



ANDOVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

36 Bartlet Street
Andover, MA 01810
(978) 247-7010
FAX (978) 247-7090

SCHOOL COMMITTEE:

Joel G. Blumstein, Esq., Chair
Susan K. McCready, Vice Chair
Paul D. Murphy
Shannon Scully
Ted E. Teichert

Sheldon H. Berman, Ed.D
Superintendent of Schools
sheldon.berman@andoverma.us

TO: Andover School Committee Members
FROM: Sheldon H. Berman, Ed.D., Superintendent
SUBJECT: Superintendent Mid-Year Report on Goals for 2016-17
DATE: March 20, 2017

PROGRESS ON SUPERINTENDENT GOALS FOR 2016-17

1. The superintendent will launch the development of a new strategic plan designed around agile strategic planning principles with defined targets for improvement. (Standard IV: Professional Culture; Professional Practice Goal)

Evidence/Product: Establish new targets and action steps to achieve those targets.

At the end of the 2015-16 school year, administrators in the district began developing a new strategic plan utilizing an agile strategic planning model. During five days of summer meetings, the entire team of more than forty administrators drafted a theory of action to guide the work on an agile strategic plan. The team also designed an opening day activity that engaged all staff in articulating the commitments that they felt were vital to moving the district forward. The “We Won’t Stop Until...” statement that evolved from opening day and the theory of action became cornerstones of the new plan.

Throughout the year, we have engaged in an iterative process among the Superintendents Administrative Team (SAT), the All Administrators group, staff members and other community members in which we shared and discussed the theory of action in small groups and refined the wording and the action steps designed to achieve our goals.

After defining targets and strategies, we identified next-step “sprints” to begin progressing toward our goals. At the last two All Administrators meetings, we refined the sprints and developed sprint teams, which are now meeting on a regular basis. I have attached the memo that was distributed to all administrators prior to our last meeting describing the sprints and our process.

Over the coming months each sprint team leader will work with their sprint teams to move forward on their target, report back to the SAT on their progress and, when appropriate, report to the School Committee. The heart of the agile strategic planning process is to make next-step gains toward our goals, reflect on the progress, make appropriate adjustments to ensure success, and determine the next step in the sprint. Because no district has done this kind of planning before, we are creating it as we move forward. That, in itself, has added excitement and greater commitment to the work we are doing.

Not only has this type of planning enabled us to identify key areas that are instrumental to our progress as a district, but it has generated strong internal commitment and leadership for achieving our goals.

2. The superintendent will assist in problem-solving to ensure a smooth and effective transition in the high school schedule that realizes the benefits outlined in the proposal and/or to recommend any necessary adjustments to the proposal based on issues related to logistics, process, or budget so that the high school's instructional program is strengthened. (Standard II: Management and Operations; Student Learning Goal)

Evidence/Product: Complete testing of the new schedule, communicate regularly with key constituency groups, and make adjustments to ensure success.

After postponing the implementation of the new high school schedule during last year's budget process, the School Committee, the high school administration, the AEA leadership, and central office administration remained committed to moving the schedule forward for implementation in September 2017. The high school administration, faculty and staff have worked throughout the year to address the financial, logistical, and operational aspects to achieve a successful implementation.

The high school administrative team convened an implementation team that created a Gantt chart defining the tasks to be completed before the end of the school year and those that need to be addressed over the summer. The implementation team is currently working with the members of their departments in re-imagining a semester course to one that is a full year. In addition, the team of teachers working on H Block has written instructional units for the first block of the sequence. They have begun the process of developing the H1 classes, and they are polling the faculty around potential H2 – H5 student opportunities. Logistically, the team is prepared for another test run of the Enriching Software on the two early release days in May and June and will also test a schedule rotation on each of those days.

Because the AEA's poll of faculty on the schedule indicated mixed feelings about the new schedule, the high school administration surveyed faculty about their concerns. Concerns emerged about having sufficient time to revise courses to fit into the new schedule, the differences in total time for various blocks, the positioning of H block within the schedule, the curriculum to be used during H1, etc. Over the past months the implementation team and the high school administration have made adjustments to the schedule and provided time and resources to address many of these concerns. Schedule change is never easy for faculty because they have to make changes in the organization of their courses. However, given the commitment of the administration, association and School Committee to move forward, high school faculty members are working diligently to prepare for a successful implementation.

The AHS administration and guidance department have also focused on communication, making presentations at each of the middle schools and for parents of high school students. The AHS Program of Studies was completed, incorporating all the necessary changes in schedule and graduation requirements to align with the new schedule. Presentations were made to the School Committee on progress and the Program of Studies.

The FTE requirements to meet additional staffing needs in both regular and special education are in the proposed FY18 budget. Moreover, the team included a request for the seed money and staffing necessary to begin a freshman year AVID course and for membership in an online learning consortium for those students who wish to accelerate or enrich their learning. Although preparation for the schedule will continue through the spring, the high school is well positioned to implement it in the fall.

3. The superintendent and assistant superintendent for finance and administration will work with the School Committee, staff and community to refine the district's facility plan and begin the process of submission of a Statement of Interest for the renovation or replacement of the first facility identified in the plan. (Standard II: Management and Operations; District Improvement Goal)

Evidence/Product: Development and submission of a high quality Statement of Interest (SOI) to the Massachusetts School Building Authority prior to MSBA's 2017 deadline.

We have made exceptional progress in moving forward on the district's facility plan. After thorough consideration by the School Committee with input from parents and staff through a series of forums this past fall, the School Committee voted to move forward in submitting a Statement of Interest (SOI) to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) for West Elementary. In addition, the Committee decided to move forward with renovations to Andover High School without the support of MSBA.

Since that time, we have been collecting data and developing a draft of the West Elementary SOI for the School Committee to consider. This work has required revisiting our enrollment projections, assessing areas of West Elementary that are problematic, and determining which MSBA priority areas will enable us to make the best case. A draft will be available for the School Committee to consider at its March 23 meeting.

In addition to the work on the West Elementary SOI, we have continued to move forward on a potential high school renovation/addition. After a recruitment process in which 24 parents and community members applied, the School Committee appointed an Andover High School Facilities Study Committee to be chaired by former School Committee chair Annie Gilbert. This committee has met once and plans to meet every other week through the remainder of the year. At its next meeting, it will consider enrollment projections prepared by MGT, NESDEC and MSBA in preparation for making a determination about the target enrollment that should be accommodated by any renovation/addition.

4. The superintendent will work with the director of student services and the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction to address students' reading issues, including issues related to dyslexia, by putting in place systems for early identification, early intervention and progress monitoring, as well as the professional development needed for all elementary faculty to be better able to identify and address reading issues. (Standard I: Instructional Leadership; Student Learning Goal)

Evidence/Product: Documentation of assessments put in place for early identification and progress monitoring and professional development offered to both regular education and special education staff with the long-range target of making effective progress in addressing students' language-based issues, with particular attention to students with dyslexia.

Our work this year has set the stage for long-term structural changes and initiatives to improve and expand the services we offer to students with learning disabilities, in particular, students who are in the various stages of learning to read. We have made significant progress in providing early screening and progress monitoring for students, along with professional development for both regular and special education teachers. We were able to expand our investments in this effort when the School Committee approved the allocation of savings in personnel to funding for additional materials and professional development. One of the significant benefits of this effort has been the collaboration between regular education and special education staff in addressing needs in this area and the collaboration among our curriculum, student services, and technology departments.

To focus only on dyslexia would be to oversimplify a more complex systemic need to look deeply at our approach to literacy in general. Thus, we have approached this initiative on multiple fronts, including: a) training for regular education teachers on both dyslexia and literacy development, b) specific training for special education teachers, reading teachers, and specialists on assessment and intervention methods for various subtypes of reading disorders, c) universal screening to identify students who may have reading challenges, plus progress monitoring systems for students who have exhibited difficulty learning to read, d) community education and outreach, and e) the restructuring of in-district programs.

In the area of general education, we have raised districtwide awareness and better understanding of reading challenges, particularly with regard to dyslexia. For example, 54 teachers participated in a course on dyslexia, 28 teachers attended a conference at Harvard Medical School on dyslexia, and even more teachers have participated in a year-long expert speaker series. This spring, another 48 regular education middle school teachers will be participating in a course on language-based learning disabilities through Landmark Outreach. The purposes of this course are to ensure our regular education teachers are equipped to work with students identified with language-based learning disabilities in the general education content classrooms, to provide our teachers with techniques and methods that are beneficial to all students in inclusionary classrooms, and to promote a co-teaching model between regular and special education staff.

In the area of interventions to address language-based learning disabilities, we have trained 43 teachers and specialists in the Lindamood Phoneme Sequencing program (LiPS), 15 teachers in the Wilson Language method, 25 teachers in the Story Grammar Marker program, and 13 teachers in the Orton-Gillingham method. Future training will include the EMPOWER writing program (building on a training provided last year), the Framing Your Thoughts program to support executive functioning, a second cohort of Wilson Language training, and a cohort model for training in accessible instructional materials and assistive digital technologies. In addition to formal workshops, teachers have been working with consultants and coaches from Landmark Outreach, Commonwealth Learning, Assistive Technology for Education, and Tufts University.

In addition, our elementary, middle school, and high school special education program heads and curricular program coordinators have been working with the student services director and with our consultants from Landmark Outreach and Tufts Center for Reading and Language Research to restructure our programs for students with learning disabilities in LEAP. For the first time, we are working in vertical teams to ensure continuity of programming from grade to grade as well as the application of interventions that are specifically mapped to the developmental reading stages of our students.

One of the most significant developments this year has been the implementation of a universal screening and progress monitoring program across elementary schools. Using a multi-tiered system of supports model (MTSS), we have established universal screening, progress monitoring and data teams in all elementary schools. Consultants from Hill for Literacy are working with regular and special education teachers at each grade level to establish monitoring protocols, analyze data, and determine appropriate interventions. Our consultants from Tufts University are also working with both special and regular education staff to develop a protocol for understanding and responding to different patterns of reading disabilities. At the same time, we have been reviewing the fidelity and consistency with which we approach prevention programs such as Foundations, which is a Wilson-based phonics program now in all schools. We have been providing tier two interventions based on the professional development we've offered to staff. And the literacy curriculum review, which we launched this year, is utilizing professional development and the diagnostic work we are doing with students to evaluate literacy programs for adoption in 2018-19. Now that we have established a solid framework for writing instruction in the regular classroom, we are working to establish a new framework for reading instruction.

Finally, we recognize the importance of including not only the local community, but also the wider community in the discussion of appropriate responses to literacy challenges. To that end, we have sought out partnerships with researchers in the field of reading, we have joined the international discussion at conferences, and we have provided an expert speaker series that is open to parents as well as interested parties from the surrounding communities.

All of this effort has demanded a great deal from staff and leadership in the district. I'm pleased to report that our staff members recognize the critical importance of addressing the needs of students with reading challenges and have lent their time and expertise to moving aggressively forward. As a result, we have put in place the systems and services to better support students

with reading challenges. Although this is a multi-year initiative, we have accomplished far more this year than we had anticipated.

5. The superintendent will provide models of data analysis and reports to help assess Andover's performance relative to other comparable communities, as well as to assess curricular strengths and areas requiring growth related to student academic performance, and will set baselines for future student outcome targets. (Standard I: Instructional Leadership; Standard III: Family and Community Engagement; Student Learning Goal)

Evidence/Product: Provide analytical data reports that track the district's academic and fiscal performance.

Not having the advantage of a full-time research and data analyst this year, we have had to rely on a one-day-a-week intern and our own internal resources. However, our work in this area is helping to create a culture that better utilizes data to advance student performance and address policy issues.

The data intern focused primarily on an assessment of our PARCC and MCAS results. The detailed report prepared by the intern was reviewed by the administrative team and by staff at each school to determine areas in which we could improve. The complete document has been uploaded to the district's website and is available to the general public. The report allows schools and the district to examine data on the performance of sub-group populations, especially the results of those students who are economically disadvantaged and those who have a learning disability. It also provides some comparative data among our set of comparison districts. In the future, it would help to have longitudinal analyses of such data. However, the current test instrument has undergone so many changes in recent years that any longitudinal analysis at this point would lack validity.

In addition to the state assessment data, the elementary level has made a concerted effort to collect and analyze literacy data that has never before been collected. The district has developed a relationship with Hill for Literacy to provide teachers with the appropriate training to administer the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) in all grades K through 5, as well as to receive additional professional development in how to analyze the results and how to best utilize data team meetings to review the results and determine interventions. The elementary administrative team has also met to discuss the similarities and differences in the structure of their data team meetings and how they might work collaboratively to have a common structure.

At the central office level, we have focused on several areas of data analysis, primarily focused on facilities and budget issues. These analyses have included such comparative financial data as tax effort to support education and per-pupil spending. In addition, we updated the enrollment and other data reports provided as part of our budget and prepared data analyses to support our Statement of Interest for West Elementary.

I want to offer a special thanks to Shannon Scully who did a comprehensive analysis of the financing of full-day kindergarten, as well as an analysis of the building projects MSBA has decided to support.

6. The superintendent will work within the limitations of staffing with administrators, faculty, and parents to enhance communication both within the district and in the community in order to strengthen appreciation of the valuable contributions the district is making to students and the community at large. (Standard III: Family and Community Engagement; District Improvement Goal)

Evidence/Product: Implement new communication strategies and propose staffing and funding requirements needed to implement a more effective communications system.

In spite of the limitations in staffing in communications, our communications intern and our administrative team in general have paid greater attention to communicating effectively with our parents, staff and community. Based on this work, we have made a number of significant improvements. First, we launched a new website and a mobile application to improve our connectedness with parents and community. Second, we established a regular practice of issuing press releases on the accomplishments of the district, many of which became the basis of articles in the Andover Townsman. Third, we are close to completing the text for an informational brochure about the district that will be posted on our website as well as provided to local realtors and others. Fourth, we continue to provide regular Connect5 messages to parents and staff. Some of these messages have addressed significant issues such as our commitment to safety and support for students from other countries, the results of lead and copper testing, and the developments in our facility plan. Finally, we have continued to submit opinion editorials to the Townsman.

ACE has been very helpful in supporting our communications efforts. They have hosted two evening events for the community to learn about the innovations the district is pursuing. In addition, they are organizing a meeting of area business leaders to share the partnerships we've developed and to invite new local companies to join those partnerships. Finally, they have committed to supporting the development and publication of the brochure on the district.

In February, our communications intern left for a full-time position with a local company. Given the time of year, it has been difficult to find someone to take on that work. However, we have been working with parent representatives on the Townwide PTO to see if there are some parents with marketing, press relations or communications experience who may help us by sharing their expertise and, potentially, assisting us in our efforts. The Communications Task Force has also met to discuss potential next steps, including staffing for communications. They met with the Communications Director at the Pike School and will be hearing from other communications staff in other districts in future meetings.

The district is providing high-quality instruction, rigorous curricula and innovative programs that are furthering the success of our students. I believe our communications efforts over the past two years are helping to reclaim and revitalize the community's pride in our schools.

7. The superintendent will work to support collaborative relationships and cooperative initiatives with the Town Manager and town department leaders to advance the interests of the schools, secure an adequate budget to accomplish district goals, and effectively communicate developments with the community. (Standard IV: Professional Culture; District Improvement Goal)

Evidence/Product: Maintain positive relationships with community leaders while advancing the interest of the district in such areas as the CIP, budget, facilities planning, and other matters of mutual interest.

Although the Town Manager and I have maintained a positive and collaborative relationship throughout the year, the School Department has had to take a stronger role in advocating for our interests, particularly in the area of budget. We have prepared in-depth presentations and support materials for the Finance Committee and the Tri-Board to explain the rationale for our budget recommendations as well as our facility plan.

In terms of collaboration with other town departments, we have continued to build strong relationships. For example, our particularly strong relationship with Public Works has resulted in collaborative work not only on maintenance but also on addressing such issues as lead and copper testing. We also have a strong relationship with Community Development and Planning. That department has been especially helpful to us in providing information on new developments in the community. I attend some of the meetings of the Economic Development Council and was able to present to the EDC and gain their support for our facility plan. We have worked extensively with Community Services, assisting Joe Connelly in the development of an after-

school program and strengthening our relationship with Youth Services and our utilization of the Cormier Youth Center. We have continued our collaboration with Police and Fire on the opioid issue as well as on investigations of incidents affecting our students. Finally, we continue to have a highly supportive and integrative relationship with the shared departments of Human Resources and Technology. In essence, the School Department continues to be a team player with other town departments to the benefit of our students and the community as a whole.

8. The superintendent and his staff will provide the contract negotiating teams with effective support and data in order for them to pursue productive negotiations. (Standard II: Management and Operations; District Improvement Goal)

Evidence/Product: Provide data reports and analyses that address negotiations questions.

We are just beginning the negotiations process. We have prepared well by identifying issues that need to be discussed and by developing analyses to better assess our relative position among comparative communities.

Attachment