

ANDOVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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TO: Andover School Committee Members
FROM: Sheldon H. Berman, Ed.D., Superintendent
SUBJECT: Superintendent goals for 2019-20
DATE: June 29, 2020

SUPERINTENDENT GOALS FOR 2019-20: END-OF-YEAR REPORT

[A Change in Focus](#)

On March 16, 2020, the district closed all schools due to the coronavirus pandemic, prompting a dramatic shift in the operation of the district. While we still attended to our overall goals, our focus shifted to providing support and continuing education to students and families who were now learning at home. Just two weeks prior to that closure, I provided a mid-year update about our work on the strategic goals through the end of February. From that point on, although the district continued to make progress on some of the superintendent's 2019-20 goals, these efforts were significantly curtailed in order to focus full time on establishing and implementing our remote learning plan.

In order to do justice to the process of reporting on district progress, I have included at the end of this document a summary narrative on our remote learning plan. I have also added to each of the goal and sprint reports any additional progress that has been made since the submission of the mid-year progress report at the end of February. I have entered these additions in blue italic text so that you can differentiate new material from material submitted in February.

End-of-Year Progress Report

The superintendent's goals are focused on long-term improvement efforts to strengthen the district's instructional program, classroom and school culture, decision-making effectiveness, and physical infrastructure, as well as its relationships with parents and the community. As many of these efforts are multi-year initiatives, specific goals may have continuity from year to year; building on the work of the prior year and deepening or extending that work during the current year. Therefore, the goals and evidence will remain as superintendent goals over multiple years with modifications that identify the specific work of the current year.

GOAL 1: The superintendent will facilitate progress of the six cross-functional sprint teams and provide regular reports on their progress in order to move forward on the agile strategic plan: Literacy, Transitions, Mental and Behavioral Health, Social-Emotional Learning, Accessibility, and Progress Monitoring. (Standard IV: Professional Culture; Professional Practice Goal)

Evidence/Product: Each sprint moves forward on action-specific steps identified in the attached matrix to achieve its targets. Regular updates of the matrix will be provided to the School Committee in conjunction with verbal updates at regularly scheduled Committee meetings throughout the school year.

The progress of each sprint is reported at the end of this document, with the exception of the Literacy Sprint, which is reported under Goal 3 below.

GOAL 2: The superintendent will work with the assistant superintendent for finance and administration and the director of facilities to make progress on the district's capital plan and large facility projects, with particular attention to supporting the work of the AHS Facility Study Committee and the West Elementary School Building Committee. (Standard II: Management and Operations; District Improvement Goal)

Evidence/Product: Continued progress through the MSBA feasibility phase for the renovation/replacement of West Elementary, a plan for the renovation/addition of Andover High School, a capital plan for Doherty, a strategy for a pre-K facility, and a viable capital improvement plan to address the needs of the other school buildings.

Key Accomplishments:

- ✓ Developed a comprehensive description of West Elementary's educational program for submission to MSBA; provided rationales for including a "flexitorium" and for incorporating Shawsheen's population into West Elementary.
- ✓ Developed alternative models for calculating AHS space utilization rates.
- ✓ Worked with Andover's Facilities Department to plan or undertake needed capital improvements at Doherty, West Middle, Sanborn, High Plain, and Wood Hill.
- ✓ *Revised and updated the 2019 Statement of Interest for Andover High School and submitted it as a new Statement of Interest in April 2020.*
- ✓ *Completed and submitted the Preferred Schematic Report (PSR) and the Preliminary Design Proposal (PDP) for West Elementary with preschool addition and provided a thorough response to MSBA's comments on both the PSR and the PDP.*

The district continues to devote extensive time and energy to capital improvements, particularly the efforts to renovate/replace West Elementary, Shawsheen Preschool, and Andover High School. The work on the feasibility phase for West Elementary has progressed aggressively this year. The superintendent, in collaboration with district and school administrators, wrote a thorough description of West Elementary's educational program to be submitted to MSBA. This document makes the case for an exemplary school facility that addresses the needs of all students in innovative ways. It highlights the need for significant space and appropriate facilities for students with special needs and preschool students so that we can move our preschool students from Shawsheen. It also provides a rationale for including an auditorium or "flexitorium" to support the instructional program. In addition to the work on the educational program, the Building Committee went through the process of selecting a project management team as well as an architect for the project.

Although Andover High School was not accepted into the MSBA program, the administration worked with the AHS Facility Study Committee to host a visit from MSBA staff and consultants. Following the non-acceptance, we met with MSBA to determine the reasons for not being accepted and then developed alternative models for calculating utilization rates in order to better make our case for overcrowding. A decision will be made in early March on whether to reapply to MSBA or to begin the process of asking the town's support for funding of a renovation/replacement of AHS.

We have also worked with the Facilities Department to address significant capital needs in the district, including replacing the floor in the high school field house and the asphalt on the tennis courts, beginning design work on the elevator for Doherty, replacing the roof and designing a new heating and air conditioning system for Sanborn, renovating West Middle's auditorium, and completion of the kindergarten playground and air conditioning for the gym at High Plain and Wood Hill.

UPDATE SINCE MARCH 1: We aggressively pursued this goal in spite of the closure. Based on the recommendation of the AHS Facility Study Committee and the vote of the School Committee, administration revised the 2019 Statement of Interest to address two specific matters raised by MSBA: the potential use of modulars to address overcrowding and the formula used to calculate utilization rate at AHS. The revised document was submitted as a new SOI in April.

The work of the West Elementary Building Committee and the West El project continued to move forward. The draft of the educational program completed earlier in the year was revised and integrated into the Preliminary Design Proposal (PDP), which was submitted on March 11. Based on MSBA's comments on the PDP, we developed and submitted a thorough response. MSBA's comments also required a significant revision of the educational program. The revised educational program was submitted as part of the Preferred Schematic Report (PSR) on May 6. We are now preparing for a presentation to the Facilities Assessment Subcommittee (FAS) and the full MSBA board. This presentation has been delayed in order for us to address issues related to the mechanical penthouse.

Although we worked hard to establish a capital improvement program that would address a number of significant facility issues, we have had to postpone a number of capital projects, including the Sanborn roof and the Doherty library air conditioning. This delay was necessary in order to first determine and address the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the district.

GOAL 3: The superintendent will work with the assistant superintendent of student services and the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning to complete the implementation of a strong core literacy curriculum and interventions that address students' reading issues, including issues related to dyslexia, through: (a) purchasing the remaining curricular materials and providing professional development for the second year of a three-year phase-in of a new elementary literacy program; (b) enhancing the use of such diagnostic tools as DIBELS, MAP, Lexia, the Benchmark Assessment System (BAS), and early screening measures to identify the supports needed for students to be successful as well as areas for program improvement; (c) continuing to expand reading interventions and programs at the middle and high school levels; and (d) integrating social studies and arts into the elementary literacy program. (Standard I: Instructional Leadership; Student Learning Goal) Literacy Sprint

Evidence/Product: Document the use of assessments for early identification, universal screening and progress monitoring, supported by data where appropriate; the professional development offered to both regular education and special education staff; and the program supports implemented at the middle and high school levels, with demonstrated improvement in students' reading performance, particularly for students with language-based reading issues.

Key Accomplishments:

- ✓ Deepened implementation of Fountas & Pinnell elementary reading curriculum.
- ✓ Increased teachers' skills in gathering, analyzing, and applying assessment data from multiple instruments.
- ✓ Used a competitive resource allocation grant to train 25 literacy assistants in how to administer the DIBELS.
- ✓ Worked with ELA teachers at elementary and middle school levels and in regular and special education programs to develop reading/writing curriculum maps, share professional development efforts, and help ensure vertical and horizontal alignment of materials and methods, including writers workshop.
- ✓ Enabled thirteen teachers to serve as literacy leads in their school through becoming laboratory classroom teachers.
- ✓ Expanded AVID to a third cohort of high school students.

- ✓ Completed a dyslexia guide, sharing it with districts statewide, and provided technical support to other districts in the area of language-based learning disabilities.
- ✓ Saw marked improvements in students' literacy skills on the MCAS and the DIBELS.
- ✓ *Adapted Reader's Workshop strategies to a remote learning environment and provided Orton-Gillingham sessions to students through teletherapy.*
- ✓ *Accepted an invitation to participate in developing the state guidance document for students with reading challenges.*
- ✓ *Piloted an assessment tool based on eye-tracking technologies and artificial intelligence.*
- ✓ *Provided/facilitated online professional development for K-5 teachers in implementing Reader's Workshop, employing common learning targets, and sharing literacy best practices as the teachers developed remote learning plans and shifted their balanced literacy pedagogy from the classroom to a virtual learning environment.*

The goal of the Literacy Sprint is to help students become successful readers through effective implementation of a core literacy curriculum, and with appropriate and timely interventions for students with literacy challenges. To learn more deeply about literacy pedagogy in action, the literacy sprint has engaged in classroom visits across grades K-12. This strategy helped our sprint team appreciate systemic literacy practice, ask teachers about the effectiveness of the curriculum, and invite feedback about areas for improvement.

Core Curriculum

At the elementary level, the focus continues to be on the implementation of the Fountas & Pinnell reading curriculum. Through professional development, grades K-2 teachers are engaged in learning and piloting the Benchmark Assessment System (BAS), which is a tool that helps assess an elementary reader's accuracy, comprehension and fluency. Through data meetings, teachers are also learning how to triangulate BAS results with the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and the Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) to inform a student's reading instruction.

Grades K-2 teachers are also beginning to learn the guided reading methodology, which provides strategic reading instruction within the general classroom. Grades 3-5 teachers are learning to apply reading mini-lessons, which provide an instructional focus within readers' workshop. Phonology curriculum and vocabulary approaches are under study to learn how we can better differentiate instruction for a wide range of learners.

Special education leadership has added decodable books to elementary classroom libraries, trained elementary Instructional Assistants in DIBELS and provided professional development in Just Right Phonological Awareness for special education teachers.

Teacher leaders have been vital to the success of the curriculum. Teachers in thirteen literacy laboratory classrooms (ten at the elementary level and three at the middle school level) continue to serve as school-based literacy leaders, inviting other teachers to observe a provider of professional development conduct model lessons in their classrooms and enabling their colleagues to present reading and writing lessons and exchange instructional strategies. Elementary literacy lab teachers have been at the forefront of helping our schools design and implement K-5 reading and writing curriculum maps, which promote alignment and consistency of instruction, pacing and assessment among the elementary schools. Similarly, the middle school curriculum advisory board and ELA teachers continue to advise on ELA curriculum updates to ensure alignment with standards and promote accessible text for students in grades 6-8.

Middle school ELA teachers have engaged in professional development to learn the writers' workshop methodology, which has allowed for increased coherence of the writing curriculum across middle schools, and from the elementary to middle school level. Special education and general education teachers are working together to integrate language-based instruction into

writers' workshop. The addition of high-quality fiction and non-fiction books in grades 6-8 ELA classrooms has increased text choices for student readers at all levels and with varied interests.

The Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) continues to be an important part of our assessment system and allows the district to more accurately understand students' reading and mathematics achievement and growth in grades 3-10. Professional development has been provided for teachers and administrators to help them understand the assessment tool, analyze its results, and use the data to inform instruction.

At the high school, Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) has expanded to include a third student cohort (grades 9, 10 and 11). AVID fosters reading, writing and organizational strategies, while also supporting students to prepare for postsecondary opportunities through experiences such as college visits and PSAT preparation. The literacy sprint is also studying how to support students with a wide variety of learning needs across all English courses and levels.

Next steps for the literacy sprint include studying how to strengthen our multi-tiered system of supports, and in particular, tier two/strategic instruction for students struggling in reading and writing. We will also continue to delve into our balanced assessment system to ensure assessments are strategic in informing student instruction. As a team, we have identified professional development needs for 2020-2021, and this spring we will begin crafting a plan that provides ongoing training and support for our literacy initiatives.

UPDATE SINCE MARCH 1: The district focused on developing common ELA learning targets throughout the grades and shared literacy instructional approaches in an online learning environment. Regular K-5 content and 6-12 department meetings were facilitated by the ELA program coordinators to support teachers' continuous learning and collaboration throughout the remote learning period. Online professional development was provided for K-5 teachers through our professional developers to support teachers in shifting from a traditional literacy block to an online balanced literacy approach. Online student reading availability was strategically increased through digital tools such as Epic, and community resources such as Memorial Hall Library. A Title I Summer Program has been restarted for the first time in several years and redesigned for the virtual learning environment. Also, online summer student book clubs for students entering grades 1-6 have been created to support student reading enrichment over the summer.

Support for Students with Reading Challenges

MCAS results from the last two years indicate we are rapidly and aggressively closing the gap for students with disabilities. Special education students are progressing at a faster rate than students overall and faster than students in other subgroups. This means we are achieving critical catch-up growth among students with a wide variety of learning, attention, and language disorders. For example, in grades 3-5 we shifted from 23% of special education students in the substantially-below-proficient category in 2017 to 9% in 2019. Similarly, in 2017, among students with disabilities in grade 3-5, only 19% scored in the categories of meeting or exceeding expectations, compared with 39% in 2019.

The DIBELS is a screening and progress monitoring measure designed to assess the foundational reading skills closely associated with dyslexia, such as phonemic awareness, automatic word reading, and decoding. The DIBELS results also underscore significant progress in remediating linguistic skill deficits associated with reading failure. In 2017, our beginning-of-year benchmark indicated 24% of our elementary students were in the intensive support range and another 20% would require additional intervention (strategic support) to acquire foundational skills. This year, our beginning benchmark showed the number of children in support categories had been cut in half, with 11% in the intensive support range and 12% in the strategic support range. Our next goal will be to maintain these levels of proficiency without over-identifying students for special education.

To support inclusive practices, Landmark Outreach continues to provide training in co-teaching in the content areas for grades 2-10. This year, we also provided [Just Right Phonological Awareness](#) program training to special education teachers so they can support students in the regular classroom; meanwhile, Student Services coordinated with the Teaching and Learning office to integrate regular and special education instructional methodologies. The purpose of this work is to provide language, linguistics, and orthography training to regular education teachers and to develop a word-work (vocabulary, spelling, and morphology) program for the upper grades.

In addition to promoting methodologies that support reading acquisition for all students in the regular classroom, the Student Services office has maintained an aggressive professional development agenda in the area of specialized interventions. Our goal is to build internal capacity so we have a cadre of in-house experts and trainers. For example, this fall 20 teachers advanced to the second of five phases of Wilson Level II training, and we have 7 teachers completing the level II (advanced) training in Orton-Gillingham methodology. The target is to have a group of in-district [Orton-Gillingham fellows](#). Fellows are expert teachers trained by the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners who are qualified to train and supervise other teachers in the methodology. A capacity-building approach is also evident in our work with data analysis. We are now in phase two of our Tier III committee, led by [Cara Dellatera](#) of [Hill for Literacy](#) and Dr. [Melissa Orkin](#) of Crafting Minds/Tufts University. The purpose of this committee is to develop and test a decision tree for using diagnostics to increase the specificity and efficiency of interventions. Teachers are working through case studies with actual student data to test the model. The committee includes ETFs, department coordinators, administrators, and teachers.

Assessment continues to be an important part of the work. Targeted and varied assessment practices allow for faster and more accurate instructional decisions. This fall, we developed a plan to pilot a benchmarking system that uses artificial intelligence and [eye-tracking technologies](#) to rapidly assess fluency, efficiency, and comprehension. We believe this method will be a more efficient means of benchmarking and progress monitoring students in the upper grades. We also extended our assessment work to paraprofessionals. In October, we trained 25 assistant literacy tutors to administer the DIBELS assessment. The Andover literacy tutor project was part of a competitive [resource reallocation grant](#). This fall the project was highlighted at the Massachusetts Association of School Business Officials (MASBO) conference and a profile of our work was published on DESE's [RADAR](#) data tool website.

Finally, the Student Services team has become the leading authority in the region for language-based learning disabilities (LBLD). This fall, we completed a dyslexia guide for school districts that was distributed to DESE stakeholders and special education directors across the state. In October, Senior Associate Commissioner of Special Education Russell Johnston invited us to share our expertise in implementing powerful systems for students with LBLD at the [five regional meetings](#) and at an event for Massachusetts directors of special education. This work led to an invitation to participate in a state task force to develop Massachusetts guidance documents pursuant to [Chapter 71 of General Laws, section 57A](#) passed in October 2018. Over the last four months, twelve school districts in Massachusetts and New Hampshire have approached us for technical support.

UPDATE SINCE MARCH 1: The district was able to complete almost all the planned professional development in literacy prior to March 16. However, because of the closure, teachers could not administer the DIBELS assessment and NWEA has not redesigned its MAP assessment so that it can be administered remotely (they plan to have that available in the fall). Elementary teachers spent much of their remote learning time on reading, greatly assisted by the reading specialists who developed videos for use with students. We also continued the use of Lexia, which is accessible at home, to sustain the work on phonics and had good rates of student participation.

During the closure, the needs of struggling readers were a top priority. The Student Services team adopted the MAX Scholar program and the digital Words and Their Stories program for

students with language-based learning disabilities. They also curated accessible reading libraries so that students could continue with just-right reading materials by using digital supports such as decodable text and Lexiled narrative text.

In the area of professional development, more than 50 teachers were trained in the MAX Scholar reading program, SLPs received training in teletherapy and the Words and Their Stories program, and 41 teachers learned to use Moby Read to assess students during remote learning. Student Services also hosted a virtual conference—CouchCon2020—where over 100 teachers learned about digital literacy tools such as LightBox, Book Creator, and TextHelp. Four teachers will attend summer institutes on a scholarship basis through our work with Landmark Outreach.

In the area of program development, we planned an online version of our summer reading clinic using virtual breakout rooms. Teachers participated in a half-day workshop on how to manage and implement successful breakout rooms for center-based literacy instruction. We are also applying for an early literacy grant to provide regular education teachers with concentrated professional development on the science of reading and to establish an early literacy district support team that can respond immediately in the event of a school closure.

The closure had a significant impact on our assessment protocols. To continue collecting data on student progress, the Student Services team built a comprehensive taxonomy of formative assessments as well as valid and reliable digital assessments. We were able to digitize several assessment tools, and we trained our elementary specialists in the Moby Read program. Finally, we used the online assessment materials from READ! Live, LANGUAGE! Live, and Lexia to assess students' progress.

Strategic partnerships continued to be an important part of our literacy work. Though we could not physically host other districts, we did provide technical support and consultation to one school district in the area of assessment and to another district regarding literacy programming in the context of the pandemic. Our work continued on the stakeholders group to develop state guidelines for early literacy and dyslexia programming, as did our consultation with Boston Children's Hospital learning disabilities advisory. Finally, we completed phase one of our pilot with the Lexplore tool that uses artificial intelligence and eye-tracking technologies to analyze reading disabilities.

GOAL 4: The superintendent will provide detailed and reliable data analyses and reports to help assess curricular strengths and implement changes in areas that require growth related to student academic performance (including with respect to literacy initiatives described in Goal #3), 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) Progress Monitoring Sprint

Evidence/Product: Provide analytical data reports on MCAS, MAP and other assessments that track the district's academic trends and our comparative performance among similar communities as well as providing trend data on the district's financial investments in comparison to other similar communities.

Key Accomplishments:

- ✓ Continued to update the data analyses of student performance and comparative finance and posted the information on the district website.
- ✓ Supported administrators and teachers in using data to better address students' individual needs.
 - ◆ Provided time for grade-level data teams to meet for the purpose of interpreting assessment data and modifying instruction.
 - ◆ Provided administrators with mid-year MAP data, identifying at-risk students.
 - ◆ Provided Level I and II MAP training for teachers and administrators.

- ◆ Presented to administrator and teacher teams about current student academic performance, student perception data, and special education disproportionality.
- ◆ *Identified inequities among specific populations and shared that information with principals, who then shared it at faculty meetings.*
- ✓ Administered the Panorama survey for the third year to better understand students' perceptions of APS culture and climate.
- ✓ *Administered three feedback surveys during the closure—one each for parents, teachers and students—with a follow-up survey of parents in June.*
- ✓ *District leaders met with NWEA to plan MAP assessment in a remote learning environment for 2020-21.*

Having a full-time experienced Director of Data, Accountability & Financial Analytics has significantly improved our ability to use data to advance instruction and organizational efficiency. APS has expanded use of NWEA MAP testing to three times a year in grades 3-8 and added grade 9 testing in ELA and Algebra I for the 2019-20 school year. The district has invested in professional development for staff, particularly school administrators, to help them understand and use the results from MAP testing to adjust classroom instruction and identify appropriate interventions.

In addition, this position has given us the opportunity to more clearly identify the district's return on investments. For example, the investments Andover has made in elementary literacy over the past few years is paying dividends in MCAS performance, as revealed in the tables below.

Insights gained from the NWEA MAP assessment data enables staff to focus on strategies that will improve MCAS ELA results for all students. This winter, the district cross-referenced its roster of lowest performing students, as identified by DESE, to the winter MAP results, thereby helping school administrators to focus their efforts on the students deemed most at-risk.

MCAS READING RESULTS 2017, 2018 & 2019					MCAS READING RESULTS 2017, 2018 & 2019				
% All Students in Subgroups Meet or Exceed Expectations					% Students in Subgroups Not Meeting Expectations				
Grades 3-5	2017	2018	2019	% Point Change	Grades 3-5	2017	2018	2019	% Point Change
SWD	19%	34%	39%	20%	SWD	23%	11%	9%	-14%
ELL	38%	49%	55%	17%	ELL	10%	5%	5%	-5%
ECON DIS	39%	35%	47%	8%	ECON DIS	17%	34%	7%	-10%
All	63%	71%	73%	10%	All	5%	2%	2%	-3%

MCAS READING RESULTS 2017, 2018 & 2019					MCAS READING RESULTS 2017, 2018 & 2019					MCAS READING RESULTS 2017, 2018 & 2019				
% All Students Meet or Exceed Expectations					% Students with Disabilities Meet or Exceed Expectations					% Students with Disabilities Not Meeting Expectations				
Grade	2017	2018	2019	% Point Change	Grade	2017	2018	2019	% Point Change	Grade	2017	2018	2019	% Point Change
3	62%	71%	77%	15%	3	19%	33%	49%	30%	3	15%	5%	7%	-8%
4	61%	71%	70%	9%	4	19%	40%	35%	16%	4	28%	14%	10%	-18%
5	65%	70%	74%	9%	5	20%	29%	33%	13%	5	24%	12%	10%	-14%
3-5	63%	71%	73%	10%	3-5	19%	34%	39%	20%	3-5	23%	11%	9%	-14%

The district has identified achievement gaps and how best to address them, especially focusing on the achievement gaps of economically disadvantaged students and Hispanic/Latino students. The work on culturally responsive pedagogy, the proposed addition of an elementary mathematics sprint, and the math coach positions are supporting efforts toward closing those gaps.

Collecting Panorama survey data for the third year and comparing it with the results of the DESE Views of Climate and Learning (VOCAL) survey have supported the work of the district's and schools' Climate and Culture Committees (C3). This additional information allows staff to look at student performance in a more holistic way, balancing academic performance with how students are feeling about their school experience.

In addition to the reports on student achievement, the district has also improved its ability to provide financial data, such as comparative district professional salary scales and the analyses included in the budget development and budget book.

UPDATE SINCE MARCH 1: With schools closed, our data analysis efforts shifted markedly to assessing parents', teachers' and students' perceptions about remote learning so that we could adjust instructional strategies to better reach students. Results of the initial parent survey were reported to the School Committee, all administrators, and, in general, to teachers in a message from the superintendent. In late May and early June, teachers and students were surveyed to assess their perceptions of remote learning as well as their thoughts about how remote learning could be improved. Also in early June, a follow-up survey was sent to parents seeking their views on our progress in remote learning strategies as well as their attitudes and recommendations about the next school year. All of these survey results have provided valuable data to the Return to School Task Force as it plans potentially hybrid models of instruction for the 2020-21 school year.

GOAL 5: The superintendent will work with the communications director, administrators, faculty, the School Committee, and parents to enhance communication among these district stakeholders and within the community in order to keep the community informed of district initiatives, events, and achievements; enlist feedback on ways to address issues confronting the district, including from School Committee members, administrators and the public; ensure School Committee receives information and data in a timely manner, consistent with applicable School Committee policy, as needed to evaluate decisions; and, 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: Creation and implementation of a district communications plan that addresses various stakeholder groups (including those in the community without APS students) and that builds a bridge to the broader Andover community, including a superintendent listening tour; creation and implementation of a plan with identified tasks and target dates for the update of the APS website in order to enhance usability while ensuring universal accessibility; and timely, strong and consistent communications both internally and externally from the superintendent's office.

Key Accomplishments:

- ✓ Identified a communications liaison at each school.
- ✓ Rebranded the *All Around APS* newsletter to make it more inclusive of the community.
- ✓ Continued to strengthen positive relationships with local media.
- ✓ Launched a superintendent's listening tour of PTOs and PACs.
- ✓ Kept a positive spotlight on the district by means of local op eds as well as feature articles and presentations for state and national organizations.
- ✓ Initiated work to update and refresh the district website and logos.
- ✓ *Provided frequent communications to parents and staff on remote learning updates.*
- ✓ *Core Team collaborated to create and update COVID-19 communications webpage and At-Home remote learning plan on aps1.net*
- ✓ *Held three virtual Townwide PTO meetings for parent feedback during the closure, and planned summer forums for parents and teachers once DESE guidance for next year is released.*
- ✓ *Responded to the national attention related to racism with public statements delineating the district's strong stand for anti-racism and our ongoing cultural proficiency initiatives.*

- ✓ *Hosted a four-webinar virtual site visit for a national audience through AASA's SEL Cohort, shining a spotlight on Andover's social-emotional learning initiatives.*

With a solid year of experience behind us in increasing communications to district staff, families and the community at large, we were better able to focus attention on the most productive strategies. Proactive communications within the district continue to expand. In July 2019, the communications director shared a Master Communications Plan for 2019-20 with the superintendent and the School Committee. This plan was shared at the August 2019 administrators' retreat with all administrators in the District.

Following a discussion between the superintendent and the communications director, we have identified a "communications liaison" at each school as a point-person to communicate with the director on events and achievements at each school. Additionally, the communications director rebranded *Warrior Wednesday* to *All Around APS*, to enhance the inclusivity of the newsletter. Its publication was also shifted from weekly to biweekly to provide more opportunities for other types of communication. *All Around APS* is distributed to over 8,500 readers and shared through APS's Twitter account and on www.aps1.net. School PTOs/PACs are using material from it for their newsletters and social media accounts as well.

All Around APS offers an opportunity for the superintendent to communicate on a regular basis to families, teachers, and the community. As part of the district's outreach to the Andover community, the newsletter also publishes events and news from the Town Manager's office of business, arts and cultural development, Andover public safety offices and non-profit organizations within the community. This strategy serves to reinforce district and community relationships.

With the shift of *All Around APS* to biweekly, the communications director has been able to focus on additional initiatives, such as the School Start Times Working Group, the refresh of the website, and enhancement of APS and AHS logos. The communications director is in the process of working with the IT department and Susan McCready on the refresh of the homepage of www.aps1.net. We will also take this opportunity to align our APS and AHS logos with proper colors and formats and to draft a style guide for APS faculty and staff.

The communications department continues to foster positive working relationships with local and Boston-area television stations. The superintendent has been able to place five op eds in the *Andover Townsman* and one in the *Eagle Tribune* to reach the community outside of APS families. The communications director has continued to issue press releases and work with reporters from both newspapers to highlight achievements within the district and respond to issues. In addition, the communications director has continued to work with TV stations to feature student achievements. For example, WCVB reported on two members of the AHS Bio-Builders club in the station's A+ segment, which features students who are making an impact within their community.

The communications department also prepared crisis management responses to media regarding the EEE virus, the "rock" vandalism at Andover High School, Black Lives Matter walk-out at AHS, and challenges at South Elementary School.

In addition, the superintendent has launched a listening tour, meeting with each of the PTOs and PACs to hear their thoughts and concerns and to answer questions. To date, he has met with six of the parent organizations with additional meetings scheduled for March. He continues to visit schools and meet with staff and faculty at each school to hear their thoughts and concerns.

Beyond the community, the innovative work of the district has been highlighted statewide in a district profile published by LearnLaunch's MAPLE project and as a DESE Kaleidoscope district. AASA has also featured the district's work on social-emotional learning at its national conference and has scheduled a site visit to Andover for later in March.

UPDATE SINCE MARCH 1: From Day One of the closure, our communications efforts changed dramatically. The need to provide everyone with current, complete, and accurate information became a top priority. Endeavoring to reassure parents and the community and simultaneously support our staff, we set aside our usual publication All Around Andover and made the new Andover Heroes widely available.

However, the major vehicles of communication became creation of the COVID-19 communications webpage and At-Home remote learning plan on aps1.net, which was updated frequently with new content and information. This platform supplemented regular emails from the superintendent to staff and parents informing them of ongoing developments and changes in remote learning expectations and strategies. In the early stages of the closure, these emails were issued multiple times each week. The frequency transitioned to weekly and then biweekly as the closure progressed. These communications were supplemented with surveys of parents, teachers and students to obtain feedback on our remote learning efforts and guidance for next year. The Return to School initiative will be the primary focus of communications throughout the summer. The district has created a webpage to assist with communications as we approach the 2020-21 school year.

The COVID-19 pandemic and school closings in Massachusetts also brought media opportunities to the district and APS received positive news coverage. High Plain Elementary's car parade was one of the first held in Massachusetts and received coverage from NBC Boston. WCVB's Chronicle featured the AHS Girls' Basketball team's season, which was abruptly cut short due to the virus. NBC Boston did a story on AHS students using 3D printers to provide PPE to healthcare workers. NBC Boston also celebrated high school graduates and ran the speech of AHS senior Ethan Gasse. WHDH 7-News provided coverage of the retirement parade of High Plain Elementary educator Nancy DiSalvo following her 31 years of service to APS.

In addition, the superintendent held three virtual Townwide PTO meetings. Each was well attended and provided valuable feedback that the superintendent shared with administrators and staff. In addition, many parents chose to provide their own feedback to the superintendent on the status of remote learning. Every one of these emails was responded to personally by the superintendent. Once DESE releases its guidance for next year, the superintendent plans to hold forums and gather input from parents and teachers on managing next year's remote learning or hybrid learning efforts.

Internal communication also increased with weekly meetings of the Superintendent's Administrative Team and all-administrator meetings. These meetings served to ensure that all administrators heard the same message and guidance and provided a level of consistency among schools and departments. In addition, the superintendent invited the faculty to send examples of their remote learning efforts, which resulted in numerous faculty members sharing their work and receiving a response from the superintendent.

As the national crisis over racism emerged, so did a number of racial incidents within the district. We responded with an immediate message to the district and the community. In addition, the superintendent drafted an anti-racism statement that outlined the district's efforts and commitment to address racism as well as to promote identity-safe schools and cultural understanding.

The AASA site visit planned for March had to be canceled due to the closure. However, the superintendent worked with AASA to convert the visit into a virtual site visit consisting of four weekly webinars. Andover was the first district to host an AASA virtual site visit. As one outcome of this successful venture, AASA will be developing a case study of our social-emotional learning efforts for national distribution.

GOAL 6: The superintendent will work with the assistant superintendent for finance and administration, the Superintendent's Administrative Team, the School Committee, the town

manager and relevant town boards to identify budget needs as early as possible, establish priorities, implement financial reporting processes that drive confidence in school department transparency, prepare thorough and timely budget documents, communicate with Town leaders and the public regarding budget needs, examine opportunities for cost savings, and attempt to reach an early and responsible budget agreement with a particular emphasis on eliminating the fee for full-day kindergarten; and will ensure appropriate Central Office resources are deployed timely and effectively to support the superintendent's progress towards these goals. (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, support for district initiatives, town funding capacity, and the elimination of tuition for full-day kindergarten; timely and complete financial analyses and other Central Office expertise necessary to support collective bargaining negotiations; deployment of appropriate Central Office resources; financial summaries to accompany financials presented at School Committee meetings; and hiring of an individual to replace the assistant superintendent for finance and administration by June 30, 2020.

Key Accomplishments:

- ✓ Continued to work toward the elimination of tuition for full-day kindergarten.
- ✓ Worked within the limited addition in state funding to recommend modest increases for mental and behavioral health services and to eliminate some second-run bus routes.
- ✓ *Addressed the deficit through a successful application for extraordinary relief from the state and budget restriction measures implemented early in the year, thereby ending the year with a larger balance in the circuit breaker than anticipated.*
- ✓ *Negotiated with the transportation companies to produce over \$300,000 in savings as a result of the closure.*
- ✓ *Modified the budget to address the reduction requested by the Town Manager and prepare for contingencies for the FY21 school year.*

The district has again developed a comprehensive budget document that provides clarity and transparency about our budget goals and priorities. The School Committee, superintendent and town manager came to early agreement on the budget increase for FY2021 and the budget was built around that parameter. Given the limited additional state aid, the budget focused on only modest increases to address mental and behavioral health initiatives, eliminate the second runs on several bus routes, and facilitate the transition to eliminating tuition for full-day kindergarten.

The process this year included providing the School Committee with a full set of recommendations for budget increases from the Superintendent's Administrative Team and holding two evenings of budget hearings on those recommendations. It also included multiple presentations by the superintendent to the School Committee as well as coverage of the process in *All Around APS* and the *Andover Townsman*.

Shannon Scully and the superintendent presented the case for eliminating full-day kindergarten tuition to the Finance Committee and the Select Board and secured endorsement from both boards. However, given the new Chapter 70 formula, it is unclear if aid will cover the increased costs of providing full-day kindergarten. Shannon Scully, Joel Blumstein and the superintendent worked on various scenarios to determine what aid might result from eliminating tuition. We will have to wait until next year for enrollment and municipal growth data that will better help us assess the extent of new Chapter 70 aid we might receive.

UPDATE SINCE MARCH 1: The closure had significant financial implications. On the one hand, it provided an opportunity to realize savings that could reduce the deficit and provide reserves for the following year. On the other, we had to pay for unanticipated costs of personal protective equipment, cleaning equipment and supplies, and online learning applications to deliver remote instruction. As a result of successful negotiations with our transportation companies to provide

savings on our transportation contract during the closure, a successful application to DESE for extraordinary relief for two special education students, and effective restrictions on budget spending throughout the year, the district will end the year with a balance that can be used to defray costs for preparing to deliver a hybrid model of instruction in 2020-21 and to address potential future costs of eliminating full-day kindergarten.

Also, to address the economic downturn due to the coronavirus, the Town Manager proposed a reduction of approximately \$807,000 in the School Department budget. Through planning for negotiations and cost saving measures, we have been able to determine a way to address that reduction without decreasing staff, pending the results of negotiations. The actual budget reduction is yet to be determined based on recent guidance from DESE.

GOAL 7: The superintendent will work with the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning and key stakeholders to refine potential options for later start times for secondary students and provide objective information concerning the benefits and drawbacks of various options to the School Committee to enable it to evaluate the feasibility of and receptivity to the potential options so that the School Committee can make an effective decision. (Standard II: Management and Operations; District Improvement Goal)

Evidence/Product: A report on the feedback and proposed options for changing start times, along with an explanation of the positive and negative implications of each option and an assessment of its feasibility, effectiveness and acceptability.

Key Accomplishments:

- ✓ Initiated a contract with Edulog that resulted in a comprehensive review of our current routing and the modeling of alternative strategies for changing start times.
- ✓ Employed multiple means to gather public input on a possible change in school start times.
- ✓ Worked within the School Committee's parameters to develop five alternative sets of bell times.
- ✓ Identified three major areas in which school start times have ramifications for bus transportation; other implications exist for the fine arts and athletics programs.
- ✓ *Convened and held regular meetings with a Parent Advisory Council.*
- ✓ *Completed a summary report that provided the benefits and drawbacks of various options for moving start times, as well as options for next steps.*

The work on changing school start times accelerated significantly this year. There has been a great deal of public input through email and forums held by the School Committee. Beginning in the summer, we contracted with Edulog to provide an in-depth analysis of our transportation system as well as alternative start times scenarios. Based on this analysis, the School Start Time Working Group narrowed the school start time options to five sample sets of bell times, complying with parameters defined by the School Committee. The Working Group is presently identifying and evaluating the benefits and drawbacks of each school start time option, in order to provide a more detailed and objective report to the School Committee in March.

School transportation continues to be a major focus of the group's meetings. Specifically, the Working Group is studying how prospective bell time scenarios impact students' morning pick-up times and home arrival times, and how a systematic investment in additional school buses may potentially result in increased efficiency. From this process, three transportation themes have emerged: (1) prospective elimination of the B-runs, (2) prospective decoupling of public and private school transportation in order to operate flexibly and independently from one another, and (3) analysis of each school start time scenario on in-town special transportation. The Working Group is aiming to more fully understand these transportation factors.

APS has also collaborated with private school directors/principals; to date, two parent delegates from the private schools participate on the School Start Time Parent Advisory Group (PAC). Continued communication and collaboration is underway with Bill Martin, Athletic Director, and with Sean Walsh, Program Coordinator for Visual and Performing Arts, as well as with community childcare stakeholders.

A School Start Time Parent Advisory Group (PAC) was convened and meetings are underway. The SST PAC is facilitated by the Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, who serves as advisory to the School Start Time Working Group. To date, the PAC is exploring the five bell time scenarios from the Working Group, and providing feedback and questions for the Working Group to consider.

On February 6, the School Committee discussed being unable to proceed with a change in school start times in FY21 due to district fiscal needs. Shortly thereafter, the School Committee Chair and superintendent jointly issued a community update that summarized school start time progress, communicated there would be no school start time changes for the 2020-21 school year, and expressed our collective commitment to school start times that would allow secondary students additional time for sleep. The community was also encouraged to e-mail the School Start Time Working Group at SchoolStartTimes@andoverma.us with questions and feedback.

As next steps, the Working Group will consider whether independent study of private school transportation is needed, as well as an analysis of in-town special transportation vehicles and cost under the five scenarios. There will also be continued study of the implications for athletics and fine arts. Communication and collaboration with the School Start Time Parent Advisory Group (PAC) and students, parents and faculty stakeholders will continue, with opportunities to provide feedback to the School Start Time e-mail address and School Committee.

UPDATE SINCE MARCH 1: The district convened a representative Parent Advisory Council to provide advice to the School Start Time Working Group. This PAC, chaired by Assistant Superintendent Sandy Trach, met regularly throughout winter 2019-20. The school start times process was interrupted by the remote learning demands of the closure; however, Assistant Superintendent Trach completed the summary report that outlined the process as well as the benefits and drawbacks of each approach to changing start times. The report has been delivered to the School Committee for consideration.

APS AGILE STRATEGIC SPRINT REPORTS

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND CULTURAL COMPETENCY SPRINT

Key Accomplishments:

- ✓ *Conducted the Panorama Survey for a third year.*
- ✓ *Continued training in Second Step and Responsive Classroom.*
- ✓ *Began work on a middle school schedule that would incorporate SEL and advisory times.*
- ✓ *Purchased classroom libraries for elementary and middle schools to increase students' cultural competency.*
- ✓ *Established the English Learner Parent Advisory Council.*
- ✓ *Converted in-person morning meetings to an online format.*
- ✓ *Worked with the Policy Subcommittee to develop a strong equity policy for the district.*
- ✓ *Wrote an anti-racism statement outlining the district's multi-year effort to support cultural proficiency and identity-safe schools and posted it on the district website.*

The 2019-20 Social-Emotional Learning Sprint has endorsed the district's initiatives to make Andover Public Schools a place where all individuals and groups are valued and supported. The district has continued to train and support staff and students through the William James College

SEL Program, Responsive Classroom summer institutes, and a pilot of the Second Step curriculum. In addition, the District is in the process of completing a third year of the Panorama Survey and providing opportunities for administrators and staff to analyze and use the data to improve the Andover educational experience. At the middle school level, administrators and teachers are working on the development of a new schedule that provides specific times for advisory and social-emotional learning time. At the high school, administrators and teachers are working on revisions to the H-1 curriculum to better address social-emotional learning.

In addition, the district has expanded its work on cultural competency through the purchase of classroom libraries for elementary and middle schools that represent authors, characters and settings from different cultures and countries. Andover Public Schools was awarded \$100,000 grant through the Cumming Foundation “100 K for 100” program, following a competitive review process of hundreds of applicants. The grant funds will be used in our elementary schools to focus on cultural proficiency and identity with the goal of creating safe classrooms for all students where the many cultures of our students are recognized and celebrated. We have developed a five phase program that will begin in February and culminate in June 2020. The title of our work is *Andover Schools: Many Cultures-One Community Project (ASMCOC)*.

The Global Endorsement Network has expanded this year at the high school. School-based parent groups interested in culture and diversity have grown this year and the district established an English Learner Parent Advisory Council (ELPAC). ELPAC was officially recognized by the School Committee at its meeting on February 6, 2020. The district’s Cultural Climate Committee (C3) is examining the equity policies adopted by other districts in order to develop and recommend an equity policy for the Andover Public Schools.

UPDATE SINCE MARCH 1: As a proactive response to students’ disrupted routines during the closure, we placed major emphasis on social-emotional learning. At the elementary level, many teachers who use Responsive Classroom’s morning meeting strategy converted that approach to online student conversations through Google Meets. In addition, teachers visited homes and organized car parades, spirit weeks, and other events and activities to remain connected to the students and support them socially and emotionally. Currently, 42 teachers are signed up for Responsive Classroom I and II training this summer.

To support the goal of creating identity-safe schools, all of the elementary schools worked with Regie Gibson to foster multi-cultural understanding. The Cultural Climate Committee collaborated with the Policy Subcommittee of the School Committee to draft a bold equity policy. Finally, the district responded to internal as well as national issues of racism with a strong anti-racism statement that outlines the steps the district has taken over the past four years and the work that is currently being undertaken to continue the fight against intolerance. Teachers also followed up with students in classrooms, holding conversations about what was happening nationally. The equity policy and the anti-racism statement will provide a solid base for launching more work in this area at the beginning of next year.

MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SPRINT

Key Accomplishments:

- ✓ *Attended a workshop to learn more about the Bridge for Resilient Youth in Transition (BRYT) model.*
- ✓ *Began the first full year of implementing the T3 mental health support program at Doherty and began work to develop a similar program at the high school.*
- ✓ *Operated the AHS transitional Learning Center at full capacity, serving 40 students by mid-year.*
- ✓ *Solidified assessment methods and curricular approaches for students with mental health challenges.*

- ✓ *Focused mental health resources to support students and families in need during the closure.*
- ✓ *Developed new models for parent outreach, including a newsletter, expanded referral service, parent coffee groups, and resource-driven websites.*
- ✓ *Developed and vetted a teletherapy guide that was accessed by school districts across the country.*
- ✓ *Designed a trauma-informed district training program for teachers.*

The Mental and Behavioral Health Sprint has been working to build the infrastructure and necessary systems to support new programs for students with mental health challenges. The focus of the sprint team's work includes updating and coordinating assessment methods, building program structures that have a solid research basis and vertical alignment, training staff to use research-validated methods to consistently and effectively manage student needs, and identifying consistent systems such as client software to manage the complex needs across the district.

This year, health teachers and Student Services staff have implemented an organized approach to the teaching of mental health curricula, including evidence-based practices for screening and assessing students for risk and suicidality (via the SOS curriculum). Coordinated efforts across schools have facilitated a systematic, prompt response to student needs, as well as data collection about symptom prevalence that can be considered alongside student responses to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey. The Mental and Behavioral Health Sprint team has also been reviewing tools for the universal screening of mental health concerns.

In terms of program implementation, the T3 mental health support program at Doherty is in its first full year. T3 is supported by grant funding that has allowed an increase in school psychologist and school nurse contributions, professional development across disciplines, and resources for designing data collection methods. The program has doubled in size and has supported auxiliary efforts in the building that promote student resiliency, such as providing targeted SEL curricula to sixth graders transitioning into middle school. In addition, a large team of AHS and Student Services staff is working to create a high school level T3 program, which will involve resource mapping, site visits to peer districts with active programs, and curricula reviews. The project goal is to create a bridge for students with significant mental health challenges as they transition from middle to high school and to have that bridge in place before September 2020.

This past fall, the Mental and Behavioral Health Sprint team and other stakeholders attended a BRYT Network day, including a workshop on coordinating systems of care for students with mental health challenges. The BRYT (Bridge for Resilient Youth in Transition) model forms the foundation of our new T3 programs, so the conference was a way to introduce the concepts to other APS leaders and provide common language for building the district's new elementary and high school programs.

In addition, the Transitional Learning Center (TLC) at AHS has continued to operate at its full capacity, supporting student re-entries following periods of extended absence due to mental health and medical incidents. By mid-year, the TLC team had worked with 40 students.

Finally, the district is applying for grant funding to initiate an APS-specific network of outpatient mental health providers, with a point person to facilitate referrals and help parents connect with therapeutic support systems. The sprint team believes this network could form the cornerstone of the district's planned mental health in the schools program.

UPDATE SINCE MARCH 1: During the closure our social workers, psychologists, and BCBA's worked as a team to support students and families in need. They intervened in multiple situations requiring individual and family support while continuing to provide teletherapy sessions for the existing caseload.

Elementary social work staff designed K-5 SEL lesson plans that were incorporated into the schools' matrices of learning activities. The staff included materials from the district's Second Step pilots as well as their own curated resources.

In the area of professional development, APS mental health staff provided professional support to district educators remotely on such topics as social-emotional learning (Mysha Kuhlmann at AHS); teletherapy (Ryan Fielding); and a book club on "[Relationship, Responsibility, and Regulation: Trauma-Invested Practices for Fostering Resilient Learners](#)" (Jen Cann at Bancroft).

In the area of community outreach, elementary and middle school social work staff designed several student/parent webpage hubs for resources related to at-home learning and such mental health topics as addressing screen fatigue, issues of isolation, and the traumatic effects of social distancing during a medical crisis. AHS social work and psychology staff also created an adolescent-specific hub of resources for our high school students and parents, including how to manage academic achievement and worries about future plans during school closures.

The social work staff distributed a weekly parent newsletter addressing mental health topics, community resources for family wellness, and guides for managing transitions and grief during social isolation. APS mental health staff organized and ran a weekly "parent coffee" series at different grade levels to support parents in addressing challenges related to remote learning and academic engagement, fears of illness/contagion, and concerns about social isolation. Mental health staff also conducted online parent groups to support transitional needs, such as elementary to middle and middle to high transitions. These groups focused on topics that are typically covered more organically in the spring when school is in session, and highlighted the need to plan flexibly in times of uncertainty. Finally, mental health staff hosted a showing of "Angst," which is a documentary about childhood anxiety. The showing was attended virtually by several hundred parents and included a panel discussion with APS staff and the filmmaker Dr. Jerry Bublick, a clinical psychologist from the Child Mind Institute.

BCBAs and RBTs scheduled virtual student groups to support students with social, emotional, and behavioral challenges. This activity included preparing and sending physical materials to families, plus parent training and virtual instruction. Supports also included community-building activities such as "virtual snack time" and "virtual recess."

At the individual student level, BCBAs and RBTs provided both parent training and remote behavior planning for students with externalized behavioral challenges and barriers to remote learning.

APS social workers and psychologists provided targeted individual telehealth services to support the social and emotional needs of students. These therapeutic supports included individual student contact as well as parent-child support when indicated. In addition, staff used a system of family outreach to maintain relationships with families who had barriers to remote learning engagement and/or situations in which students were not able to manage the demands of virtual learning.

The last three months have also provided opportunities for leadership and strategic partnerships. For example, our clinical director drafted a comprehensive Telehealth Service Provision handbook that was piloted and vetted by our mental health team. The guidance was distributed within the state by the Massachusetts School Psychology Association (MSPA) and the BRYT Network, as well as nationally by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP).

Additionally, APS staff have collaborated with both the BRYT Network and the Massachusetts School Mental Health Consortium (MASMHC) around topics related to remote student supports, Tier 3 virtual support systems, and equity during school closures. As a result, we have been developing the Trauma-Informed Schools project to organize a system of teacher supports/trainings that will be presented as recommendations for the district's Return to School

Task Force. Our clinical director participated in an AASA expert discussion panel to address general mental health considerations when planning for re-entry in the fall.

Finally, APS mental and behavioral health staff are investigating how to appropriately and effectively assess student mental health needs upon school re-entry, given the traumatic effects of both the pandemic and current events regarding race, law enforcement, and equity. In the general education domain, this work includes consideration of potential universal screening with tiered supports. In the special education domain, it includes screenings during psychologists' assessments to prevent misidentification of a disability when a student's presentation is consistent with a developmentally appropriate response to trauma.

AHS SCHEDULE AND TRANSITION SPRINT

Key Accomplishments:

- ✓ *Began investigating the formation of a smaller learning community model for 9th graders.*
- ✓ *Explored the concept of Vision of an AHS Graduate, including attendance at an NEASC training.*
- ✓ *Began preparing for the NEASC accreditation visit.*
- ✓ *Brought all APS 8th graders to AHS and presented an evening for 8th grade parents hosted by AHS students.*
- ✓ *Facilitated meetings of middle school administrators with current 9th graders to hear how the students' middle school experience had prepared them for AHS.*
- ✓ *Deployed the AHS guidance staff to each middle school to assist with course selection*
- ✓ *Encouraged 8th grade students to shadow 9th grade students.*
- ✓ *Welcomed 8th grade students from private schools in Andover to visit AHS.*
- ✓ *Transition activities were converted to remote formats.*

The Transition Sprint has been continuing to work on strengthening students' resolve as they move from middle school to high school. Over the past two years, the sprint team has introduced new events, procedures, and processes to enhance the information available to students and families. The sprint has also worked to improve communication between teachers and administrators at the middle school level and their colleagues at the high school level.

The sprint continues to bring all eighth graders to AHS to hear from their former peers. The addition of ninth grade students to the program has been very helpful as it gives the eighth graders people they know and trust who will engage in candid Q&A. Additionally, ninth graders meet with the administrators from their middle schools in small groups to give feedback about their academic, social, and emotional preparedness for life at AHS.

This past fall, the sprint arranged an opportunity for the middle school principals to join the high school principal in greeting the incoming ninth graders within the first month of the school year. This step enabled students to see a familiar adult face and to feel more at home. Conversely, the high school principal will be traveling to the middle schools this coming spring to be introduced to the eighth graders so they have greater familiarity when they arrive at AHS next fall.

The Transition Sprint continues to host parent nights for eighth grade parents to learn about AHS; to understand the academic social, artistic, and athletic programs of AHS; and to ask questions of students, teachers, and administrators.

The sprint is exploring ways to create a ninth grade cohort and may try to pilot a version of a ninth grade team in the fall. The sprint has also started to investigate a framework that would help ensure that all students graduate with a core of knowledge and skills. This work around the vision of an AHS graduate is in its infancy and is supported by the NEASC 2020 Standards. To this end, the district sent teachers and administrators to NEASC professional development seminars.

UPDATE SINCE MARCH 1: During the closure, the sprint team turned its attention to the transition activities it had established for students moving from grade 8 to grade 9. The team achieved substantial success in converting those activities to a remote online format.

PROGRESS MONITORING SPRINT

Key Accomplishments:

- ✓ *Explored various platforms that are being used by other districts and considered their advantages and disadvantages.*
- ✓ *Continued to investigate options within the district's existing platforms.*
- ✓ *Determined that more information needs to be gathered relative to the adoption of any Multi-Tiered System of Support.*

The Progress Monitoring Sprint explored options for data representation and access that are being used by other districts. For example, Somerville has created, in partnership with Code for America, a platform called Student Insights. While this could be a powerful tool, it would require the hiring of a programmer, at least part-time. The sprint team also talked with Methuen, which is using Analytics Platform LLC, a group that creates Google Data Studio Visualizations for Methuen and a number of other area districts. The sprint team plans to continue exploring what can be created within APS using Google Data Studio to better leverage existing platforms, such as Edwin and NWEA.

Based on the exploration of these different tools, the Progress Monitoring Sprint believes that it would also be best at this time to take a step back and evaluate the processes and procedures for a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). This evaluation needs to be completed before the team can move forward with recommendations about a data collection tool. The sprint team will now refocus its efforts on conducting a preliminary needs assessment to evaluate current gaps and strengths.

UPDATE SINCE MARCH 1: As a result of both the closure and Joanne Najarian's departure, the work of this sprint was temporarily suspended. In the interim, the members of the sprint team became involved in developing and implementing surveys of parents, teachers and students to assess how we could best improve our remote learning plan. This work is described under Goal 4 above.

ACCESSIBILITY SPRINT

Key Accomplishments:

- ✓ *Provided professional development to spread the use of TextHelp and placed training modules on the district website.*
- ✓ *Offered an online course on how to create a UDL classroom using Google Applications.*
- ✓ *Began the implementation of a learning management system—Blackboard Classroom.*
- ✓ *Formed the APS UDL Professional Learning Group.*
- ✓ *The Student Services department supported the goals of the accessibility sprint by creating an accessible remote learning website with a wealth of resources for families and students.*
- ✓ *The Student Services department prepared 40 daily UDL Tips that were sent to the entire staff to help them "UDLize" their remote learning efforts.*

The Accessibility Sprint focused on increasing understanding of accessibility and universal design for learning (UDL) and on evaluating platforms that will help to ensure that all curriculum is accessible.

The continued focus this year was on providing professional development for teachers and students on TextHelp and letting more people know about this tool's availability. To accomplish

this goal, the Digital Learning Department offered a TechByte Technology series on TextHelp for the second year in a row and provided UDL training to IA's.

In the area of universal design for learning, Joanne Najarian offered an online course entitled "Google Apps UDL/DI." This course focused on creating a UDL classroom using Google Applications. Twenty-four teachers participated in the course in the fall, and 22 participated last spring.

Through the district's professional development catalog, the Accessibility Sprint has formed an APS Universal Design for Learning professional learning group (PLG). This PLG is a multi-year undertaking for Andover educators who are committed to empowering all learners. Working with a team of district colleagues, participants in the UDL PLG will be learning about the UDL framework and will be supported as they apply it in practice. Participants will create innovative lessons, understand how students learn by analyzing classroom videos, build a collaborative culture through instructional rounds, and experience the excitement of learning through the UDL lens. Twenty-one teachers signed up to join the PLG, which will begin meeting the first week of March.

Finally, the learning management system (LMS) has been purchased and the implementation process has begun. The Digital Learning and Town/School Application teams have been working with BlackBoard on the implementation of Blackboard Classroom. They are currently working on the parent integration application; they hope to begin training a pilot team in the spring and run the pilot in the fall. The Accessibility Sprint has begun collecting UDL resources to share through the intranet portion of the LMS; it will be available to all teachers in late spring.

UPDATE SINCE MARCH 1: The Student Services team created an accessible website with resources for parents and students at all grade levels. Throughout the closure, the team also disseminated daily UDL tips to teachers to support their remote learning efforts.

[The literacy sprint update is reported under goal 3 above.]

CLOSURE AND REMOTE LEARNING

Just prior to the February break, it became evident that the spread of the coronavirus could result in closure of the district for a period of time. The district formed a core team to begin preparing for that possibility. During the weeks leading up to the closure, the team prepared an at-home learning website and resources for parents and students. The team also engaged teachers in preparing sets of enrichment activities that students could carry out at home. At the elementary level, teachers prepared packets of materials to go home with students once a closure was announced.

On March 13, the superintendent announced that the schools would be closed beginning on March 16. By March 17, the district was prepared for several weeks of enrichment activities, pending guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The goal for the first three weeks of the closure, which we eventually labeled as phase 1, was to provide review of existing lessons, enrichment activities around content already taught, and social and emotional support for students.

When Governor Baker extended the closure for an additional three weeks (phase 2), DESE issued guidance encouraging schools to continue with review and enrichment. We did not feel comfortable with that recommendation given the concerns of both teachers and parents that enrichment would not offer sufficient challenge and that continuity of learning had been seriously interrupted. Based on those considerations, the district instead decided to pursue continuity in learning and introduce new material. In addition, the district launched an aggressive professional development program to help teachers learn to use remote learning and online applications and tools in ways that would enable them to be more instructionally effective. We quickly revamped our website to provide better guidance for both regular education and special education. We also

purchased additional applications and tools to deliver instruction better, to provide teletherapy, and to enable greater accountability for attendance and submission of student work.

Anticipating that the closure could continue through the remainder of the school year, administration engaged in extensive internal discussions to develop grading and reporting systems that would encourage student participation and accountability. In addition, negotiations took place with the AEA to develop an overall MOA on remote learning as well as a teacher evaluation system that would be inclusive of teachers' remote learning efforts. In addition to the ongoing professional development for staff, the closure required frequent communication with parents. Online workshops were provided to parents so that they could better understand the applications and tools teachers and students were using and better support their child's learning.

As the closure moved into a third phase, the district and school administrators supported teachers in going more deeply into content and providing more live video conferencing. In addition, the district began surveying parents, teachers and students to learn how we could best support remote learning. Results of the first parent survey were reported to all administrators and to teachers with recommendations on how to strengthen remote learning to be more responsive to parents. The special education staff deserve special acknowledgement. Given that the U.S. Department of Education did not relax any special education expectations or regulations, our staff worked extremely hard to do their best to conduct IEP meetings and provide meaningful services to students. All special education students received an individualized remote learning plan for the closure period as well as for the summer program.

In addition to remote learning activities, teachers and schools created a wide variety of efforts to reach out and retain a sense of connectedness with students. Staff held car parades and visited students' homes (from a safe distance) to deliver messages of hope and connection. They produced videos—sometimes to educate and sometimes to sustain the spirit of community that lets students know that we care about them. The staff led virtual field trips, hosted spirit weeks and virtual talent shows, exhibited student art and performances online, cheered graduating seniors on their last lap around the high school, and structured virtual and live transition events to honor students' accomplishments.

All staff supported students and families in a variety of ways. The nutrition services staff reached out with meals. The custodial staff ensured buildings were clean and disinfected and worked with teachers to clean out their classrooms and return belongings and materials to students. The instructional assistants not only supported teachers' efforts but held online recess and other activities that maintained their own connection with students. The IT staff distributed approximately 700 computers as well as hot spots so that students could remain connected. The nurses worked with the Andover public health department to support individuals in the community who had contracted the virus. Throughout, the administrative team met weekly to guide and coordinate these efforts and solve problems.

Overall, we were better prepared for the closure than most Massachusetts districts and provided greater continuity in learning. However, it is difficult to replicate the depth of the classroom experience in a remote environment. We recognize that we are facing gaps in learning, particularly for some students. We anticipate that our summer enrichment program will help close some of these gaps, even though it, too, will be remote. At the same time, we learned a great deal about remote learning and will be far better prepared to deliver remote instruction in the event we need to so in the 2020-21 school year.

We have identified three significant areas of professional growth as a result of the closure. First, all of our faculty have become much more capable of using technology to advance instruction. Although variability remains in their degree of comfort and ability in the use of technology applications, every faculty member made significant steps forward in their utilization of a variety of applications and tools. These new and enhanced skills will translate to in-person instruction as well as support any continued remote learning. Second, our faculty worked together more closely

as a team than they ever had before. Particularly at the elementary and middle school levels, they took collective ownership of an entire grade or team and joined efforts to ensure that they reached all students. Third, our teachers evolved their understanding of the Universal Design for Learning principles at an accelerated rate. Collaborating with special education staff, they designed weekly lessons with accessibility supports, multiple entry points, and options for students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

OTHER AREAS OF NOTE

A report on the 2019-20 school year would not be complete without a discussion of how challenging the year was in the area of personnel. The new leadership of the AEA took a very different approach to resolving differences, choosing to use the grievance procedure and complaints to the Division of Labor Relations rather than discussion and negotiation. By the end of the year, the AEA had filed 21 grievances or complaints with DLR, often choosing both forums for a single case. Their approach required numerous hearings and the filing of responses to complaints, which consumed an enormous amount of time and legal expense.

In addition, the hostile work environment complaint at South Elementary School required significant attention by Central Office staff in covering the leave of the principal, addressing the complaint, and working toward a solution that would move the school forward. The superintendent individually interviewed 54 staff members to better understand how the school reached that point of distress and how it might move forward, and then made critical decisions to support a resolution of the problem and a fresh start.

The district participated in a JLMC process with the AEA, and together agreed upon changes to the educator and IA evaluation systems to reflect circumstances driven by remote learning.

This was also a year in which most of our union contracts were set to expire, requiring preparation for and entry into negotiations, particularly with the AEA.

Finally, the district was involved in the replacement of several key district and school administrators. Over the past five months we have completed screening and hiring processes for the Chief Operations Officer, the Transportation Administrator, the Assistant Director of Student Services, the Andover High School Principal, the South Elementary School Principal, and the Assistant Principal for Bancroft Elementary School. In addition, we have revised the job description and posted for a new Human Resources Director. While these processes are time consuming, they ensure we have the right individuals in place to take the district forward.