration provide strong reinforcement that teaching more topics with less depth will not improve our MCAS results. We must resist the natural tendency to teach specific test-related topics to improve student MCAS performance.</p> <p>Write letter to Governor and Secretary of Education advocating for inclusion of 21st Century skills in Frameworks documents and for MCAS to be broadened with sections of authentic assessment evaluated at the local level.</p>

Root Cause: Primary tests (MCAS) are not project-based

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
<p>Educate community about what MCAS does not measure well and the importance of teaching beyond the limited scope of MCAS.</p>	<p>The School Committee communicates what our strategic plan is, what its mission and vision are, and how it measures our quality of education. Emphasize that it is more than just MCAS.</p>

Root Cause: Insufficient time allocated for project-based learning

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Provide professional development for developing authentic assessments that achieve the purpose in the time available.	

Root Cause: Insufficient availability of authentic learning opportunities

The school and Newburyport community do not offer enough internships, civic engagement, or community service opportunities for students.

Build on NEBC/NPS partnership foundation to:

- Expand the participation of students in NEBC sponsored programs that develop a learning continuum about career possibilities and expose students to business and professional work environments from elementary grades through high school graduation.
- Provide internship opportunities to all students who want one.
- Provide practical examples and experiences which bring 21st century learning expectations to life and build connections between faculty and businesses.
- Increase faculty participation in NEBC programs and program planning.

Identify and document curriculum content and skills that can be specifically addressed through faculty and business connections supported by NEBC

Align NPS internship and other program models with NEBC long-term Planning vision as integrated planning model

Increase collaboration between the School Committee and the NEBC through a working session to discuss and brainstorm ideas for improving student internships, teacher externships, and all NEBC programs and program outcomes.

<p>Increase staff to administer internship program through hiring, internships, or business volunteers.</p>	
<p>Increase opportunities for internships, civic engagement and community service. Manage all through a single student engagement facilitator.</p>	
<p>Educate students as to the value of internships and civic engagement from 21st century perspective.</p> <p>Use NEBC as the bridge between classroom and work environments.</p>	
<p>Develop external learning and civic engagement transcript for all students.</p>	<p>Develop a plan for creating and implementing an external learning and civic engagement transcript for all NHS students. Place goals in NHS's FY10 School Improvement Plan (SIP).</p>

Goals to Build and Support Community

The following goals build and support the Newburyport School Community and its interaction with the larger Newburyport Community.

Improved Student Connection to Schools

Students report a more positive connection to the school community.

Vision Statement

The Newburyport Public Schools provide a community that enjoys and promotes strong connection with every student. Students enjoy a sense of belonging to the school community. They feel that they're valued and appreciated by the each person in their school and by the schools in general. The schools have an active "early warning system" that detects and responds to every student's needs – academic, physical or social... The schools provide an environment in which all students feel they can voice their opinions and concerns without fear of being chastised or denigrated. Students are proud to be a stakeholder in the Newburyport Public School community, seek ways to contribute to the Community, and look forward to participating in school life each day. NPS celebrates each student's contribution to the community, no matter how small.

Opportunity for Improvement

Results of the *Youth Risk Behavior Survey* and the *Assets Survey* suggest the need to strengthen the relationship between student and and each community stakeholder. However, we do not have good data indicating specific problem areas or mechanisms to impact the student-school connection. Common sense tells us that strengthening this relationship, especially for those students who feel least connected, will reduce youth risk behaviors, improve learning for individuals, reduce the number of school drop-outs, strengthen the community and enrich the school experience for all. Some students feel "left-out."

Root Cause: Insufficient baseline data from which to Measure progress

Newburyport Public Schools suffers from a lack of data on which to base strategy and action for improving student connection.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
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Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
<p>Hold student focus groups and gather data on school climate and student relationships to school.</p> <p>Hold teacher focus groups to supplement student generated data.</p> <p>Name student identity groups, e.g. gamers, jocks, etc.</p>	<p>Challenge school councils to make a recommendation in their FY10 School Improvement Plans (SIPs) to measure amount of and characterize types of connections between their students and each school.</p>
<p>Utilize validated surveys to ascertain level of student connections to school and to assess school climate and obstacles to students forming a positive relationship to school and the school community.</p>	<p>Use data from Asset survey to communicate a broad picture of the problems with youth connectivity with schools. School Committee to communicate this issue to the Newburyport community.</p> <p>Study and recommend a survey mechanism for measuring student connection to schools. Study should include the Aspirations Survey from the Quaglia Institute. Survey should include a mechanism to gather data on students' ability to voice concerns and to generally have a voice in their school.</p> <p>Extract data form ASSETS <u>Survey on Caring School Climate</u> and chart it.</p>

Root Cause: Fragmented efforts to build community

Efforts to build strong school communities and include all students are numerous but not cataloged or evaluated as a combined and coordinated effort.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
<p>Catalog all current school community building programs and activities and evaluate strengths and areas for improvement.</p>	

Root Cause: Not all students feel connected to the school community

Too many students feel disconnected from school, feel left out, or do not have strong relationships with either an adult or with other students.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Develop a comprehensive plan for grades PK-12 to sustain and strengthen current efforts to include all students in the NPS community and add programs and activities where they are needed. Include this as part of the NPS strategic plan.	
Establish a connection between each student and at least one adult in Newburyport Public Schools.	Challenge each school council to include in its School Improvement Plan (SIP) a goal that each student have a connection with one adult at their school with whom they would feel comfortable sharing a problem. Beyond FY09: Challenge school councils to extend the program matching students to adults by matching high-risk students in advance of their transition to a new school.

Improved Student Connection to Newburyport

Students feel connected to the Newburyport community.

Vision Statement

Newburyport provides a supportive, protective and fair environment for its students. Students feel that the community values and supports them in the pursuit of their goals. Students can establish and grow social relationships and activities with friends without unfair or ad hoc restrictions. As part of a community that communicates clearly and openly, Newburyport students understand the legal and moral limits for their activities and behaviors.

Students continually increase their connection with Newburyport. Students support community organizations through voluntary community service. Students collaborate to understand and address concerns of Newburyport businesses, organizations, and people.

Opportunity for Improvement

According to the *Assets Survey* results, our students lack the protective asset of feeling valued by the Newburyport community. Although the community strongly values its citizens' connection to the community -- including the City's youth -- our youth do not sense such a connection. The community believes that strengthening this asset is important. When our students feel more valued by the community and when they more value the community, they will be safer, better learners, and better citizens.

Root Cause: Insufficient data to understand problem

We do not have good data to determine extent of problem or from which to measure progress

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Utilize surveys, focus groups and other techniques to ascertain level of student connection to the Newburyport community and obstacles to students forming a positive relationship, and, obstacles to feeling valued by the community.	Work with NYS and the Beacon Coalition to hold community focus groups and gather data on community climate and what youth see as positive and negative in their relationship to the Newburyport community.

Root Cause: Student perception of Newburyport is low

Students' perceptions of how the community values them are low due to past experience, misperception, or lack of knowledge.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Create experiences for students, based on survey results, that can potentially lead to more positive perceptions of the community.	School Committee sponsor a working session with NYS and other partners to explore and brainstorm collaborative programs which help to increase positive connections with the community.
Educate the community about student perceptions of the community.	Work with NYS and the Beacon Coalition to report results to the Newburyport community from all Asset and Risk surveys in which Newburyport has participated.
Collaborate with NYS and other partners to help educate community members about the Assets and	

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
asset building behaviors and strategies. Create more opportunities for positive student-senior citizen interaction.	

Improved Parent Connection to Schools

Parents report a more positive connection to their child’s school and to the school district.

Vision Statement

Newburyport parents are involved with their schools at two levels. First, parents are in regular communication with their children's teachers to understand their student's progress, identify issues that need improvement, and celebrate successes. These communications support a very coordinated, coherent and consistent learning environment for each child. Second, parents work regularly to support their school and Newburyport Public Schools in general. All parents participate in their own unique way, and at their own unique level, depending on their individual circumstances. Newburyport Public Schools welcomes and encourages parent participation at whatever level and in whatever position they feel comfortable.

Opportunity for Improvement

Research has clearly demonstrated the positive relationship between parent involvement in the school and student achievement. Strengthening the school-parent connection for parents who are already engaged, and establishing a connection for parents not currently engaged, will support student achievement and improved school climate. The recent school reconfiguration presented the new challenge of developing essentially new school communities. During the 2007-2008 school year, students, staff, administration, and parents have all stepped up to this challenge, but more work remains, especially in improving parent-school connection. Parents have had challenges, especially in the blending of three elementary school parent communities into one. Schools have the continual challenge to provide parents with timely, accurate and useful information, including information about each student's progress, and to provide mechanisms for taking advantage of the huge range of talents offered by our parent community.

Root Cause: Loss of parent-school connections

Some negative history and the grade reconfiguration of 2007-2008 resulted in less than optimal levels of parent-school connections.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Develop more opportunities for parents to connect with others parents in classroom and school volunteer programs.	Continue support for VOICES program and parent volunteer programs at all levels. Continue to identify ways in which parents can contribute skills and knowledge for the benefit of the school, provide opportunities for such and recognize volunteer efforts continuously.
Have more Literacy and Math Nights at the elementary level and more curriculum/instruction sessions for parents at the Middle School and High School.	
Develop communication strategies for FY10-FY14 School Improvement Plans (SIPs)	
Improve teacher-parent communications. Find ways to make progress reporting more accurate and more timely and find opportunities for teachers and parents to communicate about subjects other than student progress.	<p>Have each school council as part of their School Improvement Plan (SIP) assess the percentage of parent participation at their school and characterize the group of non-participating parents. Central Office should design these assessments to include both student-specific and non-student-specific interactions.</p> <p>FY10 and beyond: Have each school council as part of their School Improvement Plan (SIP) assess ways to assist teachers in providing regular and timely communication of each student's progress to their parents, grades PK-12. Example progress reporting systems include SnapGrades, which provides both grade and narrative reporting tools. Where possible, consider the integration of this system with a full student information system.</p>
<p>Support development of strong PTOs at all levels.</p> <p>Host and encourage school events that provide connection opportunities for parents and teachers.</p>	

Root Cause: No clear data baseline

No clear baseline exists to measure parents' perception of their connection to school

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Establish a data baseline for the Parent-School connection.	Analyze parent surveys from FY08, and redesign surveys for FY09 that focus on the data areas that support the strategic plan and questions that can be repeated annually. Extract data from ASSETS Survey on <u>Parent Involvement in Schools</u> and chart it.

Schools Value Faculty and Staff

Faculty and staff report feeling more valued by their school and by the school district.

Vision Statement

Newburyport Public Schools values its faculty and staff. Faculty and staff that are valued by their school and school district are likely to be more satisfied and productive employees. As the primary interface to Newburyport's students, this is key. Newburyport Public Schools recognize this and actively work to maintain and improve its environment for teaching by listening to staff and working to address concerns. Newburyport's teachers are generally happy with their jobs and look forward to coming to work each morning. Newburyport's teaching environment helps develop confident, well-trained and effective teachers. Teachers want to work in Newburyport. Newburyport is able to retain its teachers and attracts many highly-qualified new teachers.

Opportunity for Improvement

Through six years of budget reductions, the faculty and staff of the Newburyport Schools have experienced job losses and significant program reductions, the closing of a school, and restructuring of the school system. Faculty and staff have been asked to work harder than ever under more challenging conditions.

It is important for the success of students and our schools to maintain a satisfied and professionally motivated work force. Unfortunately, Newburyport Schools have little information about our staff perceptions of how much they are valued and about how to increase their feelings of being valued. Without better information, any actions that the administration, School Committee, the community, and the faculty and staff themselves take are ad-hoc, and will have limited effect.

Root Cause: No Data Baseline Exists

No baseline exists in order to determine faculty and staff perceptions about how much they are valued by their schools and the school district

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
<p>Survey the faculty and staff annually on perception about being valued and other perceptions about school and work climate.</p> <p>Provide time needed for staff to dialog and share perceptions about working conditions and school climate.</p>	<p>Continue offering the end-of-year teacher surveys. Modify the survey to insure that it queries teachers for their feelings of being valuable, and how best to increase this feeling.</p> <p>Convene a discussion with teachers to understand their feelings regarding school climate and working conditions. Focus on listening and understanding. Identification of specific problems and solutions can come later. Goal of such meetings is to simply listen.</p> <p>Assess and distribute MassTeLLS teacher survey data.</p>
<p>Determine possible steps to take to improve the environment for faculty and staff. Recommend a plan. Implement the plan.</p>	

Root Cause: Not all citizens value teachers’ contributions to the community and the success of the community’s students. A percentage of Newburyport citizens do not value the work of teachers and the importance of excellent teachers to the community. Negative sentiment is sometimes directed at teacher compensation or expressed as uninformed opinion lacking appreciation for how complex and difficult teaching is as a job, and the levels of competence and commitment required for success.

Express the confidence of the School Committee in the talents and commitment of our staff to meet the challenges of educating our students in the high demand environment of the early 21st century. Do so by communication of and recognition of teachers successes in:

- Raising student achievement
- Implementing new researched-based instructional practices

- Creating an inclusive classroom and school environment
- Increasing student engagement in 21st century skills development
- Increasing students' connection to the school
- Leadership on goals of this Strategic Plan

<p>Professional and academic achievements</p> <p>The School Committee will recognize the successes of teachers individually, as teams or departments, and as an educator community at School Committee meetings, and in Committee communications.</p> <p>The School Committee will work with the Superintendent and NTA Leadership to develop relevant, regular and timely recognition opportunities.</p>	
<p>Work to ensure that Newburyport teachers' compensation is fair and competitive</p>	<p>School Committee will work collaboratively with NTA to establish a fair and competitive contract.</p>

Root Cause: Teacher' morale impacted by negative press and uniformed public opinion

<p>Continue and expand programs to award teachers and show the community's appreciation of their contribution to our community.</p>	<p>Continue with the Molin awards. Teachers very much look forward to these and greatly appreciate them.</p> <p>See goal above to simply listen to teachers.</p>

Improved Communication

Improve the effectiveness of two-way communication between the school and the school community and between the schools and the larger community.

Vision Statement

Communication is regular and open. The level of trust is high. There are few occurrences of lack of communication or of mis-communication. Members of the Newburyport Public School community feel that their concerns are heard by the District. Newburyport continues to monitor and improve communication at all levels: teacher-parent, school-parent, school-teacher, district-parent, district-teacher, and district-Newburyport.

Opportunity for Improvement

Newburyport Public Schools recognize that communication between a school and its constituents can never be good enough. The same is true for the district as a whole. School District to citizen communications appears to need special attention. The Newburyport Schools recognizes that excellent two-way communications provides the basis for increased financial support of the schools, better knowledge of the areas in which the Schools should improve, and for improvement of trust between Newburyport citizens and its schools.

Root Cause: Positive happenings aren't well communicated

Newburyport Schools need to improve communication to community about the multitude of great things going on in the Schools.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Improve school and District web sites in content, currency, and usability to increase public use.	

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
<p>Improve District to community communications.</p>	<p>The School Committee will publish several issues of a newsletter which highlights our instructional initiatives, school improvement plans, financial planning, and student and staff successes.</p> <p>The School Committee will establish "Conversations about Education" as part of its regular meeting. These "Conversations" will each feature a topic appropriate to our schools, and will allow the public to engage in a discussion about them.</p>
<p>School newsletters are issued regularly and target student and staff successes, instructional initiatives, school improvement progress. Superintendent and Schools communicate school system goals and progress regularly to parents and the community through newsletters, bulletins, position statements, and any other appropriate means.</p>	
<p>Have more literacy and math nights at the elementary level and more curriculum/instruction sessions for parents at the Middle School and High School.</p>	<p>Continue offering literacy and math nights. Update and improve these events based on feedback from FY08's events.</p>
<p>Explore grant to support or work with City to support employment of a public relations specialist to strategically communicate.</p>	
<p>Display and advertise more student work and activities through as many community avenues as possible.</p>	<p>School Committee to take a lead in advertising student work and activities.</p>
<p>Work with specialists within the school to help provide obvious community public relations via the arts and technology.</p>	
<p>Stay in weekly contact with the local area newspapers. Assign a contact person to work with a contact person at the newspapers.</p>	

Root Cause: Insufficient opportunity to provide feedback to schools

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Use surveys creatively to gather information and feedback to NPS.	See goal below on parent and community surveys.
Provide focus group venues for two-way communication on important subjects at school and district levels.	

Root Cause: No data baseline for two-way communication

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Develop clear baseline information by standardizing on survey questions that can be repeated annually.	School Committee to establish metrics for measuring two-way communication with the public.
Use surveys creatively to engage the public.	Continue to use end-of-year parent and community surveys. Modify the surveys to insure that they evaluate communication effectiveness with parents and the broader Newburyport community. Surveys should evaluate specific mechanisms (newsletter, phone system, etc.) for their perceived effectiveness.

Improved Appreciation for Diversity

Members of the Newburyport Public Schools community recognize the strength and wisdom in having a diverse and respectful community. Members report an increased feeling of respect by others in the school community.

Vision Statement

Newburyport recognizes that the strength of its school system is built on diversity. The broader and wider its foundation of unique values and strengths, the stronger and higher Newburyport can build its

educational excellence. Newburyport Public Schools welcome every member of the community with each person's unique values, characteristics, passions and challenges. Each member of our community reaches out to others and seeks to understand and appreciate their abilities. Each member strives to recognize those moments when they automatically “stereotype” another person, and actively reach out to that person to move beyond the stereotype. The community monitors itself for persistence of non-appreciative behavior and, when recognized, implements programs and activities to help reduce the behavior.

Opportunity for Improvement

There are pockets or groups of students who are not receiving the respect and appreciation they deserve. Sometimes this non-appreciating behavior is intentional, but usually it happens casually and is unrecognized by the offending person. Often non-appreciating behavior is coupled with student social and group behaviors, and occurs because “everyone is doing it.” Of course, the targets of the behaviors recognize the non-appreciative behavior, are hurt, and seek to avoid further exposure to it by distancing themselves from the perpetrator. The community fragments.

Root Cause: No data Baseline exists on diversity appreciation

No clear baseline exists to measure community members’ beliefs, behaviors, and experience about appreciating diversity in the community.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
<p>Develop clear baseline information by standardizing on survey questions that can be repeated annually, preferably a validated instrument.</p>	<p>Collaborate with NYS and City Hall to send School Committee Survey on perceptions of the schools and community values via property tax bills.</p> <p>Continue annual school effectiveness surveys and include specific questions about appreciation for diversity.</p> <p>Extract data from ASSETS Survey sections <u>Interpersonal Confidence</u> and <u>Cultural Competence</u>. Chart the data.</p>

Root Cause: Not all members of school community receive Equal respect

Not everyone in the Newburyport Schools community feels appreciated by others in the community

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Hold focus groups on issues of respect at each school and at the district level for students, staff, parents, and community facilitated by a professional.	
Brainstorm cultural and program changes that increase respect.	
Create a PK-12 continuum of programs that support respect and appreciation for differences.	Catalog all programs, PK-12, that help to promote respect and appreciation of differences.
Increase coordination of PK-12 developmental programming for respect and appreciation of differences.	
Support and implement new efforts based on survey results.	
Provide education for students, staff, parents on respect and appreciation for diversity. Collaborate with other organizations such as Parent partnership, PTO, Commission on Diversity and Tolerance, YWCA, Learning Enrichment Center, etc.	
Build diversity into school events. Events don't necessarily have to focus on diversity, but should make diversity an underlying context for the event. For example, a drama club event where Newburyport students interact with students from the Lawrence High School drama club to produce a play.	
Focus efforts to increase appreciation of all groups, but especially key groups that are under-appreciated, as identified by survey data.	

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Gather data to determine specific groups suffering from a lack of appreciation. Explore root causes for this lack of respect and identify possible solutions.	Collaborate with NYS to identify any specific groups that are non-appreciated in the school community, perhaps through focus groups. For identified groups, explore possible root causes for the lack of respect.

Newburyport Values Schools

An increased number of citizens report feeling positive value for the Newburyport Public Schools.

Vision Statement

Newburyport is a community that values schools. Its citizens see education as a foundational element of a quality society. Newburyport citizens strive to provide excellent educational opportunities for the City's youth, and actively encourage and support them in all educational endeavors. Newburyport does its best – within its citizens' means – to provide the financial support needed to provide educational facilities, programs and staffing.

Opportunity for Improvement

Anecdotal evidence strongly suggests that the community, as a whole, does not positively value Newburyport Public Schools. Much of the anecdotal information is based on the perceptions formed in the past. Myths of a negative nature persist, particularly among community members who do not have a direct and current connection to the schools. Stories persist of schools that aren't fair to everyone, that don't challenge their students, that provide only a fair to average education. A school funding override was defeated 60%-40% in the spring of 2007, despite the well-advertised fact that a failed override would mean significant reductions to important programs and loss of important opportunities for our students. Many citizens communicated their distrust of the Schools' ability to conduct its business effectively.

Impacting how citizens value our public schools is a challenge that requires creative thinking and a dramatic increase in current public education efforts. Trust, or lack thereof, in the schools and in City government in general, is a common perception of what is lacking for public support of the schools.

Root Cause: Citizens have incorrect perception of schools

Some citizens rely on distant past perceptions in their current perception of the schools (secret budget, hide money, too many administrators, teachers overpaid, School Committee that doesn't listen)

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
School Committee Communications Committee develops master communications plan	See goals listed under the “Improve Communications” goal.
Engage the public in activities that increase citizens' awareness of the schools’ successes and challenges	
Develop marketing plan and secure the resources and capacity to implement the plan. Private funding can be sought to support part-time marketing director function or alternatives.	
<p>Develop more programs that bring citizens into the schools. Develop more programs that bring students and student work into the community. Possible examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver student artwork to seniors • Deliver student artwork to veterans • Have a Senior Citizen's Day. (Breakfast, music, art, 2008 classroom experience vs. 1950, etc.) • Participate in veterans/memorial day activities • Reading/talking/interfaces with seniors • Participation in Special Olympics • Participation in Meals on Wheels • Other internship examples, coordinated through NHS/NEBC internship program 	
Increase and expand Adult Education program through partnership with the Newburyport Adult Education group. Involve current students as much as possible in the implementation of this	

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
program. Use students to help teach these classes.	
Find ways to get more topic experts from our community into classrooms.	
Evaluate ways to connect community expertise with classroom educational topics. Include VOICES program, and possibility of using web-based tools to advertise teacher's topic plan and have community members "sign-up."	
Develop programs that put more students into the community doing community service	
Have a "professional" day for students. Examples: Student day with the Mayor. Student day with a doctor. Student day with a carpenter.	
Students are rewarded for civic engagement in school recognition or credit where appropriate	

Root Cause: Negative stereotypes of students

Some citizens have a negative stereotype of students, especially teens.

Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Establish mechanisms for students and citizens to interact on this issue and discuss their views and feelings, in an effort to understand each other.	Collaborate with NYS to establish discussions between teens and older adults.

Root Cause: School Committee "Not Hearing"

Citizens don't feel "heard" by the School Committee. 30% of respondents to the School Committee's

FY08 survey felt that the School Committee did not respond to citizen concerns.

Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Develop a plan to hear and acknowledge these concerns and increase the School Committee's opportunities to "listen."	School Committee to brainstorm on issue of "not hearing" the public, identify strategies, and undertake a few specific actions in FY09 to help improve this perception.

Root Cause: Some public perception that schools do not use resources effectively

A number of citizens do not feel that Newburyport Schools spend money effectively. 40% of respondents on the FY08 School Committee community survey feel that NPS does not "use its available resources effectively."

Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Work to understand the community's response in this area and determine what's real and what's perception. Make and implement a plan accordingly.	School Committee to brainstorm on realities and perception of ineffective use of resources, identify strategies, and undertake a few specific actions in FY09 to help improve this perception.

Root Cause: Lack of non-parent participation

Citizens without children in the Newburyport Public Schools do not participate in school activities and generally do not "think" much about schools. 88% of respondents on the FY08 School Committee survey have a child in Newburyport schools. The survey did not gain significant response from citizens without kids in school.

Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Understand the reasons behind this lack of non-parent participation and plan accordingly.	School Committee to brainstorm on the issue of increasing non-parent participation in schools, identify strategies, and undertake a few specific actions in FY09 to help improve participation among citizens without kids in school.

Goals to Promote Wellness

Healthy Eating, Increased Physical Activity, and Safe Behavior

Students are healthier and safer.

Vision Statement

We envision that over the term of this Strategic Plan our students will become healthier eaters, become more physically fit, engage in fewer in risk behaviors, and engage in less bullying behavior. We also see a greatly improved learning environment and community with healthy learners who are physically and emotionally safe.

The connection between good health and learning is well established. Good health is supported by good nutrition and physical fitness. The connection between youth risk behaviors and learning is also clearly established and students who report having fewer ASSETS (protective factors) are more likely to struggle as learners and are more likely to drop out of school. Bullying is too common in today's communities and bullying and other intimidating behaviors threaten students' physical and emotional safety. Feeling safe is essential to learning and all students have a right to feel safe in school.

Opportunity for Improvement

The District recently put an administrative Wellness Policy into place. The policy addresses three areas of health and wellness; these are (1) Nutrition, (2) Physical Activity, and (3) Youth Risk Behaviors. In the elementary, middle, and high school grades, there are a number of programs within the curriculum that address each of these three areas. However, wellness has not been addressed in a comprehensive manner by the District. This has resulted in a patchwork of programs, many programs effective in their own right, but the PK-12 continuum of efforts is not coordinated.

By 10th grade, 30% of our students are overweight or obese. This mirrors state statistics. We know that many students do not get enough physical exercise. Results of the *Youth Risk Behavior* and *ASSETS* surveys suggest that we need to strengthen the protective factors available to our youth. Bullying persists as a problem in our school system and community.

Root Cause: Baseline data in incomplete

Data on health factors, risk factors, and bullying behavior is incomplete and not centralized, making a baseline difficult to determine.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
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Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Build central database for data on health factors, risk behaviors and assets, and bullying behavior.	Extract data from school health database, from Youth Risk Behavior Survey (bullying, overweight and sedentary questions) and Assets Survey (Caring School and Community and Peaceful Conflict Resolution questions).

Root Cause: Lack of a comprehensive approach to health and wellness

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Collaborate with Newburyport community organizations to help develop a community-wide and comprehensive understanding of health and wellness in Newburyport.	Implement the School Committee and Administrative Wellness Policies. Charge the Health and Wellness Advisory Council and the district Prevention Specialists to develop student health goals, strategies and benchmarks for nutrition, physical activity, risk behaviors, and life-long health. Include in all three goals: physical activity, eating and behavior.

Root Cause: Community is complacent regarding healthy behaviors and eating habits

There is a lack of awareness and complacency in our community regarding healthy eating habits.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Educate the Newburyport community on youth health and wellness.	Introduce wellness website for use by the community. Include in all three goals: physical activity, eating and behaviors. Expand community knowledge of the 40 assets. Partner with NYS.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Educate Newburyport Public School staff on Youth Health and Wellness.	Introduce all staff to 40 assets. Support study groups or workshops for credit/PDPs for intermediate training.

Root Cause: Risk behaviors persist

Students continue to participate in risk behaviors such as alcohol consumption and drug use

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Collaborate with Newburyport community organizations to help develop a community-wide and comprehensive understanding of health and wellness issues for Newburyport youth.	See charge to health-wellness advisory council in the “Increased Physical Education and Activity” goal.

Root Cause: Students and parents don't fully understand legal ramifications

Students don't fully understand legal ramifications of underage drinking and drug use.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Expand and develop education regarding legal impact of underage drinking.	Repeat NHS Senior Week required parent and student education programs annually, continuing to coordinate with local police and NYS to educate NHS students and their parents on underage drinking. Expand to Middle School. Partner with NYS.

Root Cause: Community tolerates under age drinking

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
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Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Begin a discussion within the Newburyport community on the topic of underage drinking. Explore beliefs and behaviors, and the impact those behaviors have on youth with respect to drinking. Assess ways to improve beliefs and behaviors.	Complete parent/community survey sponsored by the Beacon Coalition. Disseminate results to community.

Root Cause: Risk behaviors aren't well talked about

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Continue to gather data and communicate the data on risk behaviors, including alcohol consumption, drug use, tobacco use, and sexual activity.	<p>Work with NYS and others to promote a community-wide discussion of the results of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey.</p> <p>Promote a community-wide discussion of the results of the Youth Assets Survey.</p>
Educate and enable students to resist risk behaviors on a life-long basis. Work to continuously freshen the message. Repetition of the same message results in students not hearing and apathy.	

Root Cause: Limited opportunity for physical activity for older students

Beginning at about seventh grade, the primary opportunity for physical activity, outside of scheduled PE classes, is interscholastic sports. Regular physical activity is essential for healthy students who are ready to learn to their fullest potential. This goal recognizes that fact and sets an objective to increase overall student participation in physical activities. There are many forms of physical activity, including interscholastic sports and physical education classes, but also activities outside the District, such as dance, tai chi, yoga, organized sports programs, and a personal training practice. This goal encourages all of these and other forms of physical activity.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Institute an intramural program at Upper Elementary, Middle and High School.	NHS Athletics Study Committee evaluates adequacy of .6 FTE Athletic Director position.
Maintain and grow opportunities for unique, personal and fun physical activities at all levels. Utilize partnerships with local organizations, as necessary to accomplish this.	
Make physical activity a part of a student's personal record. Make a record of student achievements in this area.	Recommend an action plan for implementing a co-curricular transcript that includes documenting sustained participation in physical activities, for example, competitive swim, dance performance, rock climbing club, fencing class.
Collect data on student participation in physical activity. Use data to drive decision making.	

Root Cause: Narrow range of opportunities for physical activity

Wide range of interests, but relatively narrow array of opportunities

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Begin offering programs in the unaddressed areas of interest, through intramurals, external partnerships and other mechanisms.	Determine areas of interest that are not being addressed. Partner with Newburyport Youth Services to accomplish this.
Expand participation in existing programs.	

Root Cause: Many athletic opportunities emphasize skill and not participation

Our current high performance environment emphasizes skill rather than participation in sports, especially for older students. Such an environment forces a narrowing of activities for many students, except for the very skilled, often resulting in zero participation in physical activities.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
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Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Expand physical activity programs that focus more on participation and exercise, and that do not limit participation on the basis of skill or performance.	

Root Cause: Lack of “fun” sport opportunities

Many students don't find a sport in which they have “fun.”

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
See strategies above. Activities enjoying a large level of participation are usually fun. Being “fun” is necessary for good participation.	Continue to collaborate with NYS and the YWCA to identify and carry out youth activities. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ski bus • Gym memberships • Open gym and training room for all students Include the concept of “open gym” on the FY09 NHS athletics study.

Root Cause: Limited opportunities for life-long physical activities

Students don't have access to many activities which teach or encourage life-long fitness

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Increase educational focus on life-long health.	
Expand opportunities that support life-long health.	

Root Cause: Persistence of bullying

There is a persistence of bullying and other intimidating behaviors in all communities, Newburyport included.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
<p>Establish policies and coordinate anti-bullying programs across all grade levels.</p> <p>Establish Professional development for teachers in recognizing and discouraging intimidating behaviors.</p> <p>Educate students and parents in the persistence of bullying and how to recognize and discourage intimidating behavior.</p> <p>Offer programs to help offenders reduce and eliminate their behavior.</p>	<p>Establish a clear definition of bullying.</p> <p>Establish a policy on anti-bullying.</p> <p>Establish, coordinate, and expand anti-bullying programs at Molin and Nock.</p> <p>Carry out parent workshops to educate parents on forms of bullying, the School's programs to reduce bullying, and steps parents can take to help reduce bullying.</p>
<p>Gather data on the amount and type of bullying behaviors.</p>	

Safe and Secure Environment

Our schools become safer places to learn and work.

Vision Statement

We envision our schools becoming progressively safer over the term of this Strategic Plan as we make physical improvements to facilities that make them more secure and as we increase our human capacity to reduce safety risks and respond to crises and emergencies.

As Abraham Maslow described decades ago in his *Hierarchy of Learning*, safety needs being met is a prerequisite to learning. A student who is worried or concerned about assault from an outside person, or who feels either physically or emotionally threatened cannot learn. Good learners require that their basic needs are met, including the need for safety and security.

Opportunity for Improvement

Our school facilities have deficiencies in perimeter security and in interior physical security that compromises overall safety and security. Crisis and emergency planning and staff and student response needs to be continuously improved but time and resources limit planning and training.

Root Cause: Facilities lack a secure perimeter

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Identify insecure areas of facility perimeters, and establish a plan to upgrade and/or repair them.	Reclassify and re-identify capital improvements needed to provide a secure perimeter to all school properties.
Mount a continuous and constant campaign to fund the repairs. Clearly communicate the importance of these line items for the safety and security of our students.	
Where possible, identify alternative mechanisms to repair insecure areas of the perimeter. These include grants and use of volunteer efforts.	

Root Cause: Facilities lack interior security measures

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Identify insecure areas of facility interiors especially door locks, intercom systems, and other internal communications systems. Establish a plan to upgrade and/or repair them.	Reclassify and re-identify capital improvements needed to provide a secure perimeter to all school properties.
Mount a continuous and constant campaign to fund the repairs. Clearly communicate the importance of these line items for the safety and security of our students.	
Where possible, identify alternative mechanisms to repair insecure areas of building interiors. These include grants and use of volunteer efforts.	

Root Cause: Crisis response requires continuous improvement

Emergency communication devices for staff need to function as closely to perfect as possible but current Nextel phones and hand-held radios perform poorly in a crisis. School intercom systems have deficiencies.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Pay continuing attention to improving the capacity of the school crisis response teams.	<p>Utilize the drills and the October 22, 2008 “secure-in-place” event to identify specific improvements to our Crisis Response Guidelines.</p> <p>Implement and practice identified improvements in Crisis Response Guidelines in collaboration with local safety and crisis response officials.</p> <p>Evaluate readiness and adequacy of “Go Bags”.</p>
Improve communication systems and tools.	<p>Identify communications system improvements and costs.</p> <p>Identify emergency notification communication improvements and educate parent community and</p>

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
	public on changes and upgrades.

Engaged and Confident Learners

More students become engaged and confident learners.

Vision Statement

We envision all students, PK-12, engaged in their learning and with their school community. Classroom learning is meaningful and relevant for all students. Students are much more likely to succeed if they are excited by what they're learning. Engaged students look forward to learning, seek answers and solutions on their own, and achieve at higher levels.

Similarly, confident students are those who approach problems and challenges with open-minds and are willing to try new and different solutions. This confidence spills over into other parts of their lives, allowing and encouraging much more creative and positive personae to emerge.

Opportunity for Improvement

Many students today report feeling disconnected from their studies and report difficulty in connecting school learning with their lives. They often ask, “Why should I care?” and “What does this have to do with me?” Many students lack the confidence to take on new challenges or to approach problems with the confidence that hard work will pay off in terms of success or achievement. A major national study found that as students progress from grade 6 through grade 12 they report in increasing proportion that they do not find school relevant to their lives and futures.

Root Cause: Lack of a baseline

How engaged and confident are our students? We know, anecdotally, that many students are not highly engaged and confident learners. We also know the national statistics in this regard and these are disheartening. We do not know exactly how our students would report their connection to learning in school and therefore lack a baseline from which to measure progress toward our vision.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Develop or adopt a standard assessment technique for engagement and confidence.	Recommend an assessment for use in FY10 and budget appropriately.
Establish baseline by assessing students using adopted assessments.	Extract data from ASSETS Survey on <u>School Engagement</u> and on <u>Commitment to Learning</u> and chart it.

Root Cause: Difficult to discern relevance of classroom content

Students sometimes have difficulty seeing relevance of classroom content and experience. To quote a mother of past Newburyport High School students:

“This was a common complaint from my own kids, but I imagine it will be challenging to provide relevance that would be meaningful to all students, as their interests will vary widely. Still, an attempt at this may prove worthwhile to keep more students engaged in learning.”

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
<p>Encourage the use of instructional techniques that assist in making learning more relevant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active hands-on experiential learning • Self-directed learning • Inquiry-based learning • Project-based learning • Portfolio and presentation-based assignments where students showcase their work • Collaborative learning • Real world application, including field trips. “Direct Experiences,” especially low-cost walking trips in Newburyport – even for High School students – are valuable. Example subjects include history, judicial systems, etc. • Sense of place/community 	<p>Conduct regular administrative “walk-throughs,” grades PK-12. Support and encourage use of strategies to make learning more relevant to students’ lives.</p> <p>School Committee and teachers, in contract negotiations, work to increase use of “Collaborative Evaluation Process” that is option available for teachers in the contract.</p>
<p>Increase number and frequency of community service projects, with a careful balance to insure that students receive valuable experience.</p>	

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Increase number and frequency of guest lecturers and connections to businesses, professions, and trades.	

Root Cause: Schools don't tap into students' passions

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
<p>Implement a “Passion Block” to provide time for students to enjoy their passions and to provide teachers new avenues to experiment with differentiating instruction and assessment.</p> <p>Use the “Adult for every Student” program (see strategies for Connecting Students with Schools) to determine and tap into each student's passions.</p>	Investigate Governor’s Expanded Learning Time Grant program to lengthen school day and provide more time for “passion” activities.

Root Cause: Expectations are not always clearly articulated

Expectations of students, parents and teachers are not clearly articulated

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
<p>Encourage early and honest setting of expectations among students, parents and teachers. Setting of expectations can include the following techniques:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exemplars • Modeling of expectations • Rubrics • Common goals/expectations/standards • Greater opportunity for reflection • Students participate to help identify/choose a learning plan that relates to their interest • Convey to students what they are learning 	

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
<p>and why they are learning it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicit discussions about learning as a privilege and responsibility • Expectations should incorporate and value the “journey as well as the destination.” Put another way, there can be too much emphasis on grades and learning for the sake of grades. • Expectations should not become a black and white checklist. They should set an expectation that students must come prepared to think creatively to solve problems. • Increase parent teacher communication about what is going on in class and what the expectations are for learning. 	

Root Cause: Insufficient time to develop engaging units of study

Teachers lack time and resources to learn, develop and implement creative and engaging units of study

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Support sustained professional development.	School Committee and teachers, in contract negotiations, work to include process through which teachers’ Individual Professional Development Plans (IPDP) better support sustained professional development and better connection to District’s strategic goals.
Provide time and support for teachers to practice newly acquired knowledge and skills.	
Encourage and support innovation and experimentation in the classroom. Find ways to give and encourage flexibility for teachers in how they orchestrate class time, to enable more student engagement.	School Committee and teachers, in contract negotiations, work to increase use of “Collaborative Evaluation Process” that is option available for teachers in the contract.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Increase opportunities for teacher learning through connections with colleges, businesses, and government.	Determine and report reasons that few teachers participate in NEBC Externship Program.
Consider changes in the school day schedule to improve student engagement. Consider starting day later for older students, and earlier for younger students.	

Root Cause: Standards limit ability to respond to student passions

State standards dictate curriculum to too great a degree limiting teachers availability to be responsive to student passions

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Break down myth that the state frameworks entirely dictate the curriculum. Communicate that our curriculum is a carefully designed and constructed educational plan aligned with and using selected portions of the state frameworks.	See FY09 specific actions in goal for Balanced, Standards-based Curriculum.

Appendix A: Positive Youth Development

Newburyport Youth Services has chosen to develop its recreation, prevention and empowerment programming around the Positive Youth Development approach. This approach translates into our work through the BEACON Coalition as positive avenue towards supporting the development of healthy youth.

We are supporting this approach with evidence from the Search Institute and the Profile's

In Student Life Survey. The Search Institute provides information on the power of the developmental assets to both reduce high risk behavior and promote thriving indicators which result in academic success.

What Is Positive Youth Development?

The Positive Youth Development approach suggests that helping young people to achieve their full potential is the best way to prevent them from engaging in risky behaviors. Organizations and communities that promote Positive Youth Development give youth the chance to exercise leadership, build skills, and get involved. The self-confidence, trust, and practical knowledge that young people gain from these opportunities help them grow into healthy, happy, self-sufficient adults.

Positive Thinking Leads to Positive Results

When community members and policymakers harness the positive energy and initiative of youth, good things happen:

- Youth believe they can be successful instead of internalizing the negative stereotypes about them that often appear in the media.
- Youth engage in productive activities that build job and life skills and reinforce community-mindedness.
- Youth grow comfortable questioning and exploring their roles as citizens in a participatory democracy.
- In addition, adults who work closely with youth—and therefore see their dedication, responsibility, and willingness to learn—tend to view youth positively.

Positive Youth Development Takes Many Forms

Organizations and communities put Positive Youth Development into practice by allowing young people to help make important decisions about their own lives, the organizations that serve them, and their communities.

The Evidence Is Growing²

Since its creation in 1990, Search Institute's framework of Developmental Assets has become the most widely used approach to positive youth development in the United States.

Background—Grounded in extensive research in youth development, resiliency, and prevention, the Developmental Assets represent the relationships, opportunities, and personal qualities that young people need to avoid risks and to thrive.

The Power of Assets—Studies of more than 2.2 million young people in the United States consistently show that the more assets young people have, the less likely they are to engage in a wide range of high-risk behaviors (see table below) and the more likely they are to thrive. Assets have power for all young people, regardless of their gender, economic status, family, or race/ethnicity. Furthermore, levels of assets are better predictors of high-risk involvement and thriving than poverty or being from a single-parent family.

The Gap—The average young person experiences fewer than half of the 40 assets. In 2008, the average Newburyport Student has 22 assets. (www.searchinstitute.org)

A Role for Everyone

Though the concept may seem simple, Positive Youth Development requires an enormous community mobilization. Everyone has a role to play:

- Neighborhood leaders and community members can involve young people in measuring how well the community supports youth, and then work together to improve services.
- Policymakers can engage youth in discussions about policies that affect them.
- Business leaders can teach young people the skills they will need for successful employment.
- Youth service organizations can encourage youth participation in every aspect of their work.
- Members of the media can help give young people outlets for expressing their views.
- Treatment providers can engage adolescent treatment recipients in service to others, for instance, as peer educators.
- Teachers and school administrators can ensure that school policies, procedures, and teaching methods engage young people fully.
- Faith-based institutions can involve young people in community activities.

² <http://www.search-institute.org/content/what-are-developmental-assets> 11/14/2008

- Parents can strive to engage their children in positive activities that nurture their talents, skills, and interests.

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