To the Andover Community:

Andover Public Schools (APS) remain a cornerstone of our community. We expect and are rewarded annually with great initiatives from our talented staff and impressive learning from our amazing students. The commitment to capture these efforts and direct them toward overarching goals is the responsibility of our leadership team, under the guidance of Superintendent Berman.

Dr. Berman and his team built a district strategic plan that acknowledges a strong educational foundation is important for young people to succeed beyond the walls of our schools. It recognizes innovative structures for student engagement, encourages collaboration and citizenship, and provides new ways to monitor progress.

The core of district strategy is set around the Theory of Action, which has formalized an Andover perspective on 21st century learning and provides guiding principles for our educators. Through their daily work, staff and district leadership ensure APS remains a foremost district, providing a rigorous curriculum that positions Andover students for success.

This Agile Strategic Plan: Accomplishments for 2017-18 document outlines the teamwork and notable progress made this school year in turning strategic goals to action. We hope it will support community understanding of the substantial areas of educational focus and investment.

On behalf of the Andover School Committee, thank you for your continued support of public education in our town and the advancement of student learning.

Respectfully,

Shannon Scully, Chairperson
Andover School Committee
Andover Public Schools
AGILE STRATEGIC PLAN
ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2017-18

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Technology, society's expectations, students' career needs, and instructional materials are evolving at an ever-faster rate. In this environment, school districts' traditional five-year plans have become anachronistic. Agile planning encourages rapid, incremental changes toward achieving targets, yet enables flexibility so that continuous adjustments can be made in order to achieve the greatest progress.

Andover’s agile strategic plan is grounded in its theory of action, which states that in order to promote growth in foundational content knowledge and thinking skills that enable students to take ownership of their learning, we need to focus on four specific goals: the culture and climate of our schools, the rigor of our curriculum, the inclusiveness of our instruction, and the close monitoring of student progress so as to adjust instruction to meet the needs of each student. With the aim of developing these four areas to the highest level, we established seven teams of district and school leaders. Throughout 2017-18, each team concentrated on a “sprint,” which is simply a series of action steps designed to move us closer to achieving our goals. Following are the major accomplishments of each of the seven sprint teams.

The Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) sprint team undertook several major initiatives. A number of teachers at all five elementary schools underwent training and began implementing the Responsive Classroom program, which is an evidence-based approach that emphasizes the modeling of appropriate behaviors and sends students a strong message that all students belong and are important contributing members of their class and school community. The sprint team also collected baseline data by surveying students in grades 3-8 about their sense of belonging, safety and engagement. The team used the results to plan professional development topics for 2018-19 and as a basis for their recommendation that the district expand the use of the Responsive Classroom program at the elementary level next year while introducing it into the middle schools. Finally, the SEL sprint team created a Cultural Climate Committee to combat racism and discrimination while fostering identity-safe schools. This committee recommended that next year’s early release day workshops be supported by the professional development provider Facing History and Ourselves.

The Mental and Behavioral Health sprint team made progress in several key areas, building on the coordination provided by a newly hired Clinical Director. By joining the Massachusetts School Mental Health Consortium, the district is now better positioned to collect and analyze data that track mental health trends and to plan for improved service delivery. Earning a competitive grant enabled us to offer intensive training for our Registered Behavior Technicians and consultation for our BCBA’s, which will enhance behavioral services at the elementary level. The sprint team re-aligned our high school Transitions program with its original intent of serving students experiencing short-term crises. It also developed plans for 2018-19 that include an in-house mobile team to set up and support programs for elementary students with complex behavioral needs, plus an individualized wrap-around program for at-risk high school students focusing on school-to-career and transition planning.

The Andover High School 7+H Schedule sprint team oversaw AHS’s successful transition to yearlong courses, which allowed teachers to get to know their students better as learners. The H block period enabled students to personalize their school day through extra support or exploration, and assigned an advisor who can guide academic, social, and emotional choices throughout the four-year high school experience. The new elective AVID course helped freshmen strengthen study skills, while joining the Virtual high School Consortium gave students access to a wider array of online courses. The new schedule also provided much-needed time for teachers to collaborate on assessments and curricula. Presentations at middle schools by AHS teachers and administrators, as well as eighth graders’ visits to AHS, smoothed the transition for next year’s freshmen into the 7+H schedule.

The Innovation sprint team worked to promote bold approaches to traditional classroom activities, mainly by encouraging teachers to involve students in both design thinking and authentic learning experiences. For example, some faculties applied the design-thinking approach in order to problem solve ways to implement Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Elementary and middle school students benefited from the New England Arts in Literacy (NEAL) program, which is an authentic learning experience that affords students multiple ways to demonstrate their learning. The capstone initiative
grew significantly at the high school level and was piloted at the middle and elementary school levels. Innovative initiatives such as maker spaces and AHS Global Pathways expanded their reach to more students. We became the first district in the nation to implement a Global Portal, which enables students at every grade level to experience other cultures by interacting face-to-face with students in other nations.

The Literacy sprint team added the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) as an assessment tool for grades 3-6, plus some students in grades 7-10, to support work in reading comprehension. Professional development for teachers and administrators focused on analyzing data to inform instruction and to connect students with the most appropriate literacy interventions. A particular thrust involved the training of all kindergarten teachers to ensure every student develops the key foundational skill of phonemic awareness. The team oversaw the selection of the Fountas & Pinnell Classroom program for elementary literacy, with implementation to begin in 2019-20. Lexia Core 5, an adaptive computer-based practice program, was implemented in all elementary schools. Finally, the team developed an ELA map outlining the progression of literacy standards in grades 6-8, along with texts selected for readability (Lexile) levels.

The Accessibility sprint team collaborated with the Literacy sprint team to introduce TextHelp. This computer-based tool, designed to support access to the content areas by students who have language-based learning disabilities, was made available to all students in the district. The Accessibility team also supported the district’s UDL initiative by making the district website accessible and by providing teachers with links to UDL resources.

The Progress Monitoring sprint team worked to advance a data-reflective culture in the district. They supported other sprint teams and the faculty in the administration, analysis, and application of data from the DIBELS, MAP, and MCAS assessments. They also assisted elementary teachers through the purchase of Lexia Core 5, and helped elementary and school teachers in their initial use of the adaptive computer-aided math programs Dreambox, Prodigy, and IXL. Perhaps the team’s most important accomplishment was the enhancement of regular data meetings in the elementary and middle schools to help teachers better understand students’ needs and adjust instruction to meet those needs.

In addition to the seven sprints, 2017-18 was witness to several other major achievements.

**Facilities** is a key goal of the district. We completed several of MSBA’s required steps in the eligibility period for the potential replacement of West Elementary School. Based on the work of HMFH architectural firm and our own feasibility study committee, we also submitted to MSBA a Statement of Interest for a major renovation of Andover High School. Our FY18 capital projects—air conditioning and field access at High Plain and Wood Hill, doors at South, and audio enhancement for four elementary schools and one middle school—will make a significant and immediate difference in our facilities, as will new security measures, including an enhanced entrance vestibule at the high school and improved surveillance cameras at all schools.

• The FY2019 **Budget** is designed to reinforce the theory of action by providing funds for professional development, instructional technology, instructional materials, and progress monitoring to support the targets and action plans of the seven sprint teams. For example, we have aligned funds for assessments, program materials and professional development to address the needs of children with reading difficulties, particularly those with indications of dyslexia, and we have reorganized staffing and professional development funding to better address the needs of students with mental and behavioral health issues. Both of these learning challenges have been significant drivers of out-of-district placements. Aligning our budget with our targets enables us to make significant progress in achieving all of our goals.

We are proud of what has been accomplished and of everyone’s deep commitment to furthering the district’s improvement efforts. We are grateful to the School Committee, faculty, staff and parents for recognizing the importance of continuing to move the district forward, and to the community of Andover for their ongoing support of our students.
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THE THEORY OF ACTION

In June 2016, the district’s prior strategic plan was brought to a close. During the 2016-17 school year, the administrative team, faculty and School Committee began developing a new plan modeled after the agile strategic planning common in fast-paced industries. Technology, society’s expectations, students’ career needs, and instructional materials are evolving at an ever-faster rate. In this environment, school districts’ traditional five-year plans have become anachronistic. Agile planning encourages rapid, incremental changes toward achieving targets, yet enables flexibility so that continuous adjustments can be made in order to achieve the greatest progress.

The first step in the development of an agile strategic plan is the articulation of a “theory of action” or a “theory of change,” that is, a statement that outlines the actions that need to be taken in order to achieve the desired goals. It is presented in a simple format of “When we take these actions, then we expect to have these results, so that we reach our desired outcomes.” The “when” statements represent what we believe is the most critical work that needs to be done to achieve our ends. The “then” statements represent the mission of the district in terms of results we anticipate. The “so that” statements represent a larger vision statement of the kind of long-term impact we expect from our work. For example, “when” we as educators, parents, and community collaborate to provide every student with rigorous and meaningful learning experiences, “then” students will achieve academic proficiency, “so that” they are propelled toward success in their adult lives.

ANDOVER’S THEORY OF ACTION

When we collaborate to:

- Create safe, caring, and culturally responsive classrooms and schools, and partner with families and the community to support students’ academic growth and their social, physical and emotional wellbeing.
- Ensure that every student engages in a rigorous curriculum that is implemented consistently within and across schools;
- Provide inclusive instruction that engages every student in authentic learning experiences, demonstrates the power of effective effort and fosters inquiry, creativity and positive risk taking;
- Monitor student progress diagnostically and plan instruction after thorough and thoughtful data analysis to ensure each student reaches proficiency;

Then all students will:

- Demonstrate academic growth in foundational content and skills;
- Communicate effectively, think critically, problem solve creatively, work collaboratively, and evaluate objectively;
- Be self-directed and persevering agents of their own learning; and
- Demonstrate cultural awareness, an appreciation of self, empathy toward others, a sense of responsibility, and commitment to civic engagement . . .

So that all students are prepared to:

- Be lifelong learners able to pursue their personal and professional goals;
- Face adversity and ambiguity with intellectual skill, open-mindedness, adaptability, courage and confidence;
- Make informed, just and ethical decisions; and
- Be connected and compassionate citizens who contribute to a diverse and global society.

As the theory of action statement above demonstrates, in order to promote growth in foundational content knowledge and thinking skills that enable students to take ownership of their learning, we need to focus on four specific areas: the culture and climate of our schools, the rigor of our curriculum, the inclusiveness of our instruction, and the close monitoring of student progress in order to adjust instruction to meet the needs of each student.
GOALS THAT ADVANCE STUDENT LEARNING

ADVANCING STUDENT LEARNING

It is important to understand the goals we have set and the strategies for achieving those goals. To focus our efforts, we have concentrated on four instrumental goals.

**GOAL 1:** Create safe, caring, and culturally responsive classrooms and schools, and partner with families and the community to support students’ academic growth and their social, physical and emotional wellbeing.

Research indicates that classroom culture and climate affect learning as dramatically as the academic curriculum does, and that a strong foundation of social and emotional safety supports academic progress. Therefore, teachers must be as thoughtful in structuring the social environment as in preparing academic lessons. When schools create an environment that builds interdependence, compassion and empathy, students feel safe while they learn. Surrounded by a caring network of peer support, students are better able to concentrate on academic work, take risks without fearing failure, and make faster progress.

**GOAL 2:** Ensure that every student engages in a rigorous curriculum that is implemented consistently within and across schools.

Every student deserves to encounter subject matter that is challenging and purposeful. Parents need to have confidence that their children will be presented with the same rigorous curriculum, regardless of which school they attend or which teacher is providing the instruction. Districtwide consistency in curricular materials, teacher expectations, and instructional pacing also promotes professional collaboration and parental engagement in students’ academic activities.
GOAL 3: Provide inclusive instruction that engages every student in authentic learning experiences, demonstrates the power of effective effort, and fosters inquiry, creativity and positive risk taking.

Students are not empty vessels into which we pour knowledge, and learning is not rote memorization. To achieve deeper levels of understanding, students must interact with the material and experience a connection to what they are learning. Instructionally, this means framing questions, setting learning objectives that motivate students to explore material, and designing activities where students solve problems, consider diverse perspectives and demonstrate understanding in multiple ways. Authentic learning 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.

GOAL 4: Monitor student progress diagnostically and plan instruction after thorough and thoughtful data analysis to ensure each student reaches proficiency.

Clearly, teachers need to know their subject matter at a deep level. Beyond content, however, effective teaching is about the continuous study of the students in the classroom, exploring what they understand and don’t understand, and finding ways to bridge the gap. Taking a diagnostic approach means listening carefully to class discussions, analyzing students’ mistakes, using assessments to monitor progress, and asking questions that reveal how students arrive at their answers. Teachers need to review student work, analyze assessment results and plan interventions that increase students’ grasp of the material. We base our content on the curriculum, but our teaching strategies spring from the detailed diagnoses of students’ understanding and from the unshakeable belief that all children can and will learn.

AGILE STRATEGIES

In a traditional planning model, the strategies for achieving goals are blocked out in yearly segments across a three- to five-year period. Agile strategic planning is very different from traditional planning. Agile planning begins with more general targets and then sets in motion action groups organized as “sprint teams,” which are focused on the first steps in a series of actions that will achieve the goal. Instead of having rigid and isolated tasks assigned to individuals, each sprint in an agile plan is undertaken by a team and is designed to build on the district’s existing work while moving forward aggressively. (In formal agile planning these teams are called “scrum.” However, we decided to use the term “sprint team” instead.) This approach does not overwhelm the district with many new initiatives but instead focuses energy on the few strategic actions that will have the most immediate and beneficial impact. As the sprint unfolds, the team reviews its progress, assesses its impact on the larger goal, identifies what success will look like at the end of the sprint, makes adjustments to improve the likelihood of success, and then moves on to next steps.

In other words, agile strategic planning is in itself a creative endeavor and one that promotes collaboration and an evolving process of solving problems. The object is to remain flexible in pursuit of the target while taking manageable, time-limited steps toward that target. Throughout the process of agile development, the focus is on the target but the work is broken down to enhance the opportunity for success. In addition, because we are not locked into a rigid agenda, agile development allows for “just-in-time” adjustments and changes based on the analysis of progress and impact. We have chosen to adopt agile strategic planning because it supports our professional implementation of the same effective learning strategies we want our students to develop. We believe that this open-ended pursuit of targets—in incorporating innovation, engagement, collaboration, and authentic learning—has the strongest likelihood of inspiring all members of the APS staff and of engaging their commitment toward accomplishing our goals.
STRATEGIC SPRINTS

A key element of agile strategic planning is the concept of the sprint. Once an agile strategic plan has defined its targets and goals, as we have with our theory of action, the next step is to determine what the first steps should be in order to move toward that goal. For example, the design of the advisory program during H block of the new high school schedule is an important next step in support of the goal of creating caring and culturally responsive classrooms and schools. Designing the advisory program requires a team of people to conceive, plan, pilot and implement the program and then to refine it to ensure it is as effective as possible in supporting students. Within the framework of agile strategic planning, the work of this team would be labeled a “sprint” since it is designed to be the next action step in a series of actions that will achieve the goal within a defined and limited timeline.

At the end of the 2016-17 school year, we established our first set of seven sprints to take the district forward. These sprints are:

1. **A social-emotional learning** and culturally responsive pedagogy sprint that will focus on professional development for staff in order to advance the goal of caring and culturally responsive classrooms and schools (goal 1).
2. A comprehensive **mental and behavioral health** sprint focused on the restructuring of services in these areas as another step in advancing caring and culturally responsive classrooms and schools (goal 1).
3. **An AHS schedule implementation** sprint as the next step in advancing caring and culturally responsive classrooms and schools (goal 1) and curricular rigor (goal 2) at the high school.
4. **An innovation** sprint that fosters authentic student learning experiences in order to move curricular rigor forward (goal 2).
5. A **literacy** sprint that will address reading challenges and select a new approach to teaching literacy as the next step in advancing curricular rigor (goal 2) and inclusive instruction (goal 3).
6. **An accessible digital media** sprint that builds on our 1:1 initiative, the purchase of digital applications, texts and media, and our professional development in blended learning in order to support inclusive instructional practices (goal 3).
7. **A diagnostic data** sprint that focuses the district on the implementation of a variety of diagnostic assessments and data analyses to ensure we are adjusting instruction to most effectively meet students’ individual needs through student progress monitoring (goal 4).

The sprints we selected are broad areas that cross curricular boundaries. In general, sprints don’t focus on technical or procedural changes or projects such as formulating next year’s budget or redesigning a website. A sprint could include the implementation of a new curriculum adoption if the adoption represents a significant change in instructional practice. That is not to diminish the importance of procedural projects or curriculum adoptions, but they represent ongoing work that is already the responsibility of an individual or particular group. Significant initiatives, such as integrating arts into the curriculum, are encompassed as one aspect of a larger sprint. For example, the New England Arts and Literacy (NEAL) project, which represents an important initiative in integrating arts into the curriculum, would be considered part of the innovation sprint because it is promoting authentic learning and inclusive instruction.

The accomplishments within these seven sprints for the 2017-18 school year are described below. At the end of each sprint report are a number of next steps that are being considered for the 2018-19 school year.
SPRINT ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2017-18

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) SPRINT

The social-emotional learning and culturally responsive pedagogy sprint focuses on professional development for staff in order to advance the goal of caring and culturally responsive classrooms and schools (goal 1).

Target: All students feel safe, valued, and connected to school.

Progress: During the 2016-17 school year, the Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) sprint team began its work by assessing the state of SEL in our district and exploring resources regarding social-emotional learning. This year (2017-18) the SEL sprint team undertook four major action initiatives.

The first initiative involved collecting baseline data to be used to direct future SEL efforts. Prior to the 2017-18 academic year, Andover Public Schools had no consistent source of data to quantify students' social-emotional experiences occurring within our schools. While individual schools administered various student surveys over the years, we had no cohesive body of data. To address this gap, the SEL sprint team recommended that elementary and middle schools administer several scales of the Panorama Education survey. Panorama Education is 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, we administered the same survey to grades 3-8 across the district 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 climate survey and 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 potential apprehensions about student questionnaires and privacy. To build awareness and support prior to the survey administration, the SEL sprint team met with the PAC board, teachers, and the School Committee.

In November 2017, all students in grades 3-8 took a short survey focused on the three target areas. Of the 2682 students, 2603 (97%) responded. During December, the Sprint team 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, we did not compile responses from demographic areas containing fewer than ten students. We shared survey results with teachers in January 2018, and used the results as the focus of professional development work on our February early release day. At that time, staff generated action items, many of which centered on enhancing activities to increase student engagement. Staff input at each school led to the identification of next steps, including expanding the use of Responsive Classroom at the elementary level and a plan to integrate Responsive Classroom strategies into our middle schools next year. A small group of middle school teachers will be participating in Responsive Classroom training this summer. Survey results also led to the development of a comprehensive professional development calendar for the 2018-19 academic year, focusing the early release days on social-emotional learning.

In the second initiative, four APS teachers and administrators participated in a nine-month training program and earned the William James Graduate Certificate in School Climate and Social Emotional Learning. The team included Pamela 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 program prepared our team 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 created an action plan on how to create a more positive school climate and aligned the school goals with the district’s strategic plan. The William James team also created a mental health resource map of programs and systems currently in place in Andover and found many that are working...
well. These programs and resources enable students to obtain the help they need at the universal (tier I), targeted (tier II), and intensive (tier III) levels of need. The William James team also examined several SEL curricula, focusing on three criteria. The SEL curriculum had to:

- Be a well-designed, classroom-based program that systematically promotes students’ social and emotional competence, provides opportunities for practice, and offers multi-year programming.
- Deliver high-quality training and other implementation supports, including initial training and ongoing support to ensure sound implementation.
- Be evidence-based with at least one carefully conducted evaluation documenting positive impacts on student behavior and/or academic performance.

The Williams James team will be making a presentation to the superintendent and SAT and will share the results of the curriculum evaluations at that time. This in-depth study of SEL provided a strong base of knowledge and administrator and teacher leadership within the district. William James College has accepted a second team to participate in the program next year.

The third initiative focuses on advancing teacher professional development and program implementation of social-emotional learning. For many years, the Andover Public Schools has been using Open Circle as its elementary-level SEL curriculum. However, this 30-minutes-a-week program has not been consistently utilized or found to be effective without a program that focuses on classroom climate and builds a sense of community in the classroom. To address the latter need, elementary teachers expressed strong interest in the Responsive Classroom program of the Northeast Foundation for Children. Based on a six-day training program last summer and another this fall, teachers began integrating practices from Responsive Classroom into our elementary classrooms. 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 students belong and are important contributing members of their class and school. Responsive Classroom 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.” To date we have trained 46 elementary staff members representing all five elementary schools. Another on-site training for 30 elementary teachers is scheduled for this summer. Teachers from the middle school level will attend Responsive Classroom trainings at other sites.

The fourth initiative focuses on the issue of cultural proficiency and ensuring an inclusive environment for students of varied cultures in our schools. To address this need, the sprint team created a Cultural Climate Committee, known as the C3. This sub-sprint or “dart” of the SEL sprint was begun by Adrianne 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 has met bi-weekly and provided schools with resources and recommendations.

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

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

The C3 identified Terms and Concepts Training as the highest priority and foundational need for our district. In the winter of 2018, the C3 invited professional development providers—Visions, Inc., Julie Mavity-Maddelena (Brooks School Director of Spiritual Life), and Facing History and Ourselves—to share
how they might support our professional development in these areas. The C3 recommended Facing History and Ourselves as the professional development provider that can best address the need for terms and concepts foundational training. Facing History and Ourselves will help support the early release day workshops throughout the 2018-19 school year.

The next steps to bolster our work in social and emotional learning will include:

- Partnering with Facing History and Ourselves to provide district-wide training for educators and administrators throughout the 2018-19 school year on the topics of identity, membership and belonging. Members of the Early Release Day Committee, the C3 and the SEL sprint have been working with the assistant superintendent to build and solidify this plan.
- Continuing to provide opportunities for professional development in Responsive Classroom.
- Administering the Panorama survey again and including the high school in addition to grades 3 through 8.
- Sending a second team in the fall to work toward earning a William James College Graduate Certificate in School Climate and Social Emotional Learning.
- Continuing meetings of the C3 to monitor the professional development and pursue other strategies that promote cultural proficiency and prevent racism and discrimination.
- Recommending to the School Committee that the district create an administrative program coordinator position for social-emotional learning and/or restore the director of social work position to 1.0 FTE to oversee SEL programs and initiatives district-wide.
- Recommending that the School Committee consider restoring health education at the elementary level. For a thorough presentation on this recommendation, please go to: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/10H858z32rTwT7YvoU6XDkk02xHLD_CMLhoxH7Qk1g/edit?usp=sharing

MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SPRINT

The comprehensive mental and behavioral health sprint focuses on the restructuring of services in these areas as another step in advancing caring and culturally responsive classrooms and schools (goal 1).

Target: Systems and supports are in place to effectively address students with mental and behavioral health issues.

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

- **Data.** We investigated and piloted software to track Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) and discrete trial services. We also investigated client software that will allow us to track district mental health trends for planning purposes. At this time, budgetary constraints limit our ability to move beyond the trial stage of these endeavors. In order to determine needs based on currently available data, we also reviewed information from such screening tools as SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment) and SNAP (School Nurse Assistant Program). In addition, the district is now represented in the Massachusetts School Mental Health Consortium, which is a network of districts joined in promoting and mapping resources for providing mental health supports. In doing so, we are in the initial stages of utilizing the School Health and Performance Evaluation System (SHAPE), a self-assessment tool that is part of the consortium membership. The tool allows us to take a broad view of our overall mental and behavioral health service delivery for planning and budgeting purposes.

- **Frameworks.** After completing a pilot program, we applied for and received a highly competitive reallocation grant. This grant has allowed us to implement the first Andover Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) training program. Constellations Behavioral Services is conducting the intensive RBT training program and they will continue to consult with our BCBAs as we implement this new model
next year. This step will significantly enhance our ability to address behavioral needs in each elementary school.

- **Programming.** We completed a review of the in-district high school Transitions program, which provides short-term intervention and gradual re-integration (transition) services required by students returning to school from psychiatric hospitalization and/or by students experiencing short-term crises. 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 its original intent. The district has returned to using the model developed by the Bridge for Resilient Youth in Transition (BRYT) network out of the Brookline Center for Community Mental Health. Our participation in the BRYT network includes access to multiple resources, including recommendations for entrance and exit criteria, individual short-term treatment planning, and individual student data collection based on the student’s transition goals. Hiring a school psychologist to oversee this program also facilitated management of students who need formal evaluation during their time in the program.

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 and will be piloted at Doherty Middle School.

At the elementary level, we developed an in-house mobile support team that will go into effect next year. 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 clinical director can provide additional support. Our Program Head for Special Programs will lead the 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. In addition, after training several of our own staff as Safety Care trainers, we are able to expand the numbers of staff who are trained in de-escalation strategies to build capacity in buildings to respond to crises prior to calling in the in-house mobile support team.

We reached out to Lahey Clinic to discuss locating a school-clinic partnership within the district. Most of our social workers are being called upon to deal with mental health and family systems issues that are beyond the scope of school-based supports. Close collaboration with a clinic, along with better proximity of services, could provide additional resources and access to care. 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.

Finally, we formed a partnership with the University of New Hampshire Institute on Disabilities in order to implement a new wrap-around program at AHS. RENEW is a structured, school-to-career and transition planning and individualized wrap-around program for students who are at risk. Developed in the 1990’s by the Institute on Disabilities at the University of New Hampshire, RENEW employs a person-centered planning approach. Each student works with a RENEW facilitator to assemble a support (wrap-around) team. Core values include community inclusion, unconditional care, strengths-based planning, and flexible resource development, all leading to self-determination. RENEW is an evidence-based model that has substantially improved the rates of high school completion, employment, and participation in post-secondary education among young people. RENEW has been part of an Institute of Education Sciences randomized control study for several years, and is the only model of its kind. We will be implementing the RENEW model next year.
• **Outreach.** The Home Visit program was launched this year and is in its implementation stage. The team was able to secure funds for training in 2017-18, but not for the stipends that would be required for participating teachers. We are now exploring a creative alternative to fund and staff the program.

The sprint team also investigated student advocacy programs, including Yes! and Eye to Eye. After several consultations with the Eye to Eye team, we signed a contract this spring. Over the summer, our first two student leaders from AHS will be trained at Brown University. We plan to implement the program with our middle school partner in the fall.

• **Staffing.** We hired a clinical director who consults regularly on cases and conducts most of the neuropsychological evaluations that used to be contracted. We secured a Resource Reallocation to District Priorities grant and hired Constellations Behavioral Services to train ten Instructional Assistants to serve instead as RBTs. This change will also allow us to centrally deploy our BCBAs.

Our next steps in enhancing mental and behavioral health services include:

- Locating the Board Certified Behavior Analysts centrally and deploying the Registered Behavior Technicians to the five elementary schools to provide behavioral supports to schools.
- Purchasing ABA and behavioral tracking software to support data collection and analysis.
- Implementing the mobile consultation program and collecting data on efficacy.
- Piloting additional therapeutic academic support at Doherty Middle School.
- Working with the Lahey Clinic to facilitate access to mental health clinicians.
- Launching the RENEW program to support at-risk students.
- Establishing and expanding an Eye to Eye mentoring team to support students with dyslexia and other language-based learning difficulties.
- Determining funding sources for mental health management software and the Home Visit program.

**ANDOVER HIGH SCHOOL 7+H SCHEDULE SPRINT**

The AHS schedule implementation sprint will take the next steps in advancing caring and culturally responsive classrooms and schools (goal 1) and curricular rigor (goal 2) at the high school.

**Target:** All high school students experience personalized instruction that better supports their success.

**Progress:** 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 about to complete their first year of the schedule.

The yearlong aspect of the schedule differs from years past, where students would have transitioned to new courses and new teachers mid-way through the year. With yearlong courses, teacher-student relationships were deepened, enabling teachers to know their students better as learners and to monitor their progress throughout the entire school year.

Students, teachers, and the school community took advantage of the new personalization period called H Block. The personalization period has two major components. H1 is an opportunity for each student to have a faculty member, in addition to the guidance counselor, who knows the student well and can assist the student throughout the four-year high school experience. The H1 advisor gets to know a group of 15 to 17 learners and helps them make positive academic, social, and emotional choices at the high school.
The AHS staff also designed a curriculum for the H1 component to enhance students' experience at each grade.

The H2 through H5 blocks allow students and teachers to personalize their school day. Students choose which teachers they need to visit in order to delve deeply into course content, make up work, receive support, or explore areas of mutual interest. Additionally, during H2 through H5 the high school hosted a variety of meetings and speakers on topics of interest to the community. Meetings included class meetings, pre-prom events, delivery of a developmental guidance curriculum, community speakers, and the Credit for Life Fair sponsored by the Service Club of Andover. The speakers have included Ashley Bendiksen, who spoke about relationship violence; Casey McQuillen, an Andover native and American Idol contestant, who performed and spoke about being true to oneself; and An Na, an author who spoke to students about her book A Step from Heaven.

The new schedule also brought two new programs to AHS. We initiated an Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) cohort at grade 9, which we will expand to grade 10 in the 2018-19 school year. This elective course introduces students to the WICOR strategies of learning (Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization, and Reading) to strengthen their study and work skills. We also expanded the availability for virtual online courses by joining the Virtual High School Consortium (VHS). VHS has given AHS students access to a wider array of online courses taught by certified educators. Students were coached and monitored by a coordinator at the high school.

The new schedule also provided teachers time within the school day to work in professional learning groups (PLGs). These PLGs pursued a variety of school and district initiatives, including collaborating on common assessments and developing interdisciplinary curricula.

To enable rising ninth graders to take advantage of the opportunities of the 7 + H schedule, AHS and all three middle schools worked together to prepare students for the transition. Throughout the school year, Principal Phil Conrad met with eighth-grade teachers to answer their questions about the 7+H schedule. These meetings served as a prelude to a visit to the high school by all eighth-grade students, at which time the eighth graders received an overview of the 7+H schedule and the other offerings of AHS. High school students led this visit and talked about ways in which the H block was supporting both their learning and their emotional well-being. The eighth graders returned to their middle schools excited about all the possibilities AHS has to offer.

Reports from parents, students, and teachers indicate overall satisfaction with the H2-HS personalization blocks for remediation, the make up of assessments, and the offering of programs and meetings that previously would have disrupted academic classes. They also report improved relationships between students and teachers and enhanced learning through year-long courses. Finally, visits of AHS administrators and students to all middle schools, visits by eighth graders to AHS, administrator visits with all eighth-grade teams, and presentations to parents about the benefits of the 7+H Schedule have smoothed the transition from middle school to high school.

Next steps for the AHS Schedule sprint include:

- Enhancing support for students by extending such programs as AVID and VHS and by increasing the number of students who are engaged in peer mentoring and tutoring.
- Building on the current schedule to incorporate the additional 15 minutes that will be added to the school day in the 2019-20 school year.
- Continuing to refine the H1 advisory curriculum.
- Preparing each student to develop an individual legacy document or “New Student Resume” that highlights the authentic learning experiences that have had particular value, such as the current senior capstone experience.
• Developing a structure and expectations for the Professional Learning Group time by embedding the “Agile Strategic Planning Sprint Model” into the work of these groups.
• Transitioning the sprint to focus on enabling students to make smoother transitions between each level: Pre-K to kindergarten, fifth grade to sixth, eighth grade to ninth, and twelfth grade to post-secondary.

INNOVATION SPRINT

The innovation sprint fosters authentic student learning experiences in order to move curricular rigor forward (goal 2).

Target: Authentic learning experiences are integrated throughout the curriculum.

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

Last summer, ten APS faculty members traveled to Detroit to learn about design thinking at the Henry Ford Learning Institute (HFLI). Ten district teachers had attended this institute previously and found it beneficial.

At the elementary level we empowered teacher facilitators, in tandem with administrators, to lead rapid design challenges. The innovation sprint team used the district’s scheduled “open content days” as an opportunity for teachers trained in design thinking 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 were replicated in classrooms across all grade levels. In addition, some faculties applied the design-thinking approach in order to problem solve ways to implement UDL. Two fifth-grade classrooms piloted student capstone projects using design thinking.

Another authentic learning experience that was well received by teachers and students was New England Arts in Literacy (NEAL). To date, 63 elementary and middle school teachers have completed the extensive NEAL training program. In addition, 26 faculty members have implemented NEAL for two or three years and mentored the teachers who were new to it. At least 1,575 students benefited from this universally designed and innovative teaching method that emphasizes a positive emotional climate and affords students multiple ways to express their learning. NEAL presentations were made to several faculties, and parents were invited to see the students’ final performances.

Other innovative work was continued and/or expanded. Capstone training was provided to ten more teachers. The use of Capstone projects spread downward from the high school to pilots at the middle and elementary levels. The 2nd Annual Senior Capstone Showcase involved students from all three levels, with 77 students participating. The capstone initiative at the high school has grown significantly. Pioneered with five students in 2015, 57 students are enrolled in the Capstone course for next year. To further the innovative work at the high school, the AHS Innovation Lab transitioned into the IDEAStudio as space in the high school media center was reorganized to accommodate the iLab, engineering and computing spaces in one area.
Additionally, more than 40 teachers collaborated districtwide through a variety of innovative initiatives, such as maker spaces and Global Pathways. The Global Pathways program has expanded significantly. Begun with 18 students in 2015, it will have 193 enrolled in the pathway in 2018-19.

A particularly significant breakthrough was the arrival of the Global Portal. As the first district in the country to implement this innovation, it has enabled our students to experience other countries and cultures more directly and to begin initiating international collaborations with students in other countries. Every school had an opportunity for its students and parents to participate. The Portal is also being integrated into the second-grade social studies curriculum, which will focus on the study of four countries, each possessing a portal that enables our students to meet and converse with students in those 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.

Next steps for our work in innovation include:
- Expanding the Capstone initiative to more classrooms and students.
- Expanding the Global Pathway.
- Deepening the use of the Global Portal across the district.
- Increasing the number of teachers trained in design thinking.
- Piloting the New Student Resume to enable students to document their work in authentic learning experiences, service, leadership, etc.

LITERACY SPRINT

The literacy sprint will address reading challenges and select a new approach to teaching literacy as the next step in advancing curricular rigor (goal 2) and inclusive instruction (goal 3).

Target: Students with literacy challenges become successful and fluent readers or are provided with alternatives that allow them to access appropriately challenging text.

Progress: The 2017-18 school year has been our most significant to date in moving our literacy initiative forward. We have made meaningful progress in our early screening and progress monitoring, application of data analysis to select appropriate interventions for students, professional development in both utilization of data and literacy interventions, technology supports for students with language-based learning issues, and selection of a core literacy program. In essence, we have now laid a substantial foundation for future improvement in students’ reading skills and in addressing the needs of challenged readers.

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 a universal screening instrument designed to measure early literacy indicators that predict later reading success, and the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), which gauges a student’s ability to read for meaning. Simply put, one measures learning to read while the other measures reading to learn.

The Northwest Evaluation Association’s MAP is a computer-adaptive assessment that provides teachers with a thorough picture of students’ learning—how much their skills have grown, which skills have been mastered, what they are ready to learn, and specific skill gaps that need to be addressed in both reading and mathematics. The district added the MAP assessment tool this year for all students in grades 3-6, and some students in grades 7–10, to give teachers another data point for learning about their students’ skills, particularly in reading comprehension. The MAP tool also provides a native Lexile score, which enables teachers and parents to match students instructionally to appropriate reading materials. We will administer the second MAP assessment in June 2018.
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 implemented an overall professional development plan for administrators, which is followed by customized, school-based professional development delivered by administrators and outside consultants for teachers in grades 1-5, plus professional development that specifically targets kindergarten teachers.

All administrators and key teacher leaders—including principals, assistant principals, ETFs, program heads, and reading specialists—engaged in professional development with Hill for Literacy using a train-the-trainer model. Staff learned how to analyze data to inform instruction and how to guide data team meetings. To date, the principals have participated in two sessions that 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 three district-wide data team meetings aimed at identifying individual school and district 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 also used 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. Dr. Melissa Orkin of Crafting Minds (previously with Tufts University Center for Reading Research) worked with both regular and general education teachers on tier II interventions for word study and syllabication. She also helped us to refine our response to screening data with follow-up assessments that more specifically target the types of interventions students need. These sessions were school- and grade-level-based so that all teachers received customized professional development tailored to their specific needs.

Results from the spring 2017 DIBELS revealed that our 2016-17 kindergarten students generally had made little gain in phonemic awareness. Through analysis, we realized that students need more support in learning sounds prior to connecting sounds to letters. In response to the DIBELS data, kindergarten teachers engaged in three training sessions on phonemic awareness in the fall of 2017. In addition, kindergarten teachers received Just Right Phonemic Awareness Kits and four hours of professional development to assist them with instructional practice. We plan to continue this focus next fall with a three-hour explicit unit training. We also determined that teachers new to the district had received no formal training in using the FUNDATIONS program. Accordingly, in the fall of 2017, we provided all elementary teachers new to the district with grade-level-specific training in FUNDATIONS.

In addition to the support we have provided in specific progress monitoring, professional development, and intervention, we are moving forward on selecting a literacy program that best supports the development of reading skills at the elementary level. Dr. Cynthia Merrill has served as our lead consultant for this initiative. The teachers involved in the elementary-level pilot program engaged in a variety of professional development including a two-day workshop at the Literacy for All Conference in Rhode Island, a three-day 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 at an elementary school in Framingham. The pilot program concluded with a recommendation to implement a reader’s workshop model using the Fountas & Pinnell Classroom program, beginning in the 2019-2020 school year. Both the Literacy Advisory Board and the literacy sprint team recommended that teachers be provided with in-depth professional development on the reader’s workshop model during the 2018-19 school year, prior to any implementation of the program. The Literacy Advisory Board also recommended that the district use the Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System in 2018-19 to provide additional reading comprehension data to better inform instruction during the workshop model.
The grades 6–12 English Language Arts (ELA) Advisory, informed by the work of the sprint, took it upon themselves to revise the middle school summer reading program to include more student choice of texts as well as more Lexile ranges to ensure accessibility. The middle school ELA teachers will continue to engage with Lucy Calkins Units of Study Writing Program. Seven teachers will attend Columbia Teachers College during the summer 2018 to obtain further professional development.

In the area of specialized literacy instruction for students with reading and language-based literacy challenges, we continued to build a multi-pronged approach to intervention. Regular education, special education, and specialist staff were involved in extensive literacy training. For example, we ran a second one-year cohort of Wilson Language training and we certified four more teachers in Orton-Gillingham. In the area of comprehension, we conducted two more cohorts of Story Grammar Marker, a multi-sensory comprehension program for narrative text. Two of our speech-language pathologists are now qualified trainers in this approach and trained at least 38 staff members this year. This spring, we added Project Read Report Form, a multisensory middle and high school program that supports comprehension of expository text. In the area of written expression, we introduced Framing Your Thoughts, a multisensory language-based intervention for language syntax development and written expression. In our initial cohort, 49 teachers participated, and one teacher underwent advanced training to become our district trainer for Framing Your Thoughts. This in-house training model is similar to the one we use with Story Grammar Marker. Implementation of Framing Your Thoughts and Project Read Report Form will enable us to complete our vertical curriculum alignment in the area of writing and reading comprehension.

In addition to the tier II and tier III interventions described above, we implemented Lexia—an adaptive computer-based practice program—across all elementary schools. In collaboration with our IT department, we 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 critical to providing students with high-level content and access to a rigorous curriculum while at the same time accommodating their challenges. This year, we conducted two large training events: one in the summer for regular and special education teachers, and one in the winter for the teachers in our programs for students with language-based learning disabilities. We also implemented the Read Naturally program in the middle schools and at the high school to support students with language-based learning challenges.

In addition to the strong PreK-12 foundation we are building in literacy, we have established a partnership with the Carroll School to pilot their Targeted Cognitive Intervention (TCI) program. The 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 specify cognitive exercises that target the student’s needs. Our TCI teachers completed their training with Jen Brock from the Carroll School. We also traveled to Vermont to confer with specialists at the Greenwood School and observe their pilot implementation of the TCI program. We implemented our first TCI cohorts at West Middle, Wood Hill, Doherty, and High Plain Elementary this spring. Andover is the first public school to participate in this groundbreaking intervention program.

Continuing our agenda of aggressive professional development in language and literacy instruction at all levels, we worked with our Instructional Assistants (IAs) to develop their skills in supporting intensive interventions. For example, several IAs completed Lindamood-Bell (LiPS) training last summer. This year, we were awarded a competitive grant that allowed us to partner with Massachusetts General Hospital to develop an in-house training program in literacy for teacher assistants. Assistants who successfully complete this MGH-approved micro-credential will be able to support specialists as literacy tutors.

We have also continued to work with our other expert partners. For example, Ann Larsen from Landmark Outreach provided a one-week summer course to regular education teachers who are partnering with teachers in the language-based LD program. During the school year, she continued to consult with our language-based LD program at the elementary and middle schools and provided direct consultation to our
referral and admissions team for the program. Finally, Ann spent ten days with the high school staff. This work included formal training for regular and special education teachers in the Language-Based Classroom, a redesign of content-area literacy programming, and consultation on co-teaching. This phase of the work will conclude over the summer. In addition, for the second year, several curriculum directors, teachers, and administrators attended the Dyslexia Foundation conference at Harvard Medical School.

In addition to redesigning the curriculum for the AHS language-based program, we developed a new ELA course curriculum map for the middle school language-based program. The map outlines the progression of literacy standards across grades 6-8, along with a crosswalk of mentor texts that have been selected for readability (Lexile) level.

Lisa Brooks, our LD/Literacy coach, held 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 also collaborated on phonemic awareness training for kindergarten teachers.

Outreach efforts continue to be important to our work. For example, we were invited to share our literacy plan at ASCD, and we launched a digital magazine to inform the public about our projects. This spring, we were invited to participate in the Gaab Lab’s Boston Children’s Hospital Innovation Accelerator project for the early screening of dyslexia. This initiative includes literacy leaders from across the country. We have also been invited to participate in a panel presentation with some well-known dyslexia specialists in the fall.

Our middle and high school teachers are working on a student advocacy program called Eye-to-Eye. Through Eye-to-Eye, older students with dyslexia and other language-based learning disabilities will have the opportunity to mentor younger students. This program will support students with learning disabilities as they learn to navigate their personal learning styles. This summer, we will send two high school students with identified learning disabilities to Brown University for leadership training. We will recruit more AHS leaders in the fall of 2018.

In summary, given the extensive work in progress monitoring, data analysis, professional development for both regular education and special education teachers, consultation to our language-based programs, and implementation and expansion of programs to better address literacy and language-based learning difficulties, we project positive results for student performance in the coming years. Our concerted efforts to provide teachers with strong professional development in the areas of phonics and phonemic awareness, coupled with our efforts to collaborate in analyzing data to make instructional decisions, are building a solid foundation for the future.

Looking ahead, our next steps for the 2018–19 school year include:

- Continuing our work with Just Right Phonological Awareness Curriculum in kindergarten.
- Focusing professional development on effectively utilizing the literacy workshop model.
- Deepening the use of data meetings to drive literacy instruction and tier II interventions.
- Working towards implementation of the Units of Study Writing program in grades 6 and 8.
- Further enhancing our literacy and language-based programs at the high school.
- Training literacy tutors through our partnership with MGH.
- Developing a LEXILE-based reading list and refining our co-teaching model at AHS.
- Continuing to train teachers in research-based interventions.
- Continuing our outreach efforts through the International Dyslexia Association and other nationally recognized organizations.
- Developing a summer reading clinic.
ACCESSIBILITY SPRINT

The accessible digital media sprint builds on our 1:1 initiative, the purchase of digital applications, texts and media, and our professional development in blended learning in order to support inclusive instructional practices (goal 3).

Target: Universally designed instruction that maximizes the productivity of technology is integrated into all classes.

Progress: The accessibility sprint 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) provided opportunities for students at all grade levels to learn about TextHelp though 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.

Our other major accessibility initiative was Universal Design for Learning (UDL). The accessibility sprint helped organize our opening-day activities with David Rose. We provided all teachers with a webpage of resources and links to a UDL checklist. We also made our district website accessible.

Members of the elementary and middle school leadership team and digital learning leaders took part in a seven-week professional development program entitled Universally Designed Leadership. This training opportunity was offered through the CREST Collaborative.

Next steps for increasing accessibility include:
- Evaluating options, securing funding and implementing a system-wide Learning Management System (LMS), which will further help evaluate and provide accessible content for students. An effective LMS is a complex ecosystem designed to make it easy for teachers and students to access and manage digital learning resources from multiple sources in one place. An LMS will allow teachers to create lessons and resources that engage their students, and deliver personalized learning.
- Creating a toolbox for teachers to connect UDL principles and accessibility tools to classroom content.
- Following up on the UDL training offered through the CREST Collaborative. Sara Stetson, Tracy Crowley and Joanne Najarian will be teaching a UDL course for teachers and administrators in the fall of 2018. Graduate credit will be offered for this coursework.
- Continuing to provide multiple professional development opportunities for teachers, infusing UDL strategies into already scheduled professional development experiences on multiple curricular topics.
PROGRESS MONITORING SPRINT

The diagnostic data sprint focuses the district on the implementation of a variety of diagnostic assessments and data analyses to ensure we are adjusting instruction to most effectively meet students' individual needs through student progress monitoring (goal 4).

Target: Data-reflective culture is present in all schools and data is used to answer questions about student growth and drive instructional improvement.

Progress: 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 in the moment and over time.

Progress monitoring should be:
- Formative and ongoing.
- Documented and recorded regularly in a data system.
- Used to make decisions around success of interventions for individual students.
- Used to make decisions at a systems level around school-wide interventions.

This year we have made significant progress in advancing a data-reflective culture. Throughout the year, teachers collected and analyzed data utilizing a variety of universal screening and assessment tools to determine appropriate instructional levels, groupings and interventions for all students. However, the most significant improvement was the regular data meeting held at the elementary and middle schools to better understand students' needs and to adjust instruction to meet those needs.

Students in grades K-5 were administered the universal screening tool DIBELS (Dynamic Indicator of Early Literacy Skills). Students were assessed in phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, accuracy and fluency with connected text, reading comprehension and vocabulary to determine appropriate instructional focus.

In collaboration with the Hill for Literacy, principals, assistant principals and reading specialists were trained in how to conduct data meetings to determine appropriate instructional reading focus areas for every child. All students were given a benchmark assessment three times this year and students in need of intervention were monitored and assessed every six weeks.

We also purchased and began using the Lexia Core 5 program, an adaptive computer-aided instructional tool that allows children to practice early literacy skills. Lexia takes data on the mastery of skills based on the standards and adapts to the instructional level of the student. Lexia produces just-in-time data, which is then used by the teacher to make decisions about the instructional focus for each child and the groupings that will best serve children in the classroom.

At the elementary and middle school levels, teachers also began using adaptive computer-aided instruction in math through such programs as Dreambox, Prodigy, and IXL, which allow children to practice and enhance their math skills. These programs adapt to the instructional level of the student and collect data based on the mastery of skills. Teachers used this just-in-time data to make daily decisions about the appropriate instructional focus for particular children.

Students also participated in reading and math MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) testing. MAP is a nationally normed and standardized test. We administered MAP to all students in grades 3-6 and to some students in grades 7 and 8. MAP provides a student’s RIT (Rasch Unit) Score, which indicates the range of where a child is currently achieving and the appropriate instructional focus based on the standards. MAP also determines Lexile range (reading range) for individual students and the appropriate text level.
Teachers also analyzed students’ MCAS results to review both student performance and curricular coverage. Based on that analysis, schools and individual teachers made adjustments to ensure that we were covering sufficiently the material to be tested so that our students would perform as best they could.

Next steps in progress monitoring will include:

- Continuing to further the work of data teams at each level and deepen the use of data in practice.
- Utilizing elementary progress monitoring data for students transitioning to the middle schools to better determine instructional focus areas for the next year.
- Working with the Accessibility Sprint team to identify, purchase and implement a learning management system (LMS) that provides a platform (dashboard) synthesizing the data being collected. The dashboard needs to provide a data snapshot so that teachers more easily understand how students are doing in the moment and over time.
- Continuing to work with the Director of Digital Learning and the IT Applications Team to identify a data systems dashboard that monitors student progress toward the standards.

ADDITIONAL AREAS OF STRATEGIC FOCUS

TECHNOLOGY

Although there was no technology sprint this past year, such significant strides were made in the area of technology during the year in support of the other sprints that we felt it important to report on our progress in this area.

We significantly upgraded staff and student technology equipment this past year. We deployed over 700 new hybrid laptop/tablet machines to teachers, who were especially excited about access to touch screens and pens. The older Apple Macbook Pro machines were distributed to middle and high school instructional assistants, along with cart-based devices for the elementary school IAs. We distributed more than 1000 Chromebooks to students in grades 2 and 3, along with sufficient iPads for grades K-1 to meet the desired 2:1 ratio. 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. All aspects of the iAndover 1:1 program are now complete. We also upgraded all shared lab-type computers; no machine in the district is now more than five years old. In addition, we replaced the aging elementary Smartboards with new Epson interactive projectors and provided improved connectivity to all projectors from new Windows machines. Plans are underway to upgrade high school projectors over the summer.

In terms of communications technology, we deployed new state of the art VoIP (Voice over IP) digital handsets to every classroom in the district. We have selected and are currently installing a new town and school-wide notification system that will provide improved communication in both routine and emergency situations. The new system allows us to communicate over VoIP phones, smartphones, intercoms, police radio and more. As part of this project, aging physical analog intercom systems will be upgraded to modern digital paging systems. Also we implemented Enhanced E911 calling to help pinpoint calls more precisely within a building. To further enhance communication and connectivity, we upgraded wireless networks in all school buildings, effectively doubling coverage and capacity.

The IT Department upgraded the audio and video architecture in the School Committee Room to provide improved collaboration and broadcast capabilities. Over the summer we will add video conferencing
capabilities. We will use these new capabilities to experiment with new classroom use of technology and to provide an enhanced technology training experience.

The APS application team implemented Registration Gateway On-line Back to School Forms for a pilot group of five schools, as well as a new on-line student registration system. These changes allow parents to update back-to-school forms online and to enroll their students online. This information is then automatically integrated with our Student Information System (ASPEN). By implementing this system, we eliminate data entry for school administration and reduce the incidence of erroneous data being entered into Aspen. We updated the school nurse system (SNAP) with the necessary data as well. In addition, we implemented a new applicant tracking system called NEOGOV. The new system has streamlined the online application and hiring process, while eliminating the need for a five-part, carbon copy form previously used for approval of new hires. Finally, we completed the installation and configuration of Office 365 and are rolling out this program to all staff and students. In the area of assessment, the IT Department supported all standardized MCAS and ELL testing. APS is the first district in the state to pilot the interface of BYOD with standardized tests.

FACILITIES

We also did not have a sprint focused on facility improvement. However it was one of the major goals of the district. We made considerable progress in moving the capital plan forward to ensure a safe, efficient and effective learning environment. Although it often takes multiple applications over several years to have a school accepted into the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) program for renovation or replacement, the MSBA invited the district to participate in the eligibility period for West Elementary based on our first application to the program. We completed several of the initial steps required during the eligibility period. The Initial Compliance Certificate has been submitted, a building committee has been appointed, and Town Meeting approved an article funding the feasibility study from free cash. We are in the process of completing the educational profile and the maintenance documents well ahead of schedule.

We 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 pursued an aggressive timeline for developing options for the School Committee to consider. The architect and feasibility study committee refined a presentation to inform important decision makers and the community as a whole. That presentation was made to the School Committee, the Finance Committee, and the Board of Selectmen. In addition, three community meetings were held to inform the public. With the cost of the project higher than anticipated, we developed and submitted a Statement of Interest to the MSBA for the high school.

In addition to these two highly visible projects, the capital projects supported in the FY18 Comprehensive Improvement Plan (CIP)—air conditioning and field access at High Plain and Wood Hill, doors at South, and audio enhancement for four elementary schools and one middle school—will also make a significant difference. The capital projects in the FY19 CIP are equally important as next steps to upgrade the learning environment throughout our schools. These planned projects include continuing the implementation of audio enhancement at other schools, evaluating Doherty’s maintenance and building conditions, updating the media center at Doherty and the cafeteria at West Middle, installing a chairlift at Shawsheen, and replacing the stage curtains at the Collins Center. The evaluation of Doherty is particularly important and 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.

Finally, we focused attention on security issues at our schools as well. We are in the process of improving communications and putting in place new security measures, such as an entrance vestibule at the high
school and improved surveillance cameras at all schools. We also collaborated with the police department to conduct security trainings and drills at each of our schools.

**FY2019 BUDGET**

The FY2019 budget is designed to reinforce the theory of action by providing funds for professional development, instructional technology, instructional materials, and progress monitoring to support the targets and action plans of the seven sprints. For example, we have aligned funds for assessments, program materials and professional development to address the needs of children with reading difficulties, particularly those with indications of dyslexia, as encompassed by the literacy sprint. In addition, we have reorganized staffing and professional development funding to better address the needs of students with mental and behavioral health issues to support the work of that sprint. Both of these learning challenges have been significant drivers of out-of-district placements. We believe that the investments included in the FY2019 budget will build on the prior two years’ investments that are addressing students’ needs earlier and more effectively in-district.

To support the social-emotional and culturally responsive pedagogy sprint, we have realigned professional development funds to support summer and school year trainings in Responsive Classroom strategies and to enable teams from our elementary schools to participate in a William James College leadership development program. The investments in the high school schedule sprint were made in FY2018 and won’t need additional investment, with the exception of a 0.2FTE for the AVID program. This sprint team continues its work to refine elements of the schedule. The innovation sprint has been almost completely supported through grants from Andover Coalition for Education (ACE) and through a federal grant for the New England Arts and Literacy project. Some professional development funds have been used to send teacher teams to the Stanford Design Thinking Institute to support our work with maker spaces and the Innovation Lab at AHS. Professional development funds and the capital plan for technology have fueled our work on accessible digital media and support for the iAndover 1:1 initiative. Finally, we have also used professional development funds to provide support for administrators and teachers to create and enhance the work of our school-based data teams that are working to monitor the progress of individual students and deliver interventions and support that address each child’s particular learning needs. Aligning our budget with these targets enables us to make significant progress in achieving our goals.

**TAKING AN INCREMENTAL STEP FORWARD**

Over the past two years we have taken significant incremental steps to move the district forward by reducing elementary class size, implementing a new high school schedule, supporting a comprehensive plan to address learning needs, moving forward aggressively on a capital improvement, and advancing the work of our sprint teams.

We can be proud of what has been accomplished and of everyone’s deep commitment to continuing the district’s improvement efforts. We are grateful to the School Committee, faculty, staff and parents for recognizing the importance of continuing to move the district forward, and to the community of Andover for their ongoing support of our students.