



ANDOVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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TO: Andover School Committee Members
FROM: Sheldon H. Berman, Ed.D., Superintendent
SUBJECT: Mid-year progress report on superintendent goals for 2017-18
DATE: February 21, 2018

SUPERINTENDENT GOALS FOR 2017-18

Below is my report on the progress on the superintendent goals for this year. However, it is a bit of a misnomer to call them superintendent goals. Although I remain responsible for leading the work, there are many leaders and individuals on our staff who have taken these goals as their own and provided leadership and dedication in fulfilling our common commitment to progress. We have a very special staff who care deeply about the students in Andover and the quality of instructional program we provide. It is that depth of caring and competence that has moved these goals forward. Therefore, I can take only partial credit for the accomplishments below. It is truly a team effort and I thank them for the thoughtfulness, commitment and exceptional performance they exhibit on a daily basis. Here is the mid-year progress report.

1. The superintendent will facilitate progress of the seven sprints of the agile strategic plan: Literacy, AHS Schedule, Mental and Behavioral Health, Social-Emotional Learning, Accessible Digital Media, Progress Monitoring, and Innovation. (Standard IV: Professional Culture; Professional Practice Goal)

Evidence/Product: Each sprint moves forward on action steps to achieve their targets.

We have continued to have sprint team meetings and superintendent administrative team meetings focused on the sprints. All of the sprints are moving forward. At the end of this report on the goals is a status report detailing the progress that has been made on each sprint, with the exception of the Literacy sprint, which is instead discussed below under Goal 3.

2. The superintendent will work with the assistant superintendent for finance and administration, the School Committee, the AHS Facility Study Committee, MSBA, and the community to move forward on the district's capital plan, with particular attention to the MSBA process for renovation/replacement of West Elementary and a renovation/addition to Andover High School. (Standard II: Management and Operations; District Improvement Goal)

Evidence/Product: Continued progress toward the renovation/replacement of West Elementary and the renovation/addition for Andover High School.

We have made steady and substantial progress in moving our capital plan forward. The Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) invited the district to participate in the eligibility period for West Elementary based on our first application to the program. We have already completed two of the initial steps required during the eligibility period and are moving forward on the others. Most important, the town manager has included \$1.2 million for the feasibility study in the capital plan funded from free cash, which will only require a majority vote at Town Meeting.

We have also made significant progress on examining options for a high school renovation. We developed a bid request for architectural services, evaluated five architectural companies who applied, selected HMFH, and have pursued an aggressive timeline for developing various options for the School Committee to consider. By late February, the School Committee will be invited to make a determination on which option is the most effective and affordable and how to best proceed in pursuing that option.

In addition to these two highly visible projects, we have identified specific Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) projects that improve the conditions at our other schools. In particular, we have proposed an evaluation of Doherty that will provide the School Committee with an assessment of systems that need upgrading over the next ten years and potential renovations that would improve the learning environment of that school.

3. 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, and to strengthen the literacy program through use of additional data tools to identify students needing support and areas of program improvement; continued professional development to deepen the skills and knowledge of teachers and instructional assistants; implementation of TextHelp for students and teachers; piloting of a new literacy program for elementary grades; and enhancement of reading interventions and programs. (Standard I: Instructional Leadership; Student Learning Goal)

Evidence/Product: Document the assessments in use for early identification and progress monitoring and the 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.

We have been successful in implementing an effective assessment system to identify students needing support. The district's assessment model has two components: DIBELS, which is our universal screener designed to measure early literacy indicators that will predict later reading success, and the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), which measure a student's ability to read for meaning. Simply put, one measures learning to read while the other measures reading to learn.

The district added the MAP assessment tool this year to give teachers another data point for learning about their students' comprehension skills. The Northwest Evaluation Association's MAP is a computer-adaptive assessment that provides teachers with a thorough picture of students' learning—how much they've grown, what they are ready to learn—and identifies specific skill gaps that they need to master. The MAP tool also provides a native Lexile score, which enables teachers to match students instructionally to appropriate reading materials.

We have also been intentional in establishing a professional development plan for literacy so that principals have autonomy and control over their data, their schools, and how to deliver this information to the staff. We've designed an overall professional development

plan for the administrators, which is followed by customized, school-based professional development delivered by the administrators and outside consultants for teachers in grades 1-5, and more specific professional development for kindergarten teachers.

All administrators, including principals, assistant principals, evaluation team facilitators (ETFs), and program heads, as well as reading specialists engaged in professional development on a train-the-trainer model with Hill for Literacy, learning how to analyze data to inform instruction and how to guide data team meetings. To date, the principals participated in two sessions that have covered how to create small intervention groups based on student needs, and how to use progress monitoring data to modify the small groups and respond to individual student needs. In addition, the entire elementary administrative team participated in two district-wide data team meetings aimed at identifying professional development needs. The information helped principals gain a broader perspective of the district data, understand how that data affects their individual schools, and provide more effective leadership for literacy at their school.

The district is also using Hill for Literacy and Crafting Minds—Center for Reading and Educational Achievement to provide all teachers of grades 1-5 with three training sessions in decoding and fluency. The second session is underway. These sessions are a follow-up to the principal-led data team meetings and are intended to highlight specific interventions and how to appropriately deliver them. Dr. Melissa Orkin of Crafting Minds (previously with Tufts University Center for Reading Research) has been working with both regular and general education teachers on Tier II interventions for word study and syllabication. She is also helping us to refine our response to screening data with follow-up assessments that more specifically target the types of interventions students need. These sessions are school- and grade-level-based so that all teachers receive customized professional development tailored to their specific needs. This professional development has also brought to light the need for additional materials for Tier II intervention at grades 4 and 5.

Results from the spring 2017 DIBELS revealed that kindergarten students generally made little gain in phonemic awareness. We found that students need more support in learning sounds prior to connecting sounds to letters. In response to this data, kindergarten teachers received three sessions of training in the early fall on phonemic awareness. It was also determined that teachers new to the district had received no formal training in using the FOUNDATIONS program. Accordingly, in the fall we provided all elementary teachers new to the district with grade-level-specific training in FOUNDATIONS.

In addition to the specific progress monitoring, professional development and intervention support we have provided, we are moving forward on selecting a literacy program that best supports the development of reading skills at the elementary level. At this time, the elementary level is mid-way into our pilot for selecting a literacy program. The pilot includes 20 teachers in grades K-5, representing all five elementary schools. The goals of the pilot are to give teachers an opportunity to test different reading approaches and to capture data that will support choosing the best program for children. The pilot began in October and will continue through February. Teachers in grades K-2 had an opportunity to pilot Fountas & Pinnell's Classroom and Lucy Calkins' Units of Study for Reading, while teachers in grades 3-5 piloted only the Units of Study for Reading. Teachers in grades 3-5 could not pilot Classroom because it is not yet ready for release. Both approaches reflect a workshop model of instruction, which will require in-depth professional development.

The teachers involved in the pilot have engaged in a variety of PD options including a two-day workshop at the Literacy for All Conference in Rhode Island, a three-day conferring institute at Columbia Teachers College in New York, a full-day interactive

seminar provided by Heinemann consultants for Fountas & Pinnell's Classroom, and a full-day guided observation of reading workshop lessons in action at an elementary school in Framingham.

At the secondary level, a number of curriculum directors, teachers, and administrators attended last fall's dyslexia conference at Harvard Medical School. A second cohort of Wilson Language training is underway, and more than 50 teachers participated in Framing Your Thoughts training. Framing Your Thoughts is a multisensory, explicit, language-based writing program. One of our special education teachers is currently completing training to become a district trainer for the Framing Your Thoughts program. This spring, we will engage in Project Read Report Form training and then complete our vertical curriculum alignment in the area of writing and reading comprehension. Report Form is a multi-sensory, explicit, language-based reading comprehension program for older students with language-based learning disabilities. In the area of narrative text comprehension, we are working on our third cohort of Story Grammar Marker training, which would bring the number of teachers who have participated to over 70..

Continuing our agenda of aggressive professional development in language and literacy instruction, we are working with our Instructional Assistants to develop their skills in supporting intensive interventions. For example, several instructional assistants (IA) completed Lindamood-Bell training last summer. Last fall, we were awarded a competitive grant that will allow us to develop a literacy tutor program and train 30-50 IAs to deliver high-quality literacy instruction. We are also in discussions with Massachusetts General Hospital about developing a micro-credentialing program for IAs in reading practice.

We have also continued our work with Landmark Outreach. For example, Ann Larsen provided training to regular and special education middle school teachers in September. This training was focused on collaborative instruction and techniques for students with language-based learning disabilities in content-area classes. Ann has also been consulting with the teams of teachers who were trained last year. Our collaborative regular and special education team has mapped the curriculum for the middle school programs for language-based learning disabilities. Currently, the teachers are working on a cross-walk with their curricula and Framing Your Thoughts and Report Form. They are also working with the new MAP assessment data to choose novels with shared themes at multiple Lexile levels so students can participate in the same high-level content even though they are reading at various entry levels.

Lisa Brooks, our Learning Disabilities/Literacy coach, has been holding regular consultation meetings with teachers who have been trained in various interventions, including Wilson, Orton-Gillingham, and Lindamood-Bell. These teachers have the benefit of being able to ask questions and work through challenges as they implement intensive interventions. Lisa has also continued to collaborate with us on phonemic awareness training for kindergarten teachers.

In collaboration with our Instructional Technology Department, we have provided TextHelp to all Andover students. This multi-dimensional tool supports reading, organization, written expression, and access to the content areas for students with language-based learning disabilities. Assistive technology is a critical feature in providing students with high-level content and a rigorous curriculum while at the same time supporting their input and output challenges. So far, we have trained over 30 regular and special education teachers in the TextHelp accessibility tools, as well as tools such as Snap-Verter, Bookshare, and other literacy supports. We have also implemented the Read Naturally program across middle schools and at AHS.

Our middle and high school teachers are working on a student advocacy program. This program will support students with learning disabilities as they learn to navigate their personal learning styles. Older students with dyslexia and other language-based learning disabilities will have the opportunity to mentor younger students.

Another exciting literacy project is our new partnership with the Carroll School and the Gabrieli Lab at MIT. The Targeted Cognitive Intervention (TCI) program was developed to remediate reading fluency deficits in children with dyslexia. Specifically, the computer-based assessment algorithm can identify a student's cognitive profile and target cognitive exercises that are specific to their needs. Andover will be the first public school in the world to participate in this groundbreaking intervention program. So far, we have completed two training events with teachers, and now we are identifying students and scheduling the intervention plan in three schools.

We are also committed to community outreach. This year, we were invited to speak at the Decoding Dyslexia Day at the state house, and we were also requested to testify on behalf of dyslexia legislation. We were invited to share our literacy plan at the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), and we launched a digital magazine to inform the public about our literacy projects. In August, *School Administrator* magazine published an article by the superintendent and Sara Stetson entitled, "Dyslexia: Hiding in Plain Sight," which was the publication's second-most-read online article of 2017.

4. The superintendent will provide data analyses and reports to help assess curricular strengths and areas requiring growth related to student academic performance, as well as to assess Andover's performance relative to other comparable communities. (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.

The district has now implemented a more comprehensive set of progress monitoring and assessment instruments to provide data on student progress and curricular and instructional initiatives. Building on the implementation of DIBELS last year, the district administered the MAP assessment in both reading and math and the Panorama Education survey on students' sense of connectedness, engagement and safety. In addition, we have provided more targeted assessments for students who are confronting particular difficulties so that we can better meet student needs. We have also established data teams throughout the district to review the information and to recommend interventions for students and adjustments to our instructional program.

The collection and analysis of data and the preparation of data-based reports have increased significantly this year as a result of the district's decision to increase our grant writer's position by .25 FTE to address these areas. This allocation represents the first time the district has personnel dedicated to data; previously, we relied on interns for this work.

Following are the topics whose data have already been analyzed or will soon undergo analysis. The data reports are listed in three groups: those that have been shared publicly, those that are being studied internally by the administration, and those that we anticipate will be completed by the end of the fiscal year.

District Data & Stats (on web page &/or presented at School Committee meeting)

1. Student/Teacher Ratio
2. Per-Pupil Expenditures (including SPED)

3. Four-Year Graduation Rate
4. SAT Scores
5. Enrollment in Institutions of Higher Ed
6. Selectivity of College Attended
7. Special Education Enrollment and Staffing
8. MCAS

Internal (shared with administration)

9. MAP
10. School Climate (state data)
11. RADAR reports (state data)
12. Student Learning Experiences Reports (state data)

In progress

13. MCAS Report (for Web Page)
14. Civil Rights Data
15. Panorama Education
16. Community Service & Service Learning Survey
17. Finance Data for Annual Budget

5. The superintendent will work within the limitations of staffing with administrators, faculty, and parents to enhance communication among these district stakeholders and within 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 communication strategies and propose staffing and funding requirements needed to implement a more effective communications system.

The superintendent has continued to maintain regular communication with parents and staff on events in the district and progress the district is making. In addition, the Student Services Department has launched a quarterly online magazine to report on special education, nursing and social work services. Two issues have been published and a third will be released in the near future. A document for staff entitled, "The Andover Way: A Culture of Learning, Teaching and Leading," was finalized and reviewed by all staff. It synthesizes our philosophy, mission and strategic plan in order to bring meaningful consistency across the district and orient new staff to our approach and culture. A brochure on the district is in the process of being edited and will be available next fall.

Most significantly, the School Committee approved a communications position in the FY2019 budget that will enable us to take the next steps in advancing our communications efforts. We are currently working on a job description. The position will be posted as soon as the budget is approved at Town Meeting.

6. The superintendent will work with the assistant superintendent for finance and administration, the Superintendent's Administrative Team, the School Committee, and the Town Manager to identify budget needs as early as possible, establish priorities, communicate with town leaders and the public regarding budget needs, prepare thorough and timely budget documents, and attempt to reach an early and responsible budget agreement. (Standard II: Management and Operations; District Improvement Goal)

Evidence/Product: Thorough, well-documented budget that enables the district to move forward with consideration for capital needs and town funding capacity.

In contrast to the preceding several years, the Town Manager and the superintendent agreed early on a target of a 4% increase in the school budget, with 0.5% or \$380,000 of

that amount representing the transition of approximately two-thirds of the cost of textbooks from the CIP into the regular school budget. The remaining approximately \$220,000 will be transitioned in FY20.

The preparation of the budget has been challenging this year, in part because of ongoing negotiations with our bargaining units. However, with the settlement of most of those contracts, we are now in a position to create a comprehensive budget document. Given that the budget is essentially a level-service budget, there are few additions that require discussion.

Although none of these six goals specifically targeted technology, we have made significant strides in that area during the first half of the school year. I would be remiss if I failed to highlight some of the following major accomplishments.

We deployed over 700 new machines to teachers, who were especially excited about access to touch screens and pens. The old machines were distributed to middle and high school instructional assistants, along with cart-based devices for the elementary school IAs. We also deployed several hundred machines to students in grades 6-12 who could not afford to be part of the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) program. We distributed more than 1000 Chromebooks to students in grades 2 and 4, along with sufficient iPads for grades K-1 to meet the desired 2:1 ratio. All aspects of the iAndover 1:1 program are now complete. We upgraded all shared lab-type computers; no machine in the district is now more than five years old. We replaced the aging elementary Smartboards with new Epson interactive projectors and provided improved connectivity to all projectors from new Windows machines. We have begun a trial project to upgrade failing intercom and paging systems with new digital speakers, and we are launching a trial districtwide emergency notification system. In the area of assessment, we supported all standardized ELL testing and are preparing to support MCAS. APS is the first district in the state to pilot the interface of BYOD with standardized tests. We upgraded wireless networks to increase coverage and capacity, completed the installation of Office 365, and are preparing to roll out this program to all staff and students.

PROGRESS REPORTS ON SPRINTS: FEBRUARY 2018

The progress reports below were submitted by the sprint teams working in each area.

ANDOVER HIGH SCHOOL 7+H SCHEDULE

Following many years of study and planning, plus the field testing of key elements, implementation of the AHS 7+H schedule began in September 2017. To date, the new schedule has been a success. Teachers and students have transitioned to yearlong classes and are beginning their second semester together. The yearlong aspect of the schedule differs from years past, where at this point all would have new courses and new teachers/students. We anticipate that teacher-student relationships will deepen during this second semester.

The students and teachers are also taking advantage of the new H block. H block has two components H1 is an opportunity for students to have a faculty member in the building—in addition to their guidance counselor—get to know them well as learners. To enhance this experience, we have created an advisory curriculum for each grade level. The H2-H5 blocks allow students and teachers to personalize their school day. Students can choose which teachers they would like to visit in order to delve deeply into course content or explore areas of mutual interest. Additionally, during H2-H5 we have hosted a variety of meetings and speakers on topics of interest to the community. The speakers have included Ashley Bendiksen, who spoke about relationship violence, and Casey McQuillen, who performed and spoke about being true to oneself. We have also initiated an Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) cohort at

grade 9, which we will expand to grade 10 in the 2018-19 school year and expanded the availability for virtual online courses.

MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

The mental and behavioral health sprint has been working on five broad areas of change.

1. Data. We have investigated and piloted software to track Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) and discrete trial services. We have investigated client software that will allow us to track district mental health trends for planning purposes. And we have collected data from such screening tools as SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment) and SNAP (School Nurse Assistant Program). At this time, budgetary constraints limit our ability to move beyond the trial stage of these endeavors.
2. Frameworks. We have been investigating the most effective models for supervision of mental health professionals. For example, UNH will be training our team in the RENEW wrap-around model at the end of this month. Last spring, we implemented a pilot of using a Board Certified Behavioral Analyst (BCBA) consultant and a team of Registered Behavioral Technicians (RBT) to manage mental and behavioral health challenges. This pilot was expensive, but we gained a great deal of information about our strengths and weaknesses and about the potential for this model in Andover. As a result, we applied for and were awarded a Resource Reallocation to District Priorities grant to reallocate some of our IA staff to be trained as RBTs. The training program will start in the spring.
3. Programming. We completed a review of the in-district Transitions program. The review was prompted by our observation of “program drift.” With the help of our new Transitions psychologist, the program is now on track and implementation is consistent with the original intent. This work highlighted the need for a more permanent therapeutic academic support program. The team is now designing such a program, with implementation slated for the fall of 2018. The program will use existing staff. We will pilot a similar program at Doherty Middle School.

At the elementary level, we developed an in-house mobile support team. This multidisciplinary team will travel from school to school to assist in setting up programs for students with complex behavioral needs. This consulting model is a first step in building capacity across elementary schools. The model is more inclusionary than a district emotional and behavioral disability program, and is a more effective way to support students with mental and behavioral health needs. When the team requires, our own clinical director can provide additional support. Our head of special programs will lead this team. The addition of a multidisciplinary support team and supervision from a trained clinical director allows us to eliminate the \$40,000 psychiatry contract. This plan also allows us to use the skills of a successful school team in order to train any school teams that experience difficulty in supporting students who exhibit challenging behaviors.

We have reached out to Lahey Clinic to discuss their offering a mental health clinic-in-the-schools program. Most of our social workers are being called upon to deal with mental health and family systems issues that are beyond the scope of their training and responsibility. Close collaboration with a clinic, along with better proximity of services, could provide the additional resources and shift of responsibility that are needed. A clinic program could also provide Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor services; such services are currently unavailable in Andover schools because we do not employ any Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselors and our budget constrains us from adding staff.

4. Outreach. The Home Visit program is in its initial stages. Joe Yarid was able to secure funds for the training, but not for the stipends that would be required for participating teachers. He is now exploring a creative alternative to fund and staff the program. The sprint is also investigating advocacy training and mentorship programs for students with learning disabilities. The two advocacy programs we are investigating are YES! and Eye-

to-Eye. We have one new teacher who is a trained YES! facilitator. We believe Eye-to-Eye is more inclusive and has stronger development behind it, but the program and training are expensive and do not fit our current budget structure. We are contemplating the development of our own hybrid model, combining YES! workshops and the use of high school students with dyslexia as mentors.

5. Staffing. We have hired a clinical director who consults regularly on cases and conducts most of the neuropsychological evaluations that used to be contracted out. We have secured a Resource Reallocation to District Priorities grant to train ten IAs to serve instead as RBTs. This change will also allow us to centrally deploy our BCBAAs. We have also changed Transitions to a more efficient school psychology model. The new Transitions director can provide therapeutic and evaluative support rather than just counseling alone.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)

During the 2016-17 school year, the social-emotional learning sprint assessed the state of SEL in our district and explored resources regarding social-emotional learning. The sprint is undertaking four major action items during 2017-18.

1. Panorama Survey. Andover Public Schools had no consistent source of data to quantify students' social-emotional experiences in school. While individual schools administered various student surveys over the years, it seemed valuable to administer the same survey to all students in grades 3-8 to gain insight into three areas of student life: sense of belonging, engagement, and safety. The high school was not included because they had just conducted a vision survey and because they were settling into the new H block schedule. We intentionally limited the scope and depth of the survey in order to be sensitive to possible apprehensions about student questionnaires and privacy. To build awareness and support prior to the survey administration, the sprint met with the PAC board, teachers, and the School Committee.

We contracted with Panorama Education, an organization that specializes in helping schools gather data both to improve school climate and culture and to support students' social-emotional learning. In November 2017, all students in grades 3-8 took a short survey focused on the three target areas. Of the 2682 students, 2,603 (91%) responded. During December, staff worked with Panorama to link data to the same student demographic groups used by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) in reporting MCAS results: ELL, Former ELL, Economic Status, Gender, Grade Level, High Needs Status, Race, Special Education Status, and Title I Status. The survey was anonymous and, to preserve privacy, demographic areas with responses from fewer than 10 students were not reported. Survey results were shared with teachers in January and were the focus of professional development work on the February 2 early release day. At that time, staff generated action items, including those designed to increase student engagement. Staff input at each school will determine next steps in supporting our students' social-emotional needs.

2. William James Graduate Certificate in School Climate and Social Emotional Learning. Andover Public Schools has a team of teachers and administrators who are working to earn the William James Graduate Certificate in School Climate and Social Emotional Learning. The team includes Pam Lathrop (High Plain Elementary Principal), Joe Yarid (Program Coordinator for Social Work), Emily Allen (High Plain Grade 5 teacher) and Ciara O'Keefe (High Plain Grade 3 teacher). This evidence-based, blended approach addresses multiple dimensions for transforming, creating, and sustaining a positive school culture and climate, with a focus on training teams in the core concepts of social-emotional learning, systems change, and coaching. The nine-month training program prepares teams to conduct needs assessments, integrate social-emotional learning into the school culture, and identify skills required to support students' mental health needs.

The district team will then produce an action plan on how to create a more positive school climate, how to effect school change, and how to align individual school plans with the district's strategic plan. We are applying for a team from another elementary school to participate in this program next year.

3. Responsive Classroom. This evidence-based approach is associated with greater teacher effectiveness, higher student achievement in math and reading, and improved school climate. Emphasizing the modeling of appropriate behaviors and responses, the program sends students a strong message that all of them belong and are important, contributing members of their class and school. It has been described by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) as one of the most "well-designed evidence-based social and emotional learning (SEL) programs." The elementary schools want to offer Responsive Classroom training to all of their instructional staff. To date we have trained 46 elementary staff members representing all five elementary schools. Another training for 30 teachers is scheduled for this summer.
4. Cultural Climate Committee (C3). This sub-sprint or "dart" of the SEL sprint was begun by Adrienne Bock and Jorge Allen. Its vision is to become the district resource that can offer triage and treatment support when incidents of racism or discrimination occur in our schools or in our community. To this end, C3 brings together building principals and assistant principals, classroom teachers, social workers, and curricular coordinators to combat racism and create identity-safe schools. The committee meets almost weekly and provides schools with resources and recommendations.

In January, C3 identified three priority areas for district professional development:

- Terms and Concepts – What terminology do we need to understand relative to diversity, inclusion and membership in order to create safe and inclusive environments?
- Response – How do we respond when racism or discrimination occurs in our classrooms and schools?
- Curriculum – How can we ensure our curriculum is inclusive of all voices, narratives, and cultures?

ACCESSIBILITY

The accessibility sprint has focused on increasing our instructional staff's understanding and use of a variety of applications that ensure every student can access the content of the curriculum. We recognize that not all students learn in the same way, nor do they approach curricular content from identical skill levels. Part of our responsibility as educators is to provide pathways that enable all students to access and master the same high-quality content.

This fall, we provided all APS students with TextHelp, which is a key accessibility platform. TextHelp is a toolbar that enables students to flexibly and independently individualize the support they need in order to access print media. To maximize the advantages of the TextHelp platform, we provided teachers with professional development so they would be confident incorporating it into their daily instruction. To encourage student usage of this new digital tool, the Digital Learning Coaches (DLCs) are providing opportunities for students at all grade levels to learn about TextHelp through tutorials, one-to-one demonstrations and modeling.

Beyond TextHelp, we also provided accessibility-related professional development in a variety of other ways, including during the summer for special education teachers, through instructional videos that teachers can use individually at their own convenience, and through the after-school TechByte Technology Series. Finally, we have made our website accessible.

Our other major accessibility initiative is Universal Design for Learning (UDL). The accessibility sprint helped organize our opening day activities with David Rose. We have provided all teachers with a webpage of resources and links about the UDL checklist and how to create accessible

content. Members of the elementary and middle school leadership team took part in a seven-week professional development program entitled Universally Designed Leadership. This training opportunity was offered through the CREST Collaborative. As a follow-up, Sara Stetson, Tracy Crowley and Joanne Najarian will be teaching a UDL course for teachers this spring and summer. Graduate credit will be offered for this coursework.

PROGRESS MONITORING

The goal of the progress monitoring sprint is to establish a data-reflective culture in all schools. In such a culture, all educators use data to drive instruction and answer questions pertaining to student growth over time.

All sprints have a progress-monitoring component. As a result, the progress-monitoring sprint began by gathering information related to the amount of data educators are acquiring. We looked at the diagnostic assessments the district already uses for progress monitoring, how often they are used, and how data is being organized and displayed. From this review, the progress-monitoring sprint recognized the need for a universal management system that could be used easily by all educators, across levels and disciplines, to store, track and manipulate data.

Next, the sprint looked at the data management systems currently being used in the district. We realized that the work of the literacy sprint, specifically the work with Hill for Literacy, provides a template that we could try to replicate. However, we soon determined that this system is overly complex for widespread application. To encourage staff to collect and use data to drive instruction, we need a student performance dashboard that is easy to use, inclusive of all data we collect, equitable and consistent across grade levels, and customizable.

Next, we considered the Aspen system, which is also used by the district. While Aspen has many good features, it is not easy to use and does not offer the degree of customization we are seeking. At that point, we identified the Otus Student Performance Platform. Otus is a data dashboard that supports Data Management, Assessment Management, and Classroom and Learning Management. Over the next months, we will be reviewing the capabilities of the Otus platform so that we can make a recommendation about its adoption for data management.

INNOVATION

The innovation sprint has been working to promote innovation among the faculty, mainly by encouraging teachers to involve students in both design thinking and authentic learning experiences. Design thinking is a problem-solving approach that incorporates creativity and collaboration and can be integrated into each area of the academic curriculum. Authentic learning is an approach that complements design thinking. It engages students in the collaborative creation of products or solutions that require extended focus over time, match the complex real-world tasks and investigations of professionals in practice, and integrate knowledge from multiple disciplines.

Last summer, ten APS faculty traveled to Detroit to learn about design thinking at the Henry Ford Learning Institute (HFLI). Ten teachers had attended this institute previously and found it beneficial. Lisa Kreinbring, the Director of External Relations at the Henry Ford Learning Institute, describes their approach to design thinking as:

“HFLI’s approach to redesigning how we learn ... provides a structured process for addressing challenges in all aspects of our lives.... Students are challenged to apply the process to develop and test potential solutions. Through each Design Thinking Challenge cycle, students and their teachers learn to embrace experimentation and the ups and downs that are a part of the creative process. Learning is more compelling because students can see how core content is relevant to them and the world in which they live. HFLI

developed the first K-12 curriculum in the U.S. that pairs work in core subjects with design thinking.” (2015)

At the elementary level we have empowered teacher facilitators, in tandem with administrators, to lead rapid design challenges. The innovation sprint team uses the district’s scheduled “open content days” as an opportunity to lead grade-level colleagues in professional development about the design thinking components of empathy, defining the problem, ideating, prototyping, feedback and reflection. In some schools, design thinking challenges have been replicated in classrooms across all grade levels. In addition, some faculties are applying the design thinking approach in order to problem solve ways to implement UDL.

Another authentic learning experience that has been well received by teachers and students is NEAL—New England Arts in Literacy. We have 63 elementary and middle school teachers who have completed the extensive NEAL training program. In addition, 26 faculty members have implemented NEAL for two or three years and are now mentoring the teachers who are new to it. At least 1,575 students have benefited from this universally designed and innovative teaching method that emphasizes a positive emotional climate and affords students multiple ways to express their learning. This year we will make NEAL presentations to several faculties and will also invite parents to the students’ final performances.

Other innovation work from past years is being continued and/or expanded. Capstone training was provided to ten more teachers. The use of Capstone projects has spread downward from the high school to pilots at the middle and elementary levels. The AHS Innovation Lab has been expanded and we continue to support teacher innovation grants. Additionally, more than 40 teachers are collaborating districtwide through a variety of innovative initiatives, such as maker spaces and Global Pathways.

One breakthrough that is about to take place is the arrival of the Global Portal. As the first district in the country to implement this innovation, it will enable our students to experience other countries and cultures more directly and to initiate international collaborations with students in other countries. ACE has funded our use of the Global Portal for six months and is raising funds to enable us to keep it for an entire year.

LITERACY

The progress report for the literacy sprint is discussed under superintendent goal 3.