

ANDOVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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TO: Andover School Committee Members
FROM: Sheldon H. Berman, Ed.D., Superintendent
SUBJECT: Mid-year report on superintendent goals for 2018-19
DATE: March 4, 2019

MID-YEAR REPORT ON SUPERINTENDENT GOALS FOR 2018-19

The goals outlined below 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. Because these are multi-year initiatives, the specific goals will 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.

Although these are goals for the superintendent, achieving these goals requires the collective efforts of the entire administrative team. The report below reflects the work of that team as well as the work of many other teachers and staff members.

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

Evidence/Product: Each sprint moves forward on action-specific steps identified in the attached matrix to achieve their targets.

The progress of each sprint is reported in the attached document, with the exception of the literacy sprint which is reported under goal 3 below.

2. The superintendent will work with the assistant superintendent for finance and administration and the director of facilities to make progress on: a) 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, b) the MSBA process for renovation/replacement of West Elementary, and c) working with the School Committee, town leadership, community and other stakeholders to define and evaluate options for additional school facility improvements, including those at Doherty Middle School and a Pre-K facility. (Standard II: Management and Operations; District Improvement Goal)

Evidence/Product: Continued progress toward the renovation/replacement of West Elementary, the renovation of/addition to 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.

One of the most significant needs of the district is the upgrading and renovation/replacement of our aging school facilities. We have made this a leading priority and accomplished a great deal this year. Our capital improvement plan has moved some significant projects forward. We built a security vestibule at AHS and improved security throughout the district. We added sound enhancement to classrooms at all our schools except the high school. This past summer we completed the air conditioning of High Plain and Wood Hill, which made the school environments much more conducive to learning as we opened school this year. The plan developed for FY20 not only begins planning for the air conditioning of other schools and air circulation in the AHS field house, but also focuses attention on site work and roof replacement at Sanborn, high velocity fans in the AHS field house and Dunn Gym, improvements to the West Middle play area, parking at Bancroft, and completion of air conditioning to High Plain and Wood Hill.

The West Elementary building project continues to move forward expeditiously. Over the past year we convened a building committee and complied with all of MSBA's requirements for launching work on the project. We were accepted into the feasibility phase of the project and submitted the required material to be authorized to hire an owners' project manager (OPM). In our meetings with MSBA, we were able to receive authorization for an enrollment of 925 that will give us a good deal of flexibility to ensure we appropriately size the building, even if we decide to build for a lower enrollment. In addition, the MSBA is willing to consider adding a preschool to the facility. We are moving this project forward as quickly as we can in order to maximize our opportunity to address imminent needs at the high school.

Although the high school was not accepted into MSBA's program in this round, we have continued to educate the community and key town boards about the conditions of the school and options for addressing those conditions, work with the architect to refine work and cost estimates, prepare a warrant article to continue making progress in solidifying cost estimates, and revise the statement of interest in preparation for another submission in April. The Feasibility Study Committee continues to meet and move this forward.

We have also made very significant progress in evaluating the needs of the Doherty Middle School building and assessing how we might best address those needs. Working with DiNisco Architects over the past six months, we have clarified the extensive building issues that Doherty faces and have worked with the architects on a number of options for addressing those needs. A School Committee discussion of the conditions and options is scheduled for March 15. Based on that discussion, we will begin to plan how we can best address those needs over the next decade.

In addition to addressing the capital needs for building improvements, we have also been exploring better ways of maintaining our buildings and managing custodial services. The town's hiring of an assistant director for plant and facilities has given us additional capacity to accomplish projects. We have also begun the discussion with the town manager about how this individual can best provide custodial supervision, including moving that supervisory responsibility out of the Finance Office. We should have a proposal for moving that forward by the end of the year.

3. The superintendent will work with the assistant superintendent of student services and the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning to enable the district to implement a strong core literacy curriculum and interventions that address students' reading issues, including issues related to dyslexia, by: a) launching a three-year phase-in of a new elementary literacy program through a year-long professional development program for all teachers; b) enhancing the use of such diagnostic tools as DIBELS, MAP, and early screening measures to identify students needing support and areas for program improvement; c) continuing professional development to deepen the skills and knowledge of teachers and instructional assistants in core curriculum and intervention approaches to address students' reading development; d) implementing computer-based accessibility tools and universal design for learning strategies for students and teachers; and d)

expanding reading interventions and programs at the middle and high school levels.
(Standard I: Instructional Leadership; Student Learning Goal) Literacy Sprint

Evidence/Product: Document the assessments in use for early identification, universal screening and progress monitoring; 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 the long-range target of demonstrating improvement in students' reading performance, particularly for students with language-based reading issues. (We should begin to see improved reading performance on MAP and MCAS beginning with the 2020 administration of these assessments, as well as a reduction in the percentage of students identified as learning disabled in reading at the elementary level.)

Following is a detailed report on the work and progress of the literacy sprint.

This year, we have continued our aggressive, multi-pronged approach to literacy intervention to address language-based learning difficulties and dyslexia. Areas we have targeted for further development include assessment, professional development, program development, key interventions, strategic partnerships, and community outreach.

We have made progress in many areas of assessment, including screening, progress monitoring, summative assessment, and individual diagnostic assessment. This year, we have had an exciting development in our screening program. Screening measures are short assessments that check students' development of discrete foundational literacy skills. The Gaab Lab for Developmental Neuroscience at Boston Children's Hospital is developing an innovative new type of literacy screening app. The Boston Early Literacy App is designed to assess the language and pre-literacy skills that are most closely associated with future reading success in very young children. The app is the first comprehensive screener for children as young as three years old. The screener does not require special training so it can be used in preschools, daycare centers, and other locations such as Head Start.

Because of our work in literacy intervention, Children's Hospital has invited Andover to be part of the validation of the Boston Early Literacy App. Validation is the process of establishing statistical evidence that the test measures what it is designed to measure. For example, the app has to be able to discriminate between children who have difficulty with pre-literacy skills and those who do not. The test has to be able to predict reading challenges accurately. Validation also involves establishing reliability, which means that a test will yield consistent results. We hope to contribute to the knowledge base on early identification, but this invitation to participate also has advantages for our staff by providing our teachers with examples of current research on foundational literacy skills and offering a model screening program pursuant to Bill H.2872.

Screening assessments can be compared to a sieve with large holes. The assessments are designed to capture all young students who may potentially exhibit difficulty with reading. As a result, screening measures tend to capture a number of false positives. Screening measures also lack the specificity to identify the right intervention plan for an individual. In order to translate screening results into action, teachers need a way to filter out false positives and gain instructional granularity on students who show actual deficits.

Through a unique collaborative partnership between Student Services, Dr. Melissa Orkin of Crafting Minds, and the Hill for Literacy, we are developing a plan to help teachers take a closer look at students identified by screeners. The process includes three steps: 1) examination of the DIBELS results, 2) simple follow-up assessments to eliminate false positives and determine what types of reading problem children are experiencing, and 3) selecting the right intervention for each student based on that data. We are using an action research approach to vet the process.

Annual review assessments are used to measure progress on IEP goals. Over the last two years, we have changed all of our annual review assessments to ensure they provide information that is directly related to the interventions we are using and to ensure they are consistent year to year and school to school. This year, we aligned the high school annual assessments with the rest of the district.

While screeners and diagnostic assessments tend to measure discrete sub-skills important for reading, summative assessments measure students' actual reading levels. These assessments can also be used to track the trajectory of progress over time. Instructionally, teachers can use the data to match readers to books that are written at the correct difficulty level. This is particularly important for older students who are reading more complex text. We have continued to collaborate with regular education on the use of the NWEA MAP (Northwest Evaluation Association—Measures of Academic Progress) across all grades and programs. This year, we planned and provided additional training for teachers to expand the use of the instrument to more grade levels.

We have also continued to make progress on our plan to provide targeted reading interventions to students with a wide variety of needs. Over the last two years, we have reported on many new interventions. However, reading is just one aspect of literacy. Children with language-based reading disorders are often impacted in reading, speaking, listening, and writing. Thus, it is important to provide interventions in all four related strands of language development. In addition, reading can break down at any of the stages of reading development, so different interventions are required to correct problems associated with each stage. Children also exhibit different types of reading disorders. For example, there are four different types of dyslexia. Each type requires a different approach and each type can impact a reader differently at each stage of reading development. None of the interventions cure dyslexia—they simply prepare the reader to move to the next stage of reading development. Dyslexia is the most well-known reading disorder, but there are also other reading disabilities that are not related to dyslexia. In a public school setting, our responsibility is to provide services for all learners, at all stages of development, in all strands of language functioning. In order to do that, we must have the ability to constantly assess and coordinate multiple approaches.

Our new interventions for reading, listening, speaking, and writing have moved up the developmental ladder over the last two years. We continue to add and refine services at the elementary level, but this year we have also placed much of our focus on the needs of older students. For example, our work with Landmark Outreach now spans all grade levels. At the elementary and middle schools, consultant Ann Larsen continues to provide coaching for both special education and regular education teachers who co-teach in our language-based programs. This year, Ann is working with regular and special education teachers to complete our three-year plan to expand the language-based program to grade eight at Wood Hill and West middle schools. She has also been working with teams of regular and special education co-teaching partners at Andover High School. This fall, these partner teachers added language-based services in English classes and content areas in grade nine. We have also continued our coaching relationship with literacy expert Lisa Brooks. Lisa provides ongoing coaching in Orton-Gillingham methods to special education teachers and reading specialists.

At the elementary level, in-house experts are offering courses on specific language-based interventions to both special and regular education teachers. Speech-language pathologists Ann Kerwin and Sarah Letsky, for example, are teaching their third course on Story Grammar Marker. Story Grammar Marker is a method for teaching oral language and narrative comprehension to young children with language-based learning disabilities. Special education teacher Amy Schramek is offering a course on Framing Your Thoughts, a method for teaching grammar and writing skills to students at the beginning stages of language development. Due to the efforts of these dedicated Andover language and literacy experts, many regular education teachers have expressed an interest in learning how to use these techniques to differentiate their instruction. In

many cases, special education teachers, reading specialists, and regular education teachers are co-teaching and using the techniques in the regular classroom.

Another development at the elementary level is our Literacy Tutor project. Grounded in a strategic partnership with the Massachusetts General Hospital Institute of Health Professions, the Literacy Tutor project is a grant-funded micro-credentialing program for Andover instructional assistants. We designed the program to be a blended course with four modules. The modules include: 1) foundations of language, 2) phonemic awareness and decoding, 3) fluency, and 4) comprehension. Our first cohort includes 25 teacher assistants across all five elementary schools. Assistants who complete the program will become the first Andover Literacy Tutors. We believe we are the first district in Massachusetts to offer an early literacy micro-credential for paraprofessionals.

At the middle and high school levels, we have introduced a new intervention for older students who can decode but have difficulty with comprehension due to deficits in vocabulary and grammar. “Language! Live” involves direct instruction in reading comprehension and writing, online skills practice, and directed practice with age-appropriate novels. We also designed a seminar series for Orton-Gillingham teachers called “Beyond OG.” This five-part, year-long series is an advanced course for teachers of older students who have completed Orton-Gillingham but need a bridge to higher-level independent reading. The course includes techniques for teaching upper-level comprehension and grammar skills. Currently, more than 30 teachers and reading specialists are involved in this course.

A number of our Orton-Gillingham teachers have also opted to pursue level II certification. Level II is an advanced credential. Teachers with level II certification can address the need of students with more severe reading disorders and build internal capacity by assisting novice special education teachers and reading specialists.

The comprehension of non-fiction text is another a critical skill for older students. This fall, we trained a second cohort of middle and high school special education teachers and reading specialists in Report Form. Report Form is a method for teaching older students with language-based disabilities how to read for information. Students are taught strategies for identifying main ideas, categorizing facts about those main ideas, and identifying text structure. These skills help students to read and understand textbooks.

In addition to new interventions and advanced teacher training, we have also been working on new ways to deliver intensive services. Last year, some of our special education teachers and reading specialists designed a new intensive summer reading clinic for elementary and middle school students. The clinic includes a strong emphasis on growth mindset and a variety of interventions for learning sight words, decoding, spelling, and comprehension. In other words, the program is designed to provide different interventions for students at different stages of reading development. All students in the program made significant gains.

In order for students to reach their potential, they need to believe in themselves and know that their teachers believe in them too. Students with reading disabilities are particularly vulnerable to feelings of low self-esteem and may develop low expectations for themselves. Eye to Eye is a national organization that promotes self-efficacy by pairing older students with learning disabilities with younger students in a mentoring relationship. Last summer, two Andover High students participated in a week-long Eye to Eye mentor training program at Brown University. In the fall, they recruited more mentors, and we opened Andover’s first Eye-to-Eye chapter in October. The program is led by our student mentors and department coordinators.

Finally, we continue to participate in advocacy efforts in relation to literacy. In October, we were invited by Nadine Gaab of Boston Children’s Hospital, Yaakov Petscher of the Florida Center for Reading Research, and Margie Gillis of Literacy How to collaborate on a literacy symposium at

the International Dyslexia Association conference. We are also working with a number of collaborators on a dyslexia guide for school districts.

In addition to interventions to support students with dyslexia and other language-based learning difficulties, the district has made significant strides in improving tier one classroom literacy at all levels, including the areas of curriculum, instruction and assessment. These efforts have been coupled with robust professional learning. This work is part of a multi-year plan to build teacher capacity to deliver high-quality literacy instruction, increase students' reading and writing achievement, and address the needs of students who are confronting reading and language-based learning challenges.

At the elementary level, we have placed substantial focus on literacy programming to support our emerging and developing readers and writers. The district invested in the Fountas & Pinnell Reading Program for grades K-5 as the core reading program, with the initial focus on implementation in grades K-2. This curricular adoption has been supported by rigorous reading training for K-5 faculty and administrators. These efforts will continue into next school year, as the district invests in the grades 3-5 reading program materials.

The district also created ten elementary literacy laboratory classrooms (two in each elementary school). These classrooms serve as learning environments for our teachers, professional development consultant, and PreK-5 literacy program coordinator to model demonstration literacy lessons. We have been fortunate to bring on board a new, exceptionally talented PreK-5 literacy program coordinator who meets with the literacy laboratory teachers as a professional learning community to develop shared literacy practices across our elementary schools.

Elementary teachers continue to implement Just Right PA (kindergarten phonemic awareness program), Foundations (K-3 phonological program), and Lexia (K-5 word work program). Training for these programs is ongoing. The elementary early release days and literacy content meetings have been dedicated to creating supportive literacy structures for our new elementary reading program. One example is our focus on creating rich and robust classroom libraries across all K-5 grades and all elementary schools, which has been enhanced through grants from ACE and expenditures from individual school budgets.

We have also directed significant attention to integrating literacy with social studies and the arts. Through the development of *One Community, One Nation (OCON)*, and its associated training, elementary teachers learn and create integrated and engaging civics and literacy lessons for K-5 students. Meanwhile, we are working on integrating science and literacy, and have identified literature and non-fiction texts that match each of the FOSS science units. These texts will be purchased as part of the FY20 textbook budget.

Developing leadership capacity has been pivotal to the success of a comprehensive elementary literacy initiative. The assistant superintendent for teaching and learning, PreK-5 literacy program coordinator, elementary principals and elementary assistant principals meet routinely to develop shared leadership practices that support teachers in the implementation of our new reading program. The PK-5 literacy program coordinator also meets regularly with the reading specialists to provide ongoing training and support.

The middle school English Language Arts (ELA) teachers are focused on the improvement of reading and writing for students in grades 6-8. To support this work, the district created three middle school writing laboratory classrooms (one in each middle school). These classrooms serve as host learning environments for our teachers and the grades 6-12 ELA program coordinator to model demonstration writing lessons. The grades 6-12 ELA program coordinator also meets with the literacy laboratory teachers as a professional learning community to develop shared writing instructional practices across our middle schools. Fifty percent of middle school ELA teachers have participated in the Teacher College literacy institutes to enhance their expertise in teaching writing.

Andover High School participates in AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination), which is a program that teaches students to succeed using WICOR strategies (Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization and Reading). The WICOR strategies serve to support students' organizational skills, but focus in particular on deep reading and effective writing strategies. Although the major focus of AVID has been on cohorts in the ninth and tenth grades, the AHS AVID team has also promoted these instructional strategies school-wide to support the learning of all high school students.

Teachers across the district developed several professional development courses in the area of literacy and offered them to PK-12 faculty through the Professional Development Catalog. These course enrollments have filled quickly and continue to have positive feedback from participants. Courses have included: Evidence-Based Practices for Speech/Language Pathologists, Framing Your Thoughts, Introduction to Story Grammar Marker, English Language Learners in the Classroom, Supporting Students with Learning Disabilities in Your Classroom (offered fall and winter term), Evidence-Based Reading Practices for Middle School Reading Specialists, and Vocabulary and Literacy.

As part of a balanced literacy program, district educators continue to use a wide range of assessments to inform instruction and align evidence-based practices to teaching and learning. This year, the district provided training in the NWEA MAP assessment (Northwest Evaluation Association—Measures of Academic Progress) for all schools. This normed tool provides information about a student's instructional level and growth data. Increasing our capacity to analyze data and make data-informed decisions has greatly supported our collective efforts to expand and strengthen literacy teaching and learning for all students.

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, 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 provide trend data on the district's financial investments in comparison to other similar communities.

Over this past year, we have continued to update the data analyses of student performance and comparative finance that we have posted on the website. However, our most significant progress has been in the area of administrators and teachers using data to better support students' individual needs. We have continued training teachers and administrators in the diagnostic use of DIBELS and MAP data, and we have provided time for data teams at grade levels to meet for the purpose of interpreting and discussing these data and modifying instruction to better meet student needs. In addition, we have begun to use a number of intervention or supplemental programs such as Lexia in reading and Dreambox in math that provide teachers with just-in-time data on a daily basis to better support students. We have also administered the Panorama survey for the second year, giving us a better idea of how students perceive the climate and culture of our schools and their sense of belonging within them.

The most important impact of the work we've done in this area has been the change in culture around data. Moving from a time when data was viewed as largely irrelevant to understanding student needs, the faculty now appreciates the insights that data can offer for improving the effectiveness of their instruction. (For additional information, see the update of the Progress Monitoring Sprint in the attached document.)

5. The superintendent will work with the communication coordinator, administrators, faculty, 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; 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: Documentation of and metrics related to additional communication strategies including regular web and social media communications, greater website accessibility and usability, press releases and media coverage of events and achievements, and community forums that enhance regular on-going communications with staff, parents and the community.

In August 2018, we were finally able to add a communication position to enhance communication initiatives within the APS community and with the media. Since August, we have seen an increase in positive coverage of our students, faculty and administrators through both internal and external media.

On August 28, 2018, the inaugural edition of the district's e-newsletter, *Warrior Wednesdays*, debuted. By February 2019, our communications director had published [volume 22](#). The target audiences for *Warrior Wednesdays* include parents, faculty and community members. The distribution list for the newsletter aligns with the ASPEN database and each week *Warrior Wednesdays* is sent to approximately 8,400 readers, shared through APS's Twitter account, and posted on www.aps1.net.

Warrior Wednesdays spotlights students, teachers and APS community news. The newsletter offers the superintendent the opportunity to communicate on a regular basis to parents, teachers, and the community. Those messages have featured information pertinent to the gas explosions, current events, and district accomplishments. 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 nonprofit organizations within the community. This approach helps to reinforce district and community relationships.

The communications department has also established positive working relationships with local media, including the *Townsmen*, *Eagle Tribune*, *Patch*, *Boston Globe Local*, and Boston-area TV stations. This outreach has not only involved media advisories and press releases but personal contact with reporters and media representatives. Thus far, coverage from the 2018-19 school year has featured all five elementary schools appearing on WCVB's "Good Morning Eye-Opener," plus media coverage on WCVB, WHDH, NBC Boston, and Patch of high school students and public safety officials honored for leadership during the Merrimack Valley gas explosions.

In addition, we have been able to secure media coverage for the official opening of the Athletic Field Accessibility Project at High Plain Elementary/ Wood Hill Middle School (all local print media), as well as Andover High School Girls Soccer Team preparing Thanksgiving meals for the community (Boston Herald, Boston 25 & NBC Boston). West Elementary Principal Liz Roos was featured on WBZ-TV, celebrating the 6th annual Scarecrow Festival sponsored by Andover Coalition for Education. In February 2019, AHS junior Hannah Finn was featured on WCVB's "Five for Good" segment for her good works in creating the nonprofit *One Wish Project*. Our Office of Student Services, through its partnership with Boston Children's Hospital, was approached by the Boston Globe for comment on programs surrounding early detection and dyslexia. The journalist for this article has expressed interest in a follow-up story regarding APS's program with the Carroll School. The communications department also prepared responses to media regarding the arrest of a former teacher and a November school bus accident.

Communications now has a prominent presence on our website, www.aps1.net. Our communications director updates “District News” and the Communications pages on a regular basis to provide updated information to our community. We have also created a Twitter account for Andover Public Schools (@AndoverPS), and continue to grow our identity on this social media platform. In August 2018, @AndoverPS had 125 followers. Through our efforts to connect with the community, in February we reached 473 Twitter followers. In January, the Superintendent participated in his first Twitter chat with the Aspen Institute and the School Superintendents Association, reaching a national audience. The department has branded #WeAreAndover and encourages individual schools to reinforce this branding on their social media.

There is much work to be accomplished in the coming months and years to grow our communications efforts. However, the past few months have been witness to a very productive start.

6. The superintendent will work with the assistant superintendent for finance and administration, the Superintendent’s Administrative Team, the School Committee, and the town manager to identify budget needs as early as possible, establish priorities, 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, and attempt to reach an early and responsible budget agreement. (Standard II: Management and Operations; District Improvement Goal)

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

We have again produced a well-documented budget that meets the district’s priorities and the town’s funding capacity. In fact, we have expanded the documentation to include more information on FTEs over time and on individual school budgets. Each year we have identified particular areas of significant need as major budget priorities. These areas have included reducing elementary class size, addressing the needs of students with language-based learning difficulties, implementing the new high school schedule, and improving our elementary literacy program. As a result we made gains in each of these areas. The FY20 budget targets two major goals—adding time to the school day to enhance academic instruction and completing the addition of textbooks to the school budget so that we can implement a sustainable curriculum renewal cycle. We have prepared a budget that will accomplish both those goals.

We have also advocated for increased state funding for both the foundation budget and for the circuit breaker. These efforts are ongoing and the School Committee and administration have made a strong case with our legislative delegation for the need to increase funding in both areas. In terms of the foundation budget, the Governor’s budget proposal has provided the district with an increase of \$858,482, well beyond what we had anticipated. We conducted an analysis of this addition to identify the areas that account for this increase. The analysis revealed that only a small portion of the addition is due to adjustments in the formula for benefits and maintenance; most of the addition is meant to address the educational needs of students. In terms of the circuit breaker, I have worked with the Coalition for Special Education Funding to present to the legislature the urgent need to increase circuit breaker funding and have collected the signatures of 220 superintendents and special education administrators in support of fully funding the circuit breaker. I also presented to over 100 legislators and legislative aides on the need to fully fund the circuit breaker. If these efforts are successful, they may provide us with additional resources to further improve the services and supports we offer our students and families.

In the area of financial management, we have closely monitored and managed our budget, ensuring that we maintain a balanced budget. In addition, we have continued to build the circuit breaker reserve so that we have sufficient resources for unanticipated placement costs. We have also managed our full-day kindergarten account in a way that will enable the district to reduce the

annual tuition for full-day kindergarten by \$200 without expending additional general expense resources.

7. The superintendent will work with the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning and key stakeholders on the development of potential options for later start times for secondary students, and will 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.

The School Start Time Working Group began work this year to explore later school start times at the secondary level. The charge of the working group is to:

- Develop potential options for later start times for secondary students
- Provide objective information to the School Committee as to the benefits and drawbacks of various options
- Provide wide stakeholder feedback to support the School Committee in evaluating the feasibility of and receptivity to potential options
- Develop a report on the feedback and proposed options for changing school start times

The School Committee developed guiding principles as a way to support effective decision making. The guiding principles include:

- Impact on student wellbeing (physical, mental health, and academic performance)
- Impact on family and staff schedules (work schedules, before/after school child care arrangements, homework)
- Impact on extracurricular activities (athletics, drama, music, clubs) and after-school jobs
- Cost to families and district (transportation costs, before/after school childcare costs)
- Consultation with AEA
- Coordination with other Merrimack Valley Communities

The School Start Time Working Group is facilitated by Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning Sandy Trach and includes principals at each level (Pamela Lathrop/Michelle Costa, Patrick Bucco and Philip Conrad), as well as representative school district stakeholders (Shannon Scully, Kerry Costello, Mary Lu Walsh and Nicole Kieser). The working group has been meeting twice each month.

To launch the initiative within the community, we hosted Dr. Judith Owens, Director of Sleep Medicine at Boston Children's Hospital and Professor of Neurology at Harvard Medical School. Dr. Owens conducted a presentation on the consequences of insufficient sleep, as well as the evidence of a later school start time as a way to optimize the health of adolescents.

Since the fall, the School Start Time Working Group has focused its work on identifying and examining viable school transportation start and finish time options. As the group has studied later start time options for the high school and middle schools, the question of elementary start and finish times has also arisen. With the input and assistance of the transportation coordinator, later school start time options have been created for the secondary level. To accommodate a later secondary start time, one of the scenarios proposes that elementary schools start *earlier* than secondary, and another proposes that elementary start *later* than secondary. Each of these options is considered cost-neutral because each uses the existing number of drivers and buses, and maintains the same bus routes as this current school year. To further analyze our bus routes,

the district has independently contracted with a school transportation specialist to examine optimization of our bus routes. This, along with our continued study of two-tier busing, may lead to identification of cost options for future consideration. The superintendent, assistant superintendent, and transportation coordinator also communicated with the private school principals and directors in Andover to share the work and timeline of the School Start Time Working Group, as well as the potential impact on their transportation times.

The School Start Time Working Group met with the APS athletic director to discuss the impact of later school start times at the secondary level on practices, travel and game times. The group also met with after-school childcare programming (AYS) to discuss the impact of a possible later dismissal time for elementary on childcare, and/or the need for possible morning care depending on the elementary start time. Both the athletic and childcare directors communicated the pros and cons of a later start time at the secondary level, which has helped the working group continue to focus its work. This same input process will be used in examining all operational areas including, but not limited to: finance, facilities, custodial, rentals, food services, arts, public safety and town recreation.

A comprehensive communication plan is underway with support from Nicole Kieser, director of communications, who also serves as a member of the working group.

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| ● October 2018-October 2019 | School Start Time Working Group meets |
| ● March-April 2019 | Parent coffees |
| ● April-May 2019 | Public forums |
| ● May-June 2019 | Student, faculty/staff, and parent surveys |
| ● September 2019 | Survey results shared at SC |
| ● September-October 2019 | Public forums |
| ● October 2019 | School start time options presented to SC |

A webpage has been developed to provide up-to-date information on the School Start Time initiative, and a contact e-mail has been posted for questions, concerns and feedback. A frequently asked questions (FAQ) page is under development and will be posted soon. A *Warrior Wednesdays* article has also been devoted to the topic.

Attachments:

- APS Agile Strategic Sprint Reports

APS AGILE STRATEGIC SPRINT REPORTS

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING SPRINT

This year the SEL Sprint has focused on staff development, program implementation and a student survey on school culture and social-emotional skill areas. Building on the past two years of professional development in Responsive Classroom strategies, the district again offered a Responsive Classroom summer institute for 25 elementary teachers. In addition, a number of elementary teachers and administrators took the second level Responsive Classroom course. One of our elementary principals and two teachers are in the process of becoming Responsive Classroom trainers so that we can offer training and support in-house.

In addition to the professional development in Responsive Classroom, we sent a second team of four teachers and administrators to the year-long training program provided by Willam and James College. This year the team was from Bancroft. Meanwhile, the team that participated from High Plain last year is offering a district-sponsored staff development course for 25 participants, including teachers from every level of the district's staff. This course provides classroom educators foundational knowledge in social-emotional learning, an understanding of the positive impacts of developing a safe and inclusive classroom/school-wide culture, and insights into using trauma-sensitive practices to mitigate the effects of trauma on learning.

As a result of the professional development teachers have participated in over the past three years, most elementary teachers are utilizing morning meetings and other Responsive Classroom strategies to foster a caring sense of community in their classrooms and to teach social skills. As we move to adding time to the school day next year, many teachers will also be implementing closing meetings that help bring a positive closure to the day and enhance the sense of community within the classroom.

This year all the middle schools implemented the Where Everyone Belongs (WEB) program. Middle school administrators and teachers have also begun to explore possible ways to integrate Responsive Classroom strategies. At the high school, teachers and administrators are working on the structure and curriculum for H1 to better support the advisory program.

At all levels we have launched significant work in the area of cultural proficiency and cultural awareness. At the elementary level, we have selected classroom libraries that provide rich reading resources that encompass stories set in other countries and cultures, writers from other countries, and stories whose main characters are diverse racially, ethnically and nationally. In addition, the *One Community, One Nation* curriculum—which integrates social studies, literacy, and arts—focuses on diversity and equity. Examples include studying four non-European countries from around world in second grade and studying the evolution of civil liberties and human rights in U.S. history in the fourth and fifth grades.

At the secondary level, all administrators and the entire faculty are participating in professional development on cultural proficiency during the full professional day and three early release days. This work is being facilitated by Facing History and Ourselves and focuses on exploring cultural differences, discussing race and racism, and addressing stereotypes and stereotype threats. The goal of all of the work on diversity and cultural proficiency is to help create safe and culturally responsive environments that honor and value the richness of our diversity.

Finally, the district administered the Panorama survey for a second year to chart progress in fostering a positive school climate. We repeated last year's surveys on students' perceptions of school safety, sense of belonging, and engagement. We added survey scales on social awareness, growth mindset and grit. The surveys were administered to students in grades three through twelve. In addition, we began to survey faculty on their perceptions of school climate. We

are still in the process of analyzing the results and will use early release days and faculty meetings to discuss the results with faculty over the coming months. In essence, our students have a strong sense of engagement and sense of belonging. Their sense of safety declined this year but that was also reflected in national trends, probably caused by the highly-publicized incidents of school violence over the past year. In terms of the social-emotional skills scales, our students had a generally strong sense of social awareness but were not as strong in growth mindset or grit. We hope the discussion over the coming months will help us better understand our students' perceptions and assist us in strengthening their social skills and enhancing the climate in our schools.

MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SPRINT

A child's mental health is critical for success in school and life. There is a direct link between mental and behavioral health and school climate, high school graduation rates, achievement scores, and the prevention of risk behaviors such as drug and alcohol use. About seven percent of children ages 3-17 are diagnosed with anxiety. That means more than 400 Andover children experience clinically significant levels of anxiety. Many more (up to one in six) are diagnosed with other mental and behavioral health challenges, and evidence suggests still others are undiagnosed and untreated.

Since 2014, the number of Andover children with identified mental and behavioral health disorders has more than doubled, mirroring national mental health trends. Moreover, our data indicate less than 25 percent of Andover students who receive regular school social work services access clinical mental health and/or medical intervention outside of school. Children with mental and behavioral health disorders make up the largest population of students placed in out-of-district settings—and we know from the literature that children perform better and make more progress in less-restrictive environments. Simply put, the goal of the mental and behavioral health sprint team is to improve and increase mental and behavioral health services in order to prevent the potential catastrophic impact of mental health conditions such as hospitalization and out-of-district placement. Our approach includes a multi-tiered system of support model with three goals: 1) to reach more students, 2) to increase the intensity and variety of services available in the school setting, and 3) to connect more students to clinical mental health treatment not available in school settings.

In a multi-tiered system of support model, tier one supports include universal screening tools such as the Panorama survey and school climate programs such as Responsive Classroom. These universal supports are managed through the work of the social and emotional learning sprint. Supports in tiers two and three include more specific interventions targeting groups of students with similar identified mental and behavioral health needs, intensive interventions for students with clinical mental health diagnoses, and crisis intervention. The mental and behavioral health sprint focuses on these more targeted and intensive programs.

For example, the Transitions program at Andover High School includes tier II supports designed to provide temporary interventions and tier III supports to help students and families manage crisis situations. Until recently, however, there were no services for at-risk students at AHS. Students who are at risk may exhibit behaviors such as drug and alcohol use, high absenteeism, poor grades, and low engagement. The Rehabilitation for Empowerment, Natural Supports, and Education program (RENEW) is a new program that uses school and community support teams to provide clinical wrap-around services to individual students. Last year, four APS staff were trained as facilitators. Facilitators are coaches who work with the student's team and help the student through the RENEW planning and personal goal-setting process. Our facilitators include administrators, nurses, and social workers. This year, we have added four more facilitators and we now have fifteen students receiving intensive support. RENEW teams receive ongoing consultation, coaching and formal training through the Institute on Disabilities at the University of New Hampshire.

At the middle school level, we are increasing the number of students receiving services, as well as the intensity of those services, through a pilot program based on tiered levels of support. The program team includes trained partner teachers from regular education, case coordination from a psychologist and special educator, and consultation from a social worker and our clinical director. We staffed the program by reorganizing existing specialists and wrote a grant that will allow us to add some additional support time next year with a dedicated, part-time social worker or psychologist. The program includes three levels of support: therapeutic academic support blocks for students who need a home base, direct instruction in coping strategies for groups of students who require more direct intervention, and targeted mental health counseling for students who require more intensive and individualized intervention. The therapeutic support blocks are part of the schools' existing schedule during the regular "Academic Connections" blocks. Currently, we are collecting data to determine whether we are achieving measurable reductions in symptom severity, as indicated by the number of unscheduled visits to the support center, and a reduction in out-of-district placements, as indicated by comparison data from prior years.

At the elementary level, we are piloting a consultation team program. The consultation team includes our clinical director, social work coordinator, department head for special programs, and a school psychologist. The school psychologists have a new rotating schedule to staff the program. The program provides additional supports to a school when there is an unexpected or acute situation such as a significant change in behavior or mental health status of an individual student. The function of the program is similar to the function of the Transitions program at the high school, but the supports are consultative rather than direct. We are currently collecting data to determine whether the program is effective in reducing out-of-district placements.

The mental and behavioral health sprint team is also working on increasing services for students with significant social skill deficits. Students with severe social skill deficits placed in substantially separate programs can become more and more isolated over time. Our goal is to reduce substantially separate programs and increase services offered at all schools by adopting a more inclusionary approach. This year, we are working with an elementary team to coordinate a comprehensive menu of program services such as behavior plans, social skills lessons, and organizational supports. The team includes a special education teacher from each elementary school, Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) and social skills curriculum expert Lucy Dufresne, special programs department coordinator Heather Eigen, and elementary department coordinator Angelique DeCoste. Next year the new, more inclusive program will begin at all elementary schools. At the middle school level, special education coordinators at each school are working together to expand the SAIL program across all three schools. Currently, the program is housed at Wood Hill.

Another way we are increasing inclusionary opportunities and intensity of services is to increase the number of trained staff working directly with students. Our new Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) training program is designed to place highly trained assistant staff with students who require emotional and behavioral intervention. A Registered Behavior Technician is a credentialed instructional assistant who practices under the supervision of a Board Certified Behavior Analyst. This year, ten of our instructional assistants are participating in this intensive training program.

We have also made substantial progress on our third goal of connecting more students to clinical mental health services. It is important for families to have access to emergency, hospital, family therapy, and 24-hour services not available in school settings. However, many of these services are outside our sphere of influence. One way we have begun to think about bridging the gap between private, community, and school services is through a clinic-in-the-schools program. A clinic partnership program is designed to provide mental health counseling to both students and families who do not access treatment outside the school setting. Last year, we reached out to several potential clinic partners. This year, we collaborated with a local clinic on a Department of Public Health grant to fund and launch the program.

AHS SCHEDULE AND TRANSITION SPRINT

Although refinement work on the 7+H schedule continues, the sprint has shifted its focus to better address the transition between middle and high school to improve students' chances of success. The team, which includes middle and high school administrators and program coordinators, planned a number of initiatives to promote a better understanding of teaching expectations among teachers at each level as well as programs for students and parents so that they have a better understanding of what opportunities the high school offers and can effect a better transition to the high school.

The extent and depth of these programs grew significantly this year. In October, the eighth graders from all three middle schools visited the high school to give them a sense of what it will be like to be a student at AHS. As a follow-up, during H block ninth grade students visited each of the middle schools and hosted focus groups for middle school administrators and teachers to discuss their understanding of the high school experience. Science teachers at the middle and high school levels decided to shadow each other to see firsthand what their colleagues do at the other level and to better align their curricular and instructional expectations.

This winter, AHS administrators and program coordinators visited each of the middle schools and provided presentations about course opportunities at the high school and the course selection process. In addition, the high school held a curriculum night for eighth grade students and their parents to introduce them to club and extracurricular opportunities, as well course opportunities and the course selection process. High school guidance counselors are visiting the middle schools to help with the course selection and transition process, and program coordinators are creating videos on course opportunities; the videos will be posted online to help students better understand the offerings in each curricular area. Finally, high school guidance counselors are working with middle school administrators and teachers to identify students who would find the AVID program helpful in supporting their success at the high school and beyond.

The sprint is still engaged in refinement of the 7+H schedule. Administrators are working with each department to create more effective collaborative planning periods (professional learning groups) for next year. There are two collaborative planning periods for each faculty member in an eight-day cycle. In late January, a survey was administered to students and teachers about the effectiveness of H block and the year-long schedule. In addition, the high school administered the Panorama survey to all high school students. The results of both surveys are still being analyzed.

PROGRESS MONITORING SPRINT

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. To achieve this result, 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, and used to make decisions at a systems level around school-wide interventions.

Over the past three years, we have increased the number of assessments and instructional supports that provide high-quality data to teachers, as well as professional development in how to best understand and utilize these data. We have also restructured faculty meetings and other venues to give teachers collaborative time to review and study the data so that they can make adjustments in their instruction and provide targeted supports to particular students or groups of students. Currently, teachers are collecting and analyzing data with a variety of assessment tools that include universal screening, just-in-time performance assessment, benchmark and summative assessments—all designed to determine appropriate instructional levels, groupings and interventions for *every* student.

All students in grade K-5 participate in the DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) universal screening tool three times each year. Students who demonstrate a need for intervention are monitored and assessed every six weeks. Students are assessed in phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, accuracy and fluency with connected text, reading comprehension and vocabulary to determine appropriate instructional focus. Principals, assistant principals and reading specialists are continuing to participate in collaborative sessions analyzing the DIBELS data and in trainings in how to conduct data meetings to determine appropriate instructional reading focus areas for every child.

At the elementary and middle school levels, teachers are using adaptive computer-aided instruction in reading (Lexia) and in math (Dreambox and Prodigy at the elementary level and IXL at the middle school level) that allows children to learn and practice skills. These programs not only provide students with instruction and practice through adaptive instructional technology, but also collect data on students' mastery of skills. They provide just-in-time performance data for teachers that then can be used to ensure an appropriate instructional focus and effective groupings.

We have continued to enhance our analysis of benchmark assessments that enables us to track overall progress in ELA and math. Students in grades three through six, and older students as needed, have participated in two administrations this year of Measure of Academic Performance (MAP)—in ELA and math. MAP is a nationally normed standardized test that determines a student's RIT (Rasch Unit) score, which represents the range of where a child should be based on state standards for appropriate instructional focus. MAP also provides Lexile range (reading range) for individual students and the appropriate text level. To expand the utility of MAP data for instructional adjustments, we have trained twelve teachers and administrators from all the elementary and middle schools on how to best utilize MAP data to inform instruction. These teachers and administrators have become the designated trainers for their schools.

Finally, we have pursued an in-depth analysis of our MCAS summative data from last spring and have been cross-referencing that data with our other formative and benchmark data. As a result, administrators and teachers have seen that we can create significant improvement by using the data to adjust and target instruction. They have grown more comfortable and confident in understanding and using these data.

Given all the data we are now collecting, we recognize there is a need to purchase a technology platform with a dashboard that synthesizes the data so that teachers can more easily see how students are doing in the moment and over time. Having a dashboard that presents data from multiple assessments in an easily understandable and searchable matrix will assist teachers in delivering the appropriate instruction and intervention based on individual student need. As a result, the progress monitoring sprint worked with the director of digital learning and the application team to research different data dashboards. The OTUS platform was selected for the purposes of a pilot. The OTUS dashboard offers DIBELS, MAP, Dreambox, MCAS and WIDA data at the elementary school level and MCAS and MAP data at the middle school level. South was selected to pilot the dashboard this year.

ACCESSIBILITY SPRINT

The accessibility sprint has been focused on increasing understanding of accessibility and universal design for learning and evaluating platforms that will help to ensure that all curriculum is accessible.

Last year the district purchased TextHelp to improve accessibility of written communication. Our focus this year has been on providing professional development for teachers and students and letting more people know about this tool's availability. To accomplish this, the Digital Learning Department has offered a TechByte Technology series on TextHelp. Digital learning coaches have provided students with tutorials, one-on-one demonstrations, and modeling. Information has

been sent to parents through the PACs and PTOs. In March, TextHelp learning modules will be made available on the district's website for teachers, students and parents.

In the area of universal design for learning (UDL), Sara Stetson, Tracy Crowley and Joanne Najarian will be teaching a UDL course for teachers beginning March 13 through our professional development course offerings. Graduate credit will be available and the course is already full. In addition, all administrators in the district have been engaged in classroom observations focused on the utilization of UDL principles and strategies and have been debriefing these observations in our all-administrator meetings. Joanne Najarian created a clickable UDL rubric that administrators can use for the observations. UDL has also become a lens for examining curriculum implementation. One of the key features of the *One Community, One Nation* program is that through the integration of literacy, social studies, the arts and technology, it will model a UDL designed curriculum.

Finally, a good deal of work has been done to review potential learning management systems (LMS) for piloting in FY20. The LMS will enhance both accessibility and ease of use of all our applications and communications.

INNOVATION SPRINT

The innovation sprint continues to focus on collaboration and professional development in order to create dynamic and diverse learning communities for students and teachers. This work is comprised of innovative practices such as Design Thinking and the Open Share model, as well as collaborative projects such as the Capstone Program and New Student Resume. These projects individually and collectively have expanded not only *what* we teach, but also *how* we teach.

Design Thinking

Over 100 Andover teachers have been trained in Design Thinking methods through various professional development efforts. These educators have, in turn, shared their learning with other teachers system-wide. An example of this sharing was the three-day "Introduction to Design Thinking" workshop held this past summer. The teacher participants continue to offer workshops for their colleagues to expand professional learning.

Another design thinking endeavor is "novel engineering," whereby students use the design thinking cycle to identify a problem in a story and then collaborate to develop a unique strategy or solution. This approach allows teachers and students to combine literacy and the "maker mindset." Teachers continue to engage in professional development to learn this approach and actively implement it with students.

"The New Student Resume" will be initiated with our grade eight Capstone students. This effort will allow students to reflect, create, curate and share their learning within their peer community and beyond. This type of digital resume also becomes a platform for students to further explore and share their interests, passions and pursuits.

Looking ahead, an Andover Faculty Fellows program will be designed to support teachers already trained in Design Thinking. These fellows will model and support other APS educators to implement these same principles in the classroom and community alike.

Capstone Projects

Capstone Projects allow students to pursue a challenging, driving question by engaging in rigorous research and project-based learning, while also receiving ongoing feedback from multiple stakeholders. The district's Capstone Projects have grown significantly since their inception. In 2016, the pilot began with five students in the high school. Today, the program has grown to over 150 students across seven schools, and also includes grade five and grade eight.

In May 2019, we will again be able to share the work of our students in Capstone, Global Pathways, Robotics, Engineering and Bio-technology with more than 300 parents and community members through our Senior Capstone Showcase. In addition, we are proud that Andover Public Schools will host the National Capstone Consortium Summer Summit, where 200 educators across the nation will gather to share and learn from one another's Capstone projects.

Global Pathways Program

The Global Pathways Program began in 2015 with 15 students and one faculty member. Today, it has expanded to over 200 students and ten faculty members. This expansion is attributed to the expertise of the faculty facilitating the program, the implementation of the World Ready Lab (grades 6-12), and the AHS IDEASudio (a state-of-the-art fabrication laboratory for Engineering, Design, Entrepreneurship, Arts and Sciences). To support growth of the IDEASudio for students and teachers, AHS students utilize H Block in their schedule to visit the studio, and faculty workshops are provided on digital fabrication.

As part of our ongoing commitment to Global Education, Andover Public Schools continues to use the Global Portal as a PreK-12 teaching tool, as well as a community education and outreach vehicle. To support this work, the district designed and held a K-12 workshop on integrating global citizenship into teaching and learning, and spearheaded several AHS global citizenship curriculum development workshops. Andover High School will once again host a Global Summit, where over 100 AHS students will engage in a day of global design challenges with global business organizations.

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