

Andover Public Schools
Andover, Massachusetts

**Final Report
on the
2011-2016
Strategic Plan**

May 2016

Sheldon Berman, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Andover School Committee

Joel Blumstein
Susan McCready
Paul Murphy
Shannon Scully
Ted Teichert

**FINAL REPORT ON THE
2011-2016 STRATEGIC PLAN
FOR ANDOVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

A. Introduction	1
B. Executive Summary	2
C. Status Report	4
1. What We Have Accomplished- Goal by Goal	4
2. Recommendations	8
a. What We Need to Complete	8
b. What We Need to Sustain	9
c. What We May Want to Undertake	10
3. Concluding Remarks	11
D. Progress Report on Strategic Areas of Focus	12
1. High Academic Achievement For All	12
2. Technology-Supported Learning	17
3. Teaching and Leading	21
4. Communication, Planning and Partnerships	25
5. Educational Funding, Financial Management, and Infrastructure	29

INTRODUCTION

Reaching a destination efficiently and effectively requires forethought, commitment, and planning, along with the will to implement that plan. These qualities were demonstrated by the Andover Public Schools (APS) and its School Committee when they resolved to create and carry out a comprehensive five-year strategic plan for 2011-2016.

Hundreds of people gave of their time, energy, and talent to formulate the plan that would both guide and drive the work of APS for the next five years. In addition to the ongoing efforts of the district's School Committee members and Leadership Team, input was provided by a Strategic Planning Advisory Committee that included principals, teachers, parents, community representatives, and others. Two committees, heavily weighted by community members, gave particular emphasis to the key areas of revenue and technology. Consultants offered recommendations on structure and process, and each school formed a teacher-staff group that reviewed the work in progress. A particular highlight of the process was a community forum attended by more than 200 members of the Andover community who came together in the high school cafeteria to share their thoughts on three guiding questions: (1) how do we see APS now; (2) what do we want APS to be in five years, and (3) what barriers are in place currently that might prevent progress?

The 2011-2016 Strategic Plan for APS was grounded in the district's vision, mission, and core values. The Vision Statement reflects the district's commitment to provide a world-class education in an innovative, inclusive, student-focused and fiscally stable educational system. The Mission Statement gives voice to the district's intent to partner with the entire community in order to engage students and assist them to develop as self-reliant thinkers and problem solvers who are prepared to contribute to society in meaningful ways. The Core Values, which are the principles that guide decision making, are identified as high achievement for all, teaching excellence, innovation, respect and responsibility.

The Andover School Committee approved the strategic plan on November 18, 2011. The plan addressed five major areas of focus: high academic achievement for all; technology-supported learning; teaching and leading; communications, planning, and partnerships; and educational funding, financial management, and infrastructure. While the plan formed the basis of much of the work of the district's Leadership Team and other staff, over time it became evident that some alterations were needed to reflect changing circumstances, needs, and resources. The entire plan was formally updated in July 2013.

As the five-year period encompassed by this strategic plan draws to a close, it is incumbent upon us to look back and assess our progress. This final report on the district's Strategic Plan for 2011-2016 will highlight under each of the five major areas of focus the strategies we have undertaken, the goals we have reached, the work that is well underway but still needs to be completed or sustained, and important objectives that have not yet been tackled. This information will help to shape our plans for the years ahead as we continue to align our recommendations and resources in a way that best addresses the needs and interests of the students of the Andover Public Schools.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following a period of intensive study and input by hundreds of staff and community members, on November 18, 2011, the Andover School Committee approved the 2011-2016 Strategic Plan for the Andover Public Schools. The plan addressed five major areas of focus: high academic achievement for all; technology-supported learning; teaching and leading; communications, planning, and partnerships; and educational funding, financial management, and infrastructure.

The time period encompassed by this plan is drawing to a close, presenting us with the opportunity to look back at what has been accomplished and ahead to what we may want to undertake as we build upon our district's progress. A review of the past five years reveals that, first, many of the plan's stated goals and targets have been achieved with marked success. Second, some strategies are well underway, yet will need dedicated funding in order to be completed to the level originally envisioned. Third, other important efforts are currently on track, but will require continuation funding in order to be sustained. And fourth, a number of additional strategies merit consideration as we look toward developing a new plan for the future of APS. These four categories of activity are analyzed in detail in the report that follows. They are summarized below to provide an overview of how far the district has come since 2011 and, equally important, of the work that lies ahead.

Among the accomplishments of the past five years, the district has:

- Established curricular leadership in all curricular areas and updated curricula in math, science and writing in order to improve students' academic outcomes.
- Dedicated a leadership position to the promotion of innovation and community engagement that has already led to the creation of maker spaces and innovation teams in each school and student products that have received statewide attention.
- Created programs such as the Language Enriched Academic Program (LEAP) and the Transition Opportunities Program (TOP) to better support the learning needs of individual students.
- Worked jointly with the town to upgrade and modernize the technology infrastructure and to improve staff and student productivity.
- Introduced a blended, technology-rich learning environment for students, launched a 1:1 student-to-computer initiative, and provided support staff to promote effective use of technology by teachers and students.
- Supported extensive efforts to attract the best talent to the system and provided mentoring for teachers and administrators as well as professional development for current staff.
- Effectively implemented the new teacher and administrator evaluation model to provide higher levels of accountability and encourage professional growth.
- Established a reliable communication network, including multiple applications that support communication with parents and the community, and fostered important partnerships with community groups.
- Engaged with the town in innovative and cost-effective partnerships through a shared staffing model in human resources, technology and facilities.
- Implemented management and financial software applications that created administrative efficiencies and enhanced the clarity and transparency of financial reports.

To complete the achievement of important goals that were specified in the 2011-2016 plan, the district needs to:

- Continue the curriculum renewal cycle by updating the curriculum for K-12 English language arts and PreK-5 social studies, mapping the entire district curriculum in a searchable digital database, and creating additional common assessments for the core courses.
- Continue its implementation of the iAndover 1:1 initiative and blended learning in the elementary grades.
- Proceed with the transition to the 7+H high school schedule.

- Increase efficiencies in its business and human resources operations through electronic processes and software automation.
- Continue to collaborate with the town in developing a long-term facilities improvement plan, with priority given to renovation of the high school's library media center.
- Strengthen its support of new employees who are not part of the teaching ranks by providing them with orientation and mentoring services.

To maintain the progress seen in the past five years, the district will need to:

- Sustain the professional development of staff, with an emphasis on project-based learning, high-leverage instruction, social and emotional learning, the integration of technology, and feedback on the teacher evaluation model.
- Sustain and enhance its communication with non-English-speaking parents, particularly through expanded translation services.
- Maintain existing partnerships with local corporations and organizations, even as it reaches out to new potential partners.
- Enhance its communication with parents and community through more timely methods of two-way communication, including the allocation of staff to support these two-way strategies.

To build upon past accomplishments and even accelerate the rate of progress, the district may want to:

- Strengthen and stabilize its financial foundation to support long-range planning.
- Increase opportunities for PreK-8 students to study world languages and cultures.
- Enhance the appropriateness and consistency of the ways schools assess, analyze, and report student performance and growth.
- Provide students with greater access to digital textbooks and source materials.
- Expand the use of universally designed curriculum and assistive technology for students with unique learning needs.
- Expand opportunities for high school students to enroll in virtual online courses.
- Provide staff to support regular two-way communication with local media.
- Relocate the preschool program and renovate, enlarge, or replace selected facilities.
- Update evaluation models for teaching assistants, custodians, and independent positions.
- Increase the diversity of teaching and administrative staff and provide all staff with professional development in cultural competency.

The Strategic Plan for 2011-16 has served the district well. In essence, it has set in place the curricular, technological and professional development infrastructure necessary for the district to take even more significant steps forward. It has enhanced the staff's capacity to deliver high-quality and innovative instruction. The staff and administration, the School Committee, and the community should take pride in all that has been accomplished and in the groundwork that has been laid for the future.

Much work lies ahead. Important work. How much of that work we complete and how well we complete it will be greatly affected by the level of funding that is available to the district from local, state, and federal sources. No doubt, difficult choices will need to be made. As always, the district will turn to the community for support in making decisions and in striving to reach its goals. And, as always, the district will seek to work hand-in-hand with the community to ensure that every student has an equitable opportunity to take advantage of the high quality of education that permeates every classroom. Deep appreciation is extended to parents and the community for the ongoing support of the important work that is being done on behalf of the outstanding students of the Andover Public Schools.

STATUS REPORT

As we consider the accomplishments and the progress that has been made during the five-year period encompassed by this strategic plan, it behooves us to frame the work within the context that the district experienced during that time. From 2011-12 to 2015-16, overall enrollment remained relatively constant. However, there was a 9 percent increase in the number of special education students, and the proportion of APS students on IEPs increased from 16.3 percent to 18.1 percent. At the same time, the number of English language learners almost doubled from 91 to 176. Both of these increases required additional staffing and support. This time period was also accompanied by a significant recession that limited budget increases to an average of 3.4 percent. The constraints on the budget required difficult negotiations with our unions, whose deeply appreciated concessions during the bargaining process were critical in helping us sustain momentum.

Throughout the past five years, test results have remained consistent; however, given recent changes in school and district leadership and the ongoing renewal of the curriculum, we anticipate seeing improvement in assessment scores and other performance measures in the future. The level of progress we have achieved during a period of significant constraints and challenges speaks to everyone's commitment to the strategic plan and to the dedication of the staff, the district leadership, and particularly the School Committee.

In the process of executing any long-range plan, circumstances change along the way. Some targets are met or even exceeded. Others are witness to progress, but not completion. Still others are unable to be tackled because of insufficient time or funding or other obstacles. And some are intentionally abandoned with the recognition that they are no longer the best path to attaining the organization's mission and vision.

So it has been with the APS Five-Year Strategic Plan. The district's strategic plan articulates our commitment to providing a world-class education in an innovative, inclusive, student-focused and fiscally stable educational system. In this status report, we will begin by describing the most significant accomplishments of 2011-2016 as they pertain to each of the plan's five goals. We will then discuss both the tasks that are underway but need to be completed and the work that is on track but needs to be sustained. Finally, we will look at some ideas that we may want to consider in our next strategic plan.

WHAT WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED

GOAL 1 is to advance curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the district and to provide quality materials and meaningful activities that engage all students in developing the knowledge and skills that will enable them to thrive in an ever-changing world. Vital to this effort is a strong system of support at the leadership level.

The district has formed a curricular leadership team and has updated curricula in a focused way that will improve students' academic outcomes.

Program coordination and curricular consistency across schools at each level are critical to moving the district forward as a whole. It is important that parents and the community recognize that students have excellent and equitable educational opportunities, regardless of which school they attend. Over the course of this strategic plan, we have hired a Program Coordinator for all of the 6-12 and K-12 content areas. Together with the principals and teachers who serve on the Curriculum Advisory Boards, this leadership team is responsible for ensuring that the curriculum and the instructional processes are reviewed and evaluated, programs are vetted and selected, and support for program implementation is in place. In the last two years, we have substantively upgraded and updated our K-12 curriculum in math, science, and writing. Also, over the course of the past several years, we have partially restored and

enhanced the art and music programs that had been eliminated during the nationwide recession. To address students' ongoing social-emotional wellbeing and to foster their leadership capabilities, we have renewed our commitment to the Open Circle Program at the elementary level and we offer a variety of initiatives (Crew Time, Integrated Team Time, and Where Everyone Belongs) in the middle schools. We have also created a systematic schedule so that curriculum renewal can continue on a regular cycle over the coming years.

The district has dedicated a leadership position to the promotion of innovation and community engagement.

The leadership infrastructure was further strengthened by the employment of a Director of Strategic Innovation, who is incorporating concepts of design thinking and creative problem solving into the curriculum, while simultaneously fostering opportunities to link APS students and schools with the community. This initiative has already borne fruit in the form of the Andover High School Innovation Lab and Virtual Sandbox. Meanwhile, each of the elementary schools has piloted the use of Maker Studios to increase creative problem solving in the areas of design and engineering.

The district has created programs to better support the learning needs of individual students.

In the midst of the tremendous amount of progress that has been accomplished in terms of the regular program curriculum, coupled with the desire to integrate creative approaches into the teaching-learning process, the needs of specific groups of learners are not being forgotten. Over the past five years, APS has established a Language Enriched Academic Program (LEAP) for students in grades 3-8 and similar language-based program classes for students at Andover High School who exhibit dyslexia and/or language-based learning disabilities; collaborated with North Andover in launching the Transition Opportunities Program (TOP) to help young adults with disabilities develop daily living, personal-social and occupational skills; and implemented major structural changes to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the English as a Second Language program. The district also restructured existing programs for students with cognitive disabilities (Excel) and students on the autism spectrum to provide programming continuity from PreK to age 22.

GOAL 2 aims to provide staff and students with a technology-rich environment that not only uses technology to deliver instruction and measure learning, but also supports students in becoming confident users of all types of technology and digital communication as tools that help them achieve their objectives.

The district and the town have jointly upgraded and modernized the technology infrastructure to improve staff and student productivity.

This goal received a remarkable boost when, in 2011, the Town and Schools of Andover entered into a Memorandum of Understanding that created a new unified Information Technology function. The following spring, the Town's voters approved a \$2.5M bond to upgrade technology infrastructure, improve staff productivity, and usher in a new generation of digital learning. Those public funds have changed the face of teaching and learning throughout APS.

The district has introduced a blended, technology-rich learning environment for students.

Continued collaboration between the district's Department of Digital Learning and the town's Information Technology department has led to the creation of technology-rich digital classrooms where students combine traditional print media with appropriate technology tools and resources in a blended learning experience. The underlying network architecture was rebuilt to support a markedly increased volume in both wired and wireless traffic. Every teacher received a Macbook laptop computer and every classroom has either an interactive projector or interactive whiteboard. The iAndover initiative is supporting cost-efficient progress toward a 1:1 computer environment by employing a Bring Your Own Device strategy in grades 6-12. Students are now using the Internet to collaborate on projects across

classrooms and across schools and even to engage with students in other countries. A wireless computing strategy for APS was made available in all schools and classrooms and in district offices, along with multiple portals of entry to enhance communication among staff and between parents and staff. Nearing completion is a plan to upgrade/convert the existing phone system to VOIP, replacing aging school intercoms with an integrated communications environment that will allow for rapid cross-building communication during an emergency.

The district has provided support staff to promote effective use of technology by teachers and students.

Hardware, software and other forms of technological infrastructure are undoubtedly critical in today's educational environment. However, the benefits of these devices often go unrealized if there is no one to teach and support staff in their use. To ensure that we would achieve full advantage of the new technology, the district added a Director of Digital Learning, plus enough Digital Learning Specialists to serve every school on either a full-time or part-time basis. The Digital Learning Specialists provide direct instruction and professional development to teachers so they may differentiate instruction to meet the diverse needs of our students. For example, the Specialists have promoted cross-class, cross-district collaboration and communication through the online digital Web 2.0 Tool. Teachers are now using software applications such as Aspen, Google Apps for Education, and BaselineEdge, which have improved the efficiency of student grading, reporting, and record keeping. In addition, the Digital Learning Department has offered multiple professional development opportunities for administrators and support staff. Thanks to this multi-pronged approach, over the past five years APS has significantly upgraded and modernized its technology infrastructure so it is capable of performing at the level required.

GOAL 3 speaks to the need to recruit, employ, retain, evaluate and further develop high-quality teachers, administrators and support staff.

The district has supported extensive efforts to attract the best talent to the system.

The Human Resources Department assisted other departments in recruiting and selecting high-quality personnel to fill new positions in the areas of curriculum, technology, and innovation. The district also participated in multiple teacher recruitment fairs each year, advertised positions in print and on-line media, and encouraged participation from principals in the recruiting and hiring process. The district has succeeded in attracting and selecting highly capable principals to fill leadership vacancies at the school level.

The district has provided mentoring for teachers and administrators as well as professional development for current staff.

New teachers participated in a formal orientation program and were assigned mentors for their first year in the classroom. Through contract negotiations, the guidelines for teachers seeking to earn professional development credit were strengthened to require that the content of such professional development be substantive in nature. The district also invested more deeply in enabling teachers to participate in conferences and other professional development opportunities outside the district. The district established a Leader-to-Leader program to develop and strengthen leadership skills among current administrators. Across role groups, the district's annual professional development plan was linked to the priorities in the strategic plan.

The district has effectively implemented the new teacher and administrator evaluation model to provide higher levels of accountability and encourage professional growth.

Some of the most important professional development work undertaken over the past few years was in relation to the new Massachusetts educator evaluation model, which was adopted and implemented district-wide. The new state standards and evaluation rubrics were put in place for all licensed staff, including administrators, teachers, and nurses. In collaboration with the Andover Education Association,

all district evaluators were trained in the new system. Evaluation teams, composed of teachers and administrators from each building, were instrumental in training and supporting teachers as they learned the new system. The adoption of these more rigorous standards and evaluation tools will serve to encourage professional growth and raise the level of professional performance.

GOAL 4 addresses the need to have and implement a comprehensive communication plan.

The district has established a reliable communication network including multiple applications that support communication with constituents.

Communication is the cornerstone of any organization desiring to strengthen its connection and engagement with those it serves and with its employees. One of the most significant successes of the past five years has been laying the groundwork for a reliable network that supports website, email, voicemail and constituent-wide communication. The community can access information through the APS website and parents receive important immediate information through the Connect5 messaging system. The district phased in the ASPEN parent portal feature over a number of years and it is now used as the reporting structure at all grade levels. Parents can access their children's class information, helping to strengthen home-school relationships. Although the district has not implemented the formal use of social media as a means of communication, increasing numbers of professional staff are using tweets, blogs, and similar avenues to engage parents, students, and colleagues.

The district has sustained consistent communication with parent and school groups.

While technology-based communication has introduced many efficiencies in terms of both cost and time, it does not replace the value that is derived from face-to-face interaction, both on an individual basis and with parent organizations. The Townwide PTO—which had not met for a number of years—now meets regularly with the superintendent to share district information and foster coordination of effort among school PTOs. The SEPAC officers and the Director of Student Services meet on a regular basis to keep the lines of communication open and to strengthen the relationship between the parents of students on IEPs and the schools. The district has also hosted a number of community forums on various issues.

The district has fostered and sustained important partnerships with community groups.

Educating children requires the proverbial village, which entails partnering with community members, businesses, and other agencies. The district has developed strong partnerships with Merrimack College for student interns and fellowships; with The Center at Punchard (Andover Senior Center) to bring committed senior volunteers into our schools; and with the Andover Coalition for Education, the Andona Society, the Service Club of Andover, and the Andover Rotary Club in support of district innovation and school initiatives.

The district has engaged with the town in an innovative and cost-effective partnership through a shared staffing model in human resources, technology and facilities.

Key to the district's success over the past five years has been the relationship with the town. The shared staffing model in human resources, technology and facilities has been exceptionally effective. APS and the town also partnered to address health concerns and safety protocols and have initiated a joint project to examine and evaluate all of the town buildings.

GOAL 5 focuses on the need to support a fiscally stable educational system and maintenance of its infrastructure. Such stability is essential to the long-range planning and implementation of facilities, staffing, and programs.

Lack of stability has a negative impact on many aspects of a district's operations. It affects programming decisions when district leaders are unsure whether there will be funds to expand a successful program or begin a new one. It affects staff morale and staff performance when employees worry about job security.

And it affects leadership priorities when time and effort that could better be devoted to improving student outcomes must instead be allocated to the design of multiple budget scenarios.

The district has instituted software applications that create administrative efficiencies.

In an effort to promote stability for instructional programs, during the course of the 2011-2016 Strategic Plan APS instituted a number of administrative efficiencies. For example, we put into place several software applications, including one that supports a work order system for facilities and another that provides an online payment system for student fees (athletic registration, bus passes) and meals.

The district has enhanced the clarity and transparency of its financial reports.

Stability is also increased if all parties have a clear understanding of the district's financial needs and resources. Accordingly, major revisions were made to the FY 2017 Preliminary Budget Book to foster accountability, and a number of comprehensive financial reports were issued to provide greater transparency about the district's operations. The advantage of such transparency and understanding were demonstrated over the past few years when the school, town and community collaborated to design, fund and build the new Bancroft Elementary School facility.

RECOMMENDATIONS: WHAT WE NEED TO COMPLETE

In addition to the remarkable array of achievements outlined above, a number of other strategies have been underway since 2011. The work on these strategies is partially completed and is recommended to continue into the future until each task is completed. However, such continuation will depend upon the allocation of funds for this purpose in the next strategic plan.

The district needs to continue the curriculum renewal cycle, particularly in the areas of English language arts and social studies.

Of particular urgency is the need to continue with a disciplined curriculum renewal cycle by updating and upgrading the curriculum for K-12 English language arts and for PreK-5 social studies. Progress on the latter will be facilitated now that the district has expanded the role of the Program Coordinator for social studies in grades 6-12 to include grades PreK-5. We also need to finish digitally mapping the district curriculum in a database so that teachers and administrators can see the sequential flow between courses and grade levels. Access to a searchable curriculum database allows teachers to collaborate, to avoid segments of overlap in both content and skills, and to build on each other's units of study. Related to that database, we need to create additional common assessments for the core courses. This work is currently at various stages of development at the middle and high school levels in math, science, social studies, and English. As each of these curriculum and assessment efforts is completed, it will trigger the need for related professional development.

The district needs to continue its implementation of iAndover in the elementary grades and its implementation of the new high school schedule.

An additional four years will be required to fully implement the iAndover initiative, moving classrooms toward 1:1 in terms of both equipment and online instructional materials. This work includes helping staff become skilled and comfortable with the incorporation of blended learning and personalized learning into their daily classroom approach. At the high school level, transition to the 7+H schedule remains a high priority; extensive planning work has been done, but implementation must await the necessary funding.

The district needs to continue its efforts to increase operational efficiencies, improve facilities, and strengthen the professional talent of all staff.

Other important work that needs to be completed includes operationalizing the Business Office plan to convert the steps in generating requisitions and purchase orders from a manual process to one that is electronic, thereby saving time and labor and reducing errors. Additional efficiencies would derive from implementing a software program that could automate many of the processes related to recruiting, screening, tracking, and hiring applicants for district positions. We also want to collaborate with the town in developing a long-term facilities improvement plan based on the final report to be issued by MGT of America. One such improvement that is near the top of the district's list is the renovation of the high school's library media center. We will also want to consider developing orientation and mentoring strategies to support new employees who are not part of the teaching ranks.

RECOMMENDATIONS: WHAT WE NEED TO SUSTAIN

Other important efforts from the 2011-2016 Strategic Plan are on track but are also ongoing. In other words, they do not have a defined completion point, but instead are supportive activities or processes that need to be sustained if we are to continue making the level of progress we have seen in the past five years. Again, continuation is dependent upon funding in the next strategic plan.

The district needs to sustain the professional development of staff in order to enhance their capacity to deliver the highest quality of instruction and program improvement.

The most obvious of these activities is the provision of high-quality professional development for all staff. Teachers are especially interested in expanding and deepening their ability to incorporate project-based learning (PBL) and social and emotional learning (SEL) into the curriculum as two means of engaging students in the learning process. Through project-based learning, students gain knowledge by tackling a complex and meaningful problem for an extended period of time and often explain their work in a public presentation. Through social and emotional learning, students learn to set goals, feel empathy for others, manage their own emotions, establish positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. As another facet of PBL, teachers want to offer students more opportunities for externships and internships that connect the classroom curriculum with the real world. In terms of professional development, an ongoing priority is to focus on the continual strengthening of skills among staff in all district capacities— instructional, administrative, and support—to make effective and efficient use of the ever-changing array of hardware and software in order to enhance student learning and staff productivity. To ensure that our new teacher evaluation model is serving to enhance teacher performance and growth, we would do well to solicit formal feedback from teachers and principals, by means of surveys or focus groups.

The district needs to sustain and enhance its communication with non-English-speaking parents and with local corporations and organizations.

Some of our hoped-for ongoing work will involve parents and community. Given the rapidly increasing population of English language learners, the district is eager to continue enhancing its translation services to better communicate with parents, as well as ensure that staff members know how to access those services. We also wish to maintain our existing partnerships with local companies—which graciously support various initiatives through the voluntary efforts of company leaders and staff plus corporate support for particular programs—and simultaneously reach out to more companies that could offer meaningful assistance and involvement in our schools.

The district needs to enhance its overall parent and community communication efforts through more current two-way communications systems and through staff support that provides leadership and consistency for this communication.

The district benefits greatly from hearing the perspectives of parents and community members. We want to establish an effective on-line system of two-way communication so we can gather feedback and respond to concerns. To maintain and build trust, such two-way communication must be carried out in a timely way. The much-needed enhancements to the district's communication activities will be dependent upon the allocation of staff dedicated for these purposes.

RECOMMENDATIONS: WHAT WE MAY WANT TO UNDERTAKE

Given that we want to build upon the many accomplishments of the past five years and perhaps even accelerate our rate of progress, it would be wise begin a conversation now about the direction of the district's next strategic plan. The two sections above lay out a significant amount of work that could and probably should be included in this plan in order to achieve targets and sustain the momentum achieved during 2011-2016. However, it must be noted that many of these tasks will require funding. As always, the district leadership and the School Committee will have to consider priorities and make some difficult choices. Following are several objectives that we may want to include in our discussions about the district's future direction.

- Perhaps foremost is the need to keep working toward a sufficiently strong and stable financial foundation. Even the best plans will gather dust on a shelf if adequate funding is not made available.
- In light of the global economy and the growing interdependence of nations, elementary and middle school students would benefit from increased opportunities to study multiple world languages and cultures.
- Our schools are at different stages in their work on both assessing student growth and analyzing the results to inform instruction. We should significantly enhance the appropriateness and consistency of progress monitoring and reporting among schools at all levels.
- Our students may benefit from greater access to digital textbooks and source materials, particularly in the middle and high schools and particularly in curricular areas such as science where currency of information is important. In some cases, digital textbooks may be appropriate replacements for traditional print media.
- Students with unique learning needs would benefit from an expansion of universally designed curriculum and the routine integration of assistive technology tools.
- Blended learning that incorporates the use of technology would be an advantage to students at all grade levels. High school students would benefit from the opportunity to enroll in more virtual online courses in order to pursue advanced or specialized classes not available at AHS. A reasonable expectation is that every student at AHS would enroll in at least one virtual course before attending college.
- The district would benefit from the development of a two-way communication system that offers a sustained online method for receiving and responding to perspectives, concerns, and feedback from parents and community members—perhaps including translation services when non-English-speaking parents want to initiate contact with the district.
- Our communication efforts lack sufficient staff to support a two-way communication program, provide information on a regular basis to local media, and respond most effectively to district

issues and community crises. It would be highly beneficial to provide at least one additional communication staff person to lead and sustain these efforts.

- Based on the results of the facilities study, the preschool program will need to be relocated. In addition, the study indicates a need for significant renovations in, additions to and/or replacements of other school buildings over the next ten years.
- Our evaluation models for teaching assistants, custodians, and independent positions should be updated to align with the new model and rubrics already in place for licensed personnel.
- We need to find an effective way to expose our students to a more diverse staff of teachers and administrators and, at the same time, make cultural competency a key plank of professional development for all staff.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The 2011-2016 Strategic Plan has achieved much for the district and the community. In essence, it has set in place the curricular, technological and professional development infrastructure necessary for the district to take even more significant steps forward. It has enhanced our staff's capacity to deliver high-quality and innovative instruction. The keys to any strategic plan lie in sustaining the gains that have been made and continuing to build on the efforts of the past. Providing continued support for innovation and enhancing staff capacity and curricular improvement will be essential to ensure that the gains of the past five years make a difference well into the future.

We live in a time of rapid change. Although the strategic plan of 2011-16 served us well, a strategic plan that remains static for a five-year period is no longer viable. As we look ahead, we may be well advised to develop instead what is known as an "agile strategic plan," that is, one that can more readily accommodate revisions based on changing circumstances and the latest data. Within this framework, we would still develop long-range strategic targets and pursue incremental strategies for moving toward those targets on an annual basis. What would be different from our current strategic plan is the way we handle the strategies. For the first year, we would devise two or three strategies that we believe would help us reach each target or make progress toward it. At the end of the year, we would report on the results and alter the strategies as needed for the second year to keep us moving toward our targets. Thus, an agile strategic plan would remain current over time and would enable us to take advantage of shifts in priorities and resources to better meet our goals. However, better definition of our targets would prompt even better allocation of our resources.

Finally, educational funding is essential if the district is to provide expected services, maintain compliance with state and federal regulations, and support investment in the strategic plan to enable the district to move forward with learning opportunities for APS students. The strategic plan is not a wish list; rather, it reflects the need to grow and improve our schools in a manner consistent with the vision, mission, values, and goals of APS and the high expectations of the Andover community. We invite everyone in the community to join us in this effort, and we thank you for your ongoing support of the important work that is being done every day on behalf of the outstanding students of the Andover Public Schools.

PROGRESS REPORT ON STRATEGIC AREAS OF FOCUS

STRATEGIC AREA OF FOCUS: HIGH ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL

Goal 1: APS students will develop the “habits of mind” that underlie critical and creative thinking, effective communication, collaborative problem solving, and responsible citizenship needed to thrive in an increasingly complex and evolving global society.

Strategy 1.1: Ensure a well-sequenced PK–12 curriculum, instruction, and assessment system that is relevant, rigorous, consistent, and articulated so APS students are engaged in challenging academic experiences grounded in essential 21st century “habits of mind.”

A leadership support system is vital to the research, development, and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment that are consistent across schools at each level and that support vertical alignment in PreK-12 learning targets. For Andover, this critical leadership infrastructure comes in the form of the PreK-12, 6-12, and PreK-5 Program Coordinators and Directors. Over the course of this strategic plan, we have put in place a coordinator in each of the 6-12 and K-12 content areas. This instructional team is responsible for ensuring that the curriculum and instruction are reviewed and evaluated, programs are vetted and selected, and support for program implementation is in place. In addition, the program coordinators have been essential in setting the stage for sharing ideas and adopting innovation across the district. The district’s intentional investment in these positions is paying increasing dividends as time goes by. Thanks in large part to the leadership provided by these coordinators and directors, we have substantively upgraded and updated our curriculum in math, science, and writing. We now need to turn our attention to English language arts and social studies. A systematic schedule has been created so that curriculum renewal can continue on a regular cycle over the coming years.

Mapping the curriculum digitally in a database makes the plan more explicit and gives teachers and administrators the ability to see the flow of the sequence from one level to the next and from one course to the next. Access to a searchable curriculum database allows teachers to collaborate, to avoid segments of overlap in both content and skills, and to scaffold and build on each other’s units of study. This practice is still in its infancy in APS, but is vital to continued growth.

Parents, teachers, and administrators understand the need to create engaging learning opportunities for our students. One such model that we are implementing is Project-Based Learning from the Buck Institute in California. In the past three years, the district has provided over 70 middle school teachers and 25 elementary/high school teachers with professional development about this methodology. In addition to the focused PD, three of the six early release days in the past three years have been devoted to teachers working collaboratively to create curriculum units that utilize this form of instruction.

Engaging opportunities for student learning are provided more explicitly at the high school through the new pathways we have created and through the emerging partnerships that have shaped the externship and internship programs. Examples include the Global Pathway, which currently has 25 students enrolled, and the Environmental Sustainability Internship Course.

As the district strives to strengthen students’ global awareness and citizenship, implementing a robust world language program at the elementary level and increasing world language opportunities at the middle level are increasingly important. Global citizenship suggests that all of our students need to understand world cultures as well as spoken languages.

COMPLETED

- Program Coordinators were put in place for literacy (PreK-5); for English language arts (6-12); and for mathematics, science, social studies, fine arts and world languages/ESL (PreK-12).
- Curriculum Steering and Advisory Boards were re-established and program reviews were completed for PreK-8 mathematics, PreK-8 science, and 6-12 social studies.
- We updated and upgraded the curriculum in math, science, and writing.
- Professional development was offered in Project-Based Learning (three years) and in EDLeader 21 (three years, for administrators).
- At the high school, the Program of Studies was revamped and the first cohort (25 sophomores) is participating in service learning projects under the newly created Global Pathways program.
- Also at the high school, students are exploring new learning opportunities through Innovation lab and Virtual Sandbox.

IN PROGRESS

- Teachers need more professional development support in Project-Based Learning and interdisciplinary instructional methods.
- Mapping of the curriculum is still underway.
- We are seeking to expand our external partnerships
 - ESIC Environmental Sustainability Community Projects (AHS)
 - ES Pfizer-sponsored “Bacteria all around us” (South ES)
 - Pfizer-sponsored internships (AHS–SpEd)
 - Everfi (NHL - Bruins), Future Goals/Radius Programs, free online STEM enrichment courses (grades 4-10)
 - Energize Andover, Plants Facilities, Schneider Electric, energy monitoring analysis (AHS)

NOT YET MET

- The curriculum for English language arts and social studies needs to be updated and enhanced; at the elementary level, we need to provide social studies reading materials as the content for the reading program.
- More time needs to be devoted to world languages and cultures at the middle school (add a fifth day) and elementary levels.
- We have not implemented explicit instruction and assessment of the “habits of mind” (the 4Cs–critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration).

Strategy 1.2: Develop and implement a comprehensive assessment plan, using multiple forms of assessments, that is shared with students, teachers, administrators and parents.

Knowing what to assess, creating meaningful assessments, assessing student growth, analyzing the assessment data, and reporting on the results are critical facets of the instructional process. All of our schools are working on this important area, but are at different stages in their progress.

Each elementary school has a clearly defined tiered instruction model that uses assessment data to inform instruction. However, at this point in time, the analysis of student work and assessment data at the upper grade levels is less structured. It is sometimes done by departments or by teachers who share

common courses. Teachers may review exam results collaboratively to determine strengths and weaknesses of both the course and the instruction.

Common assessments are being developed and administered in each of the core courses. Social studies teachers created sets of document-based questions to assess specific skills. English teachers have collaborated on key topics to develop open-response questions that allow students to express what they know in greater depth. Math and science teachers identified concepts and created pre- and post-exams that identify growth. This process has provided teachers and their program coordinators with the framework and structure to discuss instruction, student responses, and student progress in the content areas. This collaborative review of student work is relatively new, but with practice will become part of the climate and culture of our schools.

COMPLETED

- Reading data teams were established at the elementary schools.
- Common assessments were developed and implemented at the middle and high school levels.
- The district established after-school time dedicated to assessment analysis.

IN PROGRESS

- We are identifying benchmarks and assessments for elementary math.
- Clearly defined rubrics are starting to be used for performance-based assessments.
- Teachers are learning to make consistent use of protocols and processes for analyzing assessment results at all levels in all content areas.

NOT YET MET

- We have not begun to establish benchmarks and assessments for elementary reading, writing, and science. We have yet to develop a K-5 consistent system of progress monitoring other than report cards.
- We lack a standards-based reporting structure that aligns to the 2011 MA Curriculum Frameworks at the elementary and middle school levels.
- The assessment of critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration is not part of the student record.

Strategy 1.3: Ensure that students have diverse learning experiences that evidence differentiated instruction, an understanding of learning styles, and real world experiences through PreK–12 classroom instruction.

Over the past five years the Andover Public Schools has created programs to better address the needs of specific groups of learners. For example, for students with dyslexia and/or related language-based learning disabilities, the district established a Language Enriched Academic Program (LEAP) for grades 3-8. The district is currently engaged in a review of LEAP to further enhance the program. In addition, the district collaborated with North Andover in launching the Transition Opportunities Program (TOP) to help young adults with disabilities develop daily living, personal-social and occupational skills. The district has also initiated a transition program for students in grades 9 through 12 who struggle with anxiety and its impact on school attendance, and is seeking ways to scale the program for students in grades 7 and 8.

Andover has experienced a significant increase in English Language Learners (ELLs). As a result, the English as a Second Language program has undergone major structural changes to ensure its effectiveness and efficiency. In the coming years, this program will go through a formal review of

curricular and instructional practices. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has issued professional development requirements for both core academic and non-core teachers who serve ELLs. We have been able to support these new mandates using our own staff and facilities.

Each of the elementary schools has piloted the use of Maker Studios to increase creative problem solving in the areas of design and engineering. The middle schools have revamped the engineering program to expand the LEGO Mindstorms robotics program, which builds on the elementary problem-solving experiences. The high school is piloting the Andover Innovation Lab curriculum, which uses Stanford University's design thinking/engineering protocol. That new curriculum, along with the senior CAPStone research projects, will serve as a foundation for additional experiences that give AHS students a chance to apply their learning outside the school walls and beyond the school day. In addition to these in-school opportunities, the district offers Dual Enrollment for interested and qualified high school students through programs such as edX Online Learning, Brigham Young Online Learning, Merrimack College, and Middlebury Interactive. Students' creativity has also been supported through the restoration of the PreK-12 art and music programs that had been eliminated as a result of financial cutbacks during the recession.

COMPLETED

- The district has established and implemented a Language Enriched Academic Program (LEAP) at elementary and middle school levels, the Transition Opportunities Program (TOP) partnership with North Andover for 18–22-year-olds, and a transitional alternative program for students in grades 9–12 who are struggling with school-related anxiety.
- The ESL program made gains in hiring, established a summer program for ELLs, and complied with DESE's mandates that core academic teachers who have ELLs in their classrooms must participate in a Sheltered English Immersion Course and that non-core teachers who serve ELLs must participate in an experience that provides a basic understanding of how to facilitate ELLs' progress.
- We developed two district handbooks, one that explains the tiered instruction model and one that details the special education referral process.
- We restored and enhanced the PreK-12 programs in art and music.

IN PROGRESS

- The district is providing a variety of blended learning options to meet students' varied needs.
- The district is addressing state mandates by offering professional development relative to Sheltered English Immersion programming.
- The elementary schools are piloting Maker Studios, while AHS pilots senior CAPStone projects and the Andover Innovation Lab curriculum.
- Based on an evaluation of our language-based programs, the district is improving both regular education interventions and language-based programs to provide additional early identification, progress monitoring, and intervention for students with language-based learning disabilities.

NOT YET MET

- Still to be developed is an alternative program, similar to the AHS Transitions Program, for students in grades 6–8 who need support for emotional challenges such as anxiety and depression.

Strategy 1.4: Ensure that each school has a strong and healthy school culture that promotes a sense of participation, wellness, safety, and security so students develop the social, emotional, and wellness competencies that will enable them to be self-aware, to self-manage, and to make responsible decisions.

Our schools are committed to the social-emotional wellbeing of all students. The elementary schools have used the Open Circle Program for more than a dozen years and it is an accepted part of the school day and culture.

Each middle school provides unique opportunities for students to develop leadership capabilities. Wood Hill offers Crew Time, Doherty provides Integrated Team Time, and West Middle supports individual initiatives through its Where Everyone Belongs (WEB) program. The WEB program has been so successful that the other middle schools are researching the program for possible adoption.

The high school has been researching ways to personalize the AHS student experience. The administration, faculty, and staff have created a powerful plan for a student advisory program; however, that program cannot be implemented until additional funding enables the 7 + H schedule to go into effect.

COMPLETED

- The Open Circle curriculum and program continue to be well integrated into the elementary school culture.

IN PROGRESS

- We are moving toward a consistent advisory program across all three middle schools.

NOT YET MET

- Implementation of the high school advisory program awaits the necessary funding.

STRATEGIC AREA OF FOCUS: TECHNOLOGY-SUPPORTED LEARNING

Goal 2: APS students will be immersed in interactive, technology-rich classrooms that support instruction and student learning to prepare them for a society dominated by digital communication.

Strategy 2.1: Provide a robust wireless technological infrastructure (including hardware, software, support, and training) to support classroom instruction, collaboration tools, and administrative functions for students, teachers, and staff.

In 2011, the Town and Schools of Andover entered into a Memorandum of Understanding that created a new unified Information Technology function. In the spring of 2012, the Town's voters approved a \$2.5M bond to upgrade technology infrastructure across both entities (plus Public Safety and Library), improve staff productivity, and usher in a new generation of digital learning. Those public funds have changed the face of teaching and learning throughout APS.

All of the district's 400+ classrooms and the district offices have been equipped with wireless access points. The underlying network architecture was rebuilt to support the increased volume in both wired and wireless traffic. These changes created a much more stable and powerful platform for delivering digital learning and for managing district functions. Information sharing and management have also benefited from the addition of parent and teacher portals.

COMPLETED

- A multi-year technology plan was developed for APS with the support of the Town's newly hired Chief Information Officer.
- Wireless network capabilities have been expanded and upgraded, providing an improved backbone for enhanced access and control of internal and external network use while ensuring appropriate security and adequate support to sustain the network.
- A wireless computing strategy for APS is available in all schools and classrooms and in district offices. Appropriate technology infrastructure was included in the design and construction of Bancroft Elementary School.
- Multiple portals of entry have been made available to enhance communication among staff and between parents and staff.
- A new Casper device management platform was instituted to allow remote support and update of all Apple devices.

IN PROGRESS

- Research is ongoing to identify any additional resources that will enable the infrastructure to remain up-to-date and that will maintain its security as technology evolves worldwide.
- A plan is being developed to replace aging school intercoms with an integrated communications environment that will allow for rapid cross-building communication during an emergency.

NOT YET MET

- We have not identified a robust learning management system that will support a blended learning environment, i.e., one that consistently and effectively incorporates technology into the teaching-learning process.

Strategy 2.2: Create technology-rich digital classrooms where students use appropriate and safe technology tools and resources to support the learning and teaching process.

Continued collaboration between the district's Department of Digital Learning and the town's Information Technology department has led to the creation of technology-rich digital classrooms where students combine traditional print media with appropriate technology tools and resources in a blended learning experience. As part of this process, the district provided teachers with current laptop computers and full access to a robust wireless network. All classrooms contain either interactive whiteboards or interactive projectors. Teachers use these tools to create and present effective instructional materials with the support of ongoing professional development and hands-on assistance from the Department of Digital Learning. In addition, we launched the iAndover 1:1 pilot, which is a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) initiative to expand access to technology within the classroom. Preliminary response to this program has been extremely enthusiastic.

Teachers are now using software such as Aspen, Google Apps for Education, and BaselineEdge, which have improved the efficiency of student grading, reporting, and record keeping. Additional resources that support more interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches have also been made available, facilitating content sharing across grade levels, school-wide, and district-wide.

The department of Digital Learning has provided teachers with learning experiences that promote cross-class, cross-district collaboration and communication through the online digital Web 2.0 Tool. Many steps are involved in creating an educational environment that supports this work. There has been a shift toward recognizing the benefit of using technology in the classroom to support teaching and learning, but there must be additional work to connect the use of technology with district and content goals. One step in this direction included providing teachers with time, support, and focused professional development that ties content and technology use, particularly in connection with Project-Based Learning. An additional step will include working with program and building administrators to create a unified vision of technology use in all classrooms that is consistent and attainable and that aligns with district expectations.

The district continues to explore the role of blended learning within the classroom. Some students have used the Internet to collaborate on projects across classrooms and across schools and even to engage with students in other countries. The district also continues to adopt and expand Universal Design for Learning (UDL) curriculum and to promote the integration of assistive technology tools to meet the needs of its diverse learners. A professional learning group has been investigating various blended learning strategies to determine how they can be utilized in the classroom and shared across the district. Teachers involved in the iAndover 1:1 Learning Initiative participated in a professional learning group through a blended learning model. Blended learning models are being implemented in some classrooms, but use throughout the district is inconsistent. Additional work is needed in order to provide staff with a clear understanding of how blended learning and personalized learning can be incorporated within their classrooms.

For FY15, the district piloted a BYOD 1:1 Learning Initiative at the middle school level in grade eight at West Middle and Doherty and in grade seven at Wood Hill. An advisory group composed of teachers, administrators, and parents met and discussed the initiative, reported their findings, and made recommendations to expand the BYOD program. Accordingly, FY15 saw the initiative expand to all 8th grade students, to 9th grade students in their ELA and social studies classes, and to 7th graders at Wood Hill Middle School. In addition, the 2:1 mobile lab program was implemented at the Bancroft Elementary School through their building project. For FY17, the iAndover BYOD 1:1 Learning Initiative will be expanded to include grades 6 - 10. In addition, 5th grade students across the district will be provided with laptops to use during the school day.

In 2015, the district hired a Director of Strategic Innovation to lead, inspire, and support innovative approaches to teaching and learning; develop districtwide curricula that incorporate concepts of design thinking and creative problem solving; and foster engagement between the public schools and members

of the Andover community and other partners. Outcomes to date include the creation of the AHS Innovation Lab and Virtual Sandbox.

With the expansion of the iAndover 1:1 Learning Initiative, Open Educational Resources (EOR) and digital textbooks are being introduced in many content areas. The shift to digital content curation and repositories has begun and will continue in the coming year. The full iAndover Pilot report can be found at <http://bit.ly/1WoaSna>

COMPLETED

- We employed a Director of Strategic Innovation to lead the district toward exciting new applications of technology that will expand student learning both in the classroom and beyond.
- We inaugurated a successful BYOD pilot with our 8th grade teams, later expanding it to grades 7 and 9.
- All teachers have laptops (600+ Macbooks distributed since 2013) and access to a robust wireless network.
- All middle and high school classrooms (250+) were upgraded in 2012-13 to include “short throw” projectors and companion Apple TVs. These projectors are fully interactive, allowing students and teachers to manipulate on-screen objects with a digital pen. The secondary schools’ existing 125 “smart boards” were repurposed to provide complete coverage of elementary classrooms. From 2012 to 2014, more than 1000 new iPads and several hundred Macbooks were distributed to facilitate student learning.
- New Apple-based labs were deployed in 2014 at Andover High School (graphics lab) and West Middle School (music lab).
- Selected teachers are using software applications such as Aspen, Google Classroom, Google Apps for Education (Cloud-based), and BaselineEdge, which have improved the efficiency of student grading, reporting, and record keeping.

IN PROGRESS

- The district is expanding iAndover to include grades 6-10 (BYOD) and grade 5 (laptops provided during the school day).
- Research is underway to identify additional resources that will support the integration of technology with curriculum.
- Additional work is needed to expand and integrate assistive technology to promote curricular access by all students, particularly in conjunction with Universal Design for Learning.
- We conducted a PARCC pilot, using technology to administer tests to middle school students.

NOT YET MET

- We have not yet tackled the digital curation of resources, which will help district staff make better and more efficient decisions in the selection and application of software for particular needs.
- We have not completed the districtwide shift to the consistent implementation of blended classroom environments.
- We still hope to pilot a Virtual Desktop in an effort to reduce students’ reliance on hardware that is located in labs.

- We have only limited access to virtual online courses that could particularly supplement the high school curriculum.

Strategy 2.3: Provide professional development opportunities to support APS teachers, support staff, and administrators in the integration of technology into (a) teaching and learning, and (b) business and administrative functions.

The Department of Digital Learning was expanded so that every building has either a shared or full-time Digital Learning Specialist. The Digital Learning Specialists provide direct instruction and professional development to teachers so they may differentiate instruction to meet the diverse needs of our students.

Integrating technology into teaching/learning and business/administrative functions is an ongoing process. Training structures are in place to support instructional staff with their digital classroom needs. The Digital Learning Department offers professional development opportunities to support APS teachers, support staff, and administrators. These opportunities have included a district-led technology conference, TechByte Tuesday workshops, online digital learning courses with graduate credit available, blended learning courses, after-school professional learning groups, online self-paced modules, professional development during team and department time, and Face-to-Face opportunities during early release days.

Although professional development opportunities are open to all individuals, support staff and administrators are largely underrepresented as participants. The Digital Learning Department will continue to establish and strengthen professional development opportunities to better serve these populations.

COMPLETED

- We employed a Director of Digital Learning to guide the district's increasing emphasis on the application of technology to enhance student outcomes.
- We added positions to give each school the support of either a full-time or part-time Digital Learning Specialist.
- Middle and high school teachers received training to help them maximize the utility of the new interactive projectors and Apple TVs.
- Professional development was provided to teachers at all levels in ways to use the Macbook laptop computers to enhance student learning and instructional management.

IN PROGRESS

- Participation in technology-related professional development has grown at the middle school level in conjunction with the iAndover 1:1 Learning Initiative.
- Additional Digital Learning Specialists are needed to fully serve the elementary schools.

NOT YET MET

- Growth in participation at the elementary and high school levels is not increasing at a level comparable with that at the middle school level.
- Support staff and administrators are largely underrepresented in terms of participation in professional development.

STRATEGIC AREA OF FOCUS: TEACHING AND LEADING

Goal 3: All recruitment, staff development, and evaluation strategies will result in the retention of high-quality teachers, support staff, and school leaders to support educational and administrative goals.

Strategy 3.1: Attract and retain qualified, passionate, and diverse teachers, support staff, and school leaders focused on making learning relevant, accessible, and engaging.

High-quality employees are key to the district's success in meeting each of its goals. The district uses a wide variety of means—including participation in teacher recruitment fairs, extensive advertising in online and print media, and participation by multiple administrators—to inform potential candidates of available positions in the district and to encourage them to apply. This comprehensive approach contributes to our success in not just filling vacancies, but in attracting staff who understand the district's vision and have the skills and commitment to help us achieve it. After an unsettling four-year period in which Andover High School was led by three different administrators, we now have an outstanding principal in place at AHS, and the students as well as staff are responding positively to this stability.

Given a student population that is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse and with the number of ELL students growing by an average of 20% a year, we need culturally diverse adults on our teaching and administrative staff who can serve as role models for students and more accurately represent society at large. Reaching this goal will be a major challenge since, according to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's website, only 9% of Massachusetts' teachers are persons of color. With the limited diversity of the current staff, staff members in every position in the district would benefit from targeted professional development to increase their cultural competency.

As we extend our recruitment and screening process nationwide in a search for the best candidates, we are seeking ways to make these operations more efficient and effective across geographic distances. Our Human Resources Department is currently evaluating applicant tracking software programs. Applicant tracking is a collection of online HR solutions that helps districts automate the processes related to the employee lifecycle, from recruiting, screening, tracking and hiring applicants to onboarding new employees and managing all of the related forms and files. Tracking software products being considered are intuitive, web-based tools designed to easily attract, select and efficiently onboard the very best employees. Districts can customize the application to meet specific HR needs, using automated workflows to improve communication and ensure a fair hiring process.

COMPLETED

- Human Resources assisted other district departments in bringing on board high-quality staff for new positions related to curriculum, technology and innovation and in restoring stable leadership at AHS.
- APS participated in multiple teacher recruitment fairs, including those sponsored by Boston College, Lesley College, Simmons, and the Massachusetts Educational Recruitment Consortium.
- As a member of the Massachusetts Partnership for Diversity in Education, we received resumes from each of the in-state and out-of-state teacher fairs attended by that organization.
- We published an annual calendar of teacher recruitment fairs and solicited participation from principals and program advisors.
- We provided every administrator with a handbook entitled "Procedures for Recruiting and Hiring."
- We routinely advertised positions in multiple print and online media.

IN PROGRESS

- Andover High School is conducting a climate survey to help inform our efforts to develop greater cultural competency among staff.
- We are moving forward with the identification of a software program that will automate many of the processes related to recruiting, screening, tracking, and hiring applicants for district positions.

NOT YET MET

- We have been unsuccessful in increasing the racial and cultural diversity of our staff.
- A four-year program designed to promote an interest in the teaching profession among culturally and racially diverse high school students did not contribute to the district's having a more diverse faculty.
- We have not successfully linked our recruitment software (Talent Ed) to other recruitment software such as School Spring.

Strategy 3.2: Review and update the district mentoring and orientation programs based on staff feedback, research, and best practice.

Every district has a unique culture and climate and holds specific expectations for its employees. While an effective recruiting and hiring process is essential to finding high-quality personnel who are a good fit for the district, the task of building a capable team does not end there. In particular, the work of a classroom teacher is intellectually, emotionally, and psychologically demanding. A high percentage of teachers leave the profession within their first four years in the classroom. A strong system of orientation and mentoring is key to supporting and retaining the staff we work so hard to recruit.

COMPLETED

- The district conducted an annual orientation program for new teachers before their work year began.
- We assigned a mentor to each new teacher and provided a formal mentoring program throughout the first year of employment.
- We reviewed and revised the teacher mentor/mentee program each year to better meet the needs of new hires.
- The district established a Leader-to-Leader program to cultivate the leadership skills of its current administrators.

IN PROGRESS

- Our orientation and mentoring program for teachers is well established, but we need to provide similar support to other employee groups, such as instructional assistants, secretaries, nurses, and custodians.

NOT YET MET

- We have not developed survey tools to solicit feedback from individual teachers as to the effectiveness of the orientation and mentoring components.

Strategy 3.3: Maintain a comprehensive staff development program aligned with the APS mission, vision, and student learning priorities to support staff in meeting the needs of all students.

Progress toward attaining district goals is swifter, deeper, and longer lasting when all facets of a district's operational systems are in alignment. A comprehensive staff development program is key to enabling staff to understand what those goals are and what role they play in achieving them. As a result of effective professional development opportunities, staff members become familiar with a common language for discussing their goals and strategies and they meld into a more cohesive unit focused on improving the performance of all students. As a current priority, staff members in every position in the district would benefit from targeted professional development to increase their cultural competency. In addition, the district seeks to develop leadership capacity at all levels of the organization, especially among the teaching staff.

COMPLETED

- The district's professional development plan for each fiscal year was intentionally linked to the priorities specified in the five-year strategic plan.
- All teachers and administrators received comprehensive training on the new teacher evaluation model and worked collaboratively to develop individual and team goals that support both professional growth and the strategic plan.
- High school teachers played a leadership role in developing a new school schedule that will likely be implemented once funding becomes available.
- The district tightened its requirements for the course content that can apply toward credit for teachers' professional development and invested more deeply in enabling teachers to benefit from out-of-district training opportunities.

IN PROGRESS

- Administrators were advised to monitor and adjust teacher goals to ensure they aligned with the school improvement plan and the district's strategic plan.
- A course on strategies for fostering a healthy learning climate for diverse learners was well attended by high school teachers.
- The district established a Leader-to-Leader program that is helping to cultivate the leadership skills of current administrators and to foster a professional learning community.

NOT YET MET

- We have not conducted formal training for principals in how to lead teachers in developing their Individual Professional Development Plans.

Strategy 3.4: Review and update the supervision and evaluation process for all employees and make changes to reflect the district commitment to high-level job performance.

An effective approach to employee evaluation focuses less on sitting in judgment about staff performance and more on assisting each employee to grow in their position and improve their performance. To the extent we have been effective in recruiting and hiring high-quality staff for each position, we can proceed with greater confidence in assisting every member of the team to grow professionally, perform at even higher levels and develop new skills.

COMPLETED

- The new Massachusetts educator evaluation model was adopted and implemented.

- The new state standards and evaluation rubrics were put in place for all licensed staff, including administrators, teachers, and nurses.

IN PROGRESS

- Feedback on the implementation of the new Massachusetts educator evaluation system has been sporadic and informal; the process might benefit from the district's taking a more systemic approach to gathering input from both teachers and administrators.

NOT YET MET

- The district has not yet updated its evaluation models for teaching assistants, custodians, and independents.

STRATEGIC AREA OF FOCUS: COMMUNICATION, PLANNING AND PARTNERSHIPS

Goal 4: Develop communication systems, strategies and partnerships with parents, the community, and town officials to build shared expectations, understanding, and trust to support the APS vision, mission and goals.

Strategy 4.1: Develop a comprehensive communication plan to disseminate information about the schools, solicit feedback from all constituencies, and engage the community in the school system's goals.

Communication is the cornerstone of any organization desiring to strengthen its connection and engagement with those it serves and with its employees. The Andover Public School District recognized the need for a comprehensive communication plan and established it as a major goal in the five-year strategic plan.

Technology plays an important role and contributes to the district's success in communicating with parents. A reliable network that supports website, email, voicemail and constituent-wide communication is essential. One of the most significant successes of the past five years has been the foundational work to provide a reliable network and an effective communications system. The community can access information through our website and parents receive important immediate information through our Connect5 messaging system. The district phased in the use of the parent portal feature through ASPEN over a number of years and it is now used as our reporting structure at all three levels. Parents can access their child's class information, thereby strengthening home-school relationships. Although the district has not implemented the formal use of social media as a means of communication, increasing numbers of professional staff are using tweets, blogs, and similar avenues to engage parents, students, and colleagues.

In addition to parents getting student information through ASPEN, many of our schools hold parent coffees or get-togethers to welcome new parents to the school community or to share important parenting information. These coffees have been successful in presenting topics around health (opioid awareness), social media and Internet safety. The Student Services Department has created a parent handbook that assists families to understand the IEP process and lays out the various processes and protocols for parents. The SEPAC officers and the Director of Student Services meet on a regular basis to keep the lines of communication open and to strengthen the relationship between the parents of students on IEPs and the schools. The Townwide PTO continues to meet with the superintendent to both share district information and enable coordination of effort among school PTOs.

The community views district achievements as beacons for strengthening the community and for enticing newcomers to settle in the town. APS continues to highlight our strengths, our student successes, and our professional accomplishments through a variety of ways, most of which are face-to-face during meetings and gatherings. This activity could have a stronger impact if the messaging and delivery moved beyond meetings and incorporated other avenues. An effective communication program is necessary for this component to reach its full potential and to reach all stakeholders in the community.

While our efforts have focused on getting the information out, there are two areas where we have not made significant progress. First, we have not adequately provided ways in which the community or parents can offer feedback in a meaningful, productive format. Although we have hosted a number of community forums on various issues, we lack a sustained online vehicle for collecting and responding to parent and community perspectives and concerns. Creating a two-way communication cycle would be beneficial in building a shared expectation, understanding, and trust to support all of APS. Second, the district has no dedicated staff to support the ongoing work in communication or the development of a two-way communication system. Over the coming years, it will be necessary to provide communication staffing to achieve the desired outcomes in this area. The district has begun to initiate a broader approach by forming a communication task force in collaboration with town government.

COMPLETED

- The district uses the APS website, APS email and voicemail, and the Connect5 notification system to communicate with staff and parents.
- Student work, teacher initiatives, and staff, school and district achievements are highlighted at faculty meetings, school committee meetings and community venues.
- A parent portal has been fully implemented on ASPEN to provide parents with online access to information about student performance at all grade levels and to support parents' engagement in their children's educational growth.
- The Townwide PTO —which had not met for a number of years — now meets regularly with the superintendent to share district information and foster coordination of effort among school PTOs.
- With a rapidly increasing English language learning student population, the district is enhancing its translation services to better communicate with parents.
- The strategic plan has been updated yearly and posted on the district website.

IN PROGRESS

- A Communication Task Force is being convened to create a better two-way communication system that solicits input from constituents and the community.
- A practice of utilizing parent and community forums is being put in place to solicit input on significant district issues, such as the ones held to discuss an accelerated math program at the middle school and the facility master plan.
- A practice of offering parent forums or coffees is also used to communicate information about pertinent issues, such as the opioid crisis or helping children make safe choices when using social media.
- The Director of Student Services and the SEPAC co-chairs meet monthly to build and strengthen a more positive relationship between the administration and parents of students with IEPs.
- We have launched work with the Andover Townsman to provide opinion editorials.
- A special education handbook for parents of students with IEPs is in the process of development to inform and help guide them through the special education process.
- We are gradually expanding the use of social media as yet another means of engaging parents and the community at large in the life of our district.

NOT YET MET

- We have not established an effective two-way communication system that solicits input on a regular basis.
- We lack sufficient internal staffing to support an effective communication program, provide information on a regular basis to local media, and respond most effectively to district issues and community crises.

Strategy 4.2: Identify mutual needs and opportunities for collaboration and partnerships with parents, citizens, volunteers, business, and community partners.

Educating children requires the proverbial village, which means strong partnerships with community members, businesses, and other agencies. For example, our strong partnership with Merrimack College provides potential teachers with the experience they need while also giving our classrooms additional adult support for student growth and development.

Our schools have strong ties to community seniors through The Center at Punchard, which identifies volunteers for our elementary schools. Many of these volunteers assist classroom teachers by working with individual or small groups of students to provide support and/or enrichment.

The district relies on the generosity of others to provide additional monetary support and adult support for initiatives that allow our students to learn beyond the classroom and to apply their knowledge to situations where real solutions are needed. Ongoing partnerships with the Andover Coalition for Education, the Service Club of Andover, the Rotary, the Addison Gallery, the Andover Historical Society, and many businesses and individuals support our student interns and our student innovators through the Environmental Sustainability Internship Course, the Engineering Externship Program, the Robotics Club and other project-based learning experiences. These individuals and organizations have provided the district with invaluable human and monetary support to kick-start particular projects and/or to augment programs already in place.

Some of our newest initiatives extend partnerships to other towns and other school districts. One very successful partnership is with North Andover and Northern Essex College through the Transition Opportunities Program (TOP) that supports our 18–22-year-old student population with job-related, living, and college experiences. In addition, we are establishing partnerships with other schools to strengthen the senior CAPStone Project.

Looking ahead, in order for schools and teachers to access these partnership opportunities more effectively and efficiently, the district will need to centralize the information about volunteer activities in a common database.

COMPLETED

- The district has developed strong partnerships with Merrimack College for student interns and fellowships; with The Center at Punchard (Andover Senior Center) to bring committed senior volunteers into our schools; and with the Andover Coalition for Education, the Andona Society, and the Service Club of Andover in support of district innovation and school initiatives.

IN PROGRESS

- The district has established partnerships with local companies to support various initiatives through the voluntary efforts of company leaders and staff, plus corporate support for particular programs such as the robotics competitions, the Environmental Sustainability and Internship Course, etc.
- District leaders attend the programs and events of community and business organizations such as Rotary, the Economic Development Council, etc.
- The district regularly partners with the staff at the Addison Gallery of American Art to provide staff development, which in turn enhances communication from our schools in regard to creative programming for students. Most recently, collaborative work on the New England Arts for Literacy (NEAL) grant resulted in exhibitions of student learning with a high level of parent participation.
- The district has been exploring and implementing regional programs with other school districts, such as the Transition Opportunities Program in collaboration with the North Andover Public

Schools, and a regional Senior CAPStone program with North Andover, Phillips Andover, and Lawrence.

NOT YET MET

- The district has not established a formal business and community partnership program.
- Other than those individuals volunteering through school-based parent organizations, the district has not been able to establish a comprehensive volunteer program.
- A centralized database of volunteers and partnerships has not been created.

Strategy 4.3: Engage the parent community, community-at-large, and local town government in developing a strong collaborative partnership that supports the work of the public schools and public school educators.

The relationship between the district and the town is critically important for our long-term success. Without a clear understanding of the needs of the district and the reason behind those needs, our programs could not be supported. Clear communication and collaboration between the school and town departments bring us closer to that understanding. Our shared staffing model in human resources, technology and facilities has been exceptionally successful. For example, collaboration between town and district brought the new Bancroft Elementary School from concept to reality. APS and the town also partnered to address health concerns and safety protocols and have initiated a joint project to examine all of the town buildings in order to first gain a complete picture of the needs and then create a comprehensive plan that addresses those needs.

Another shared initiative is a review of our web-based communication and the establishment of a communication task force to recommend additional efforts that can enhance our communication and collaboration with the community. Clear communication between school and town departments, between school and community, and between town and community strengthens relationships and builds trust.

COMPLETED

- The district collaboratively participates in a number of town and school groups such as the Chairs' meetings, the Tri-Board meetings, and regular meetings with town staff and leaders.
- The school, town and community collaborated to design, fund and build the new Bancroft Elementary School facility.
- The district has established effective relationships around safety, security and health issues as exemplified in our collaborative efforts with town departments relative to opiate addiction and the ALICE safety and security protocols.

IN PROGRESS

- The district and town are strengthening their collaborative work through a common facility planning initiative, a communication task force, and shared staff positions.

STRATEGIC AREA OF FOCUS: EDUCATIONAL FUNDING, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT, AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Goal 5: Sustainable plans and systems for the allocation and alignment of financial, building, technological, and human resources will be developed to support the APS vision, mission, and learning goals.

Strategy 5.1: Develop annual budgets supported by the town that reflect the APS mission, vision, and values to provide a comprehensive and balanced PK-12 educational program that is responsible and transparent in its use of municipal funds.

The School Committee sets priorities that address the needs of APS students and schools. These priorities provide direction to administrators and guide staff in developing budget recommendations. The priorities also guide the School Committee in its budget deliberations and planning process.

Over the past five years, district funding needs have been incorporated into the Town Manager's and Tri-Board's annual budget processes and planning documents. However, while balanced budget requests have been presented at the Andover Town Meetings, compromises were necessary due to funding constraints and many APS strategic plan requests were not included in the final budget allocations.

COMPLETED

- Major revisions were made to the FY 2017 Preliminary Budget Book, including a preface explaining the budget, expanded salary and expense account data for greater transparency, and additional data tables.
- Athletic, bus, full-day kindergarten and pre-kindergarten user fees were evaluated on an annual basis for effectiveness, efficiencies and cost-effectiveness.
- An online payment system was put in place for athletic fees, bus transportation fees and food services sales.
- Annual progress regarding the district's budget and financial reports has been communicated to the School Committee and community via meetings and information posted on the district website.
- A work order system has been implemented by Plant & Facilities to promote efficiency and accountability.
- The district's Grants Management Office has been active and effective in securing grants and gifts for APS, such as the \$1.1 million New England Arts and Literacy Grant and steadfast support from the Andover Coalition for Education (ACE). The Andover Fund for Education (AFE) has supported teacher innovation in the classroom, recognized outstanding student achievement, and encouraged community involvement in public education. APS grants history is published in the district's annual budget book.

IN PROGRESS

- Leading up to the 2016 Annual Town Meeting, the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and School Committee Chairperson participated in 18 Chairs meetings focused on the development of a reasonable and fair FY 2017 budget. The process resulted in a consensus budget that was supported unanimously by all three boards, and subsequently at Town Meeting.
- We are developing the APS Facility Use Policy.

- The school department's Business Office is in the planning phase of converting the generation of requisitions and purchase orders from a manual process to electronic. Munis Purchasing, which is an application available within our Financial Accounting System, will meet the needs of multidepartment organizations by providing a central focus for all external purchases and internal inventory items. Individual school departments will enter requisitions electronically, with the current budget, commodity, and vendor data readily available. Once requisitions are approved, they will be forwarded to the purchasing department and automatically converted to purchase orders. The requisition and purchasing approval process will become automated, and originators and approvers will be notified by the system as a request is processed. Munis Purchasing will help control procurement costs. We anticipate that order-processing costs will be reduced through decentralized requisition entry, automated workflow approvals, and online budget checking.

NOT YET MET

- We have not yet explored revenue-generating opportunities such as summer usage of school facilities. However, the Athletic Department does generate rental income, which is part of the gate and rental offset to that department's budget.
- To satisfy the Finance Committee's request for timely reporting of full-time equivalents (FTEs), the Business Office initiated implementation of the Position Control software application through our Fund Accounting System (Munis). This work is incomplete because additional staff would be needed to process frequent changes in APS positions. The labor-intensive nature of system maintenance was not identified prior to the project's initiation.

Strategy 5.2: Provide the facilities and technology necessary to support students' learning needs and ensure that resources are equitably distributed across all schools within the district.

Development of a comprehensive capital improvement plan (CIP) has been an annual undertaking as district representatives collaboratively worked with Plant and Facilities to set priorities with realistic financial planning for the maintenance of the physical plant. CIP planning commenced with building tours by various board and committee members followed by a review of requested projects submitted by school principals. Project requests included technology to support student learning. To that end, great progress has occurred in making network, Internet access, and wireless capabilities available in all classrooms and school offices.

The School Committee appointed a subcommittee to develop a redistricting plan to be implemented when the new Bancroft Elementary School opened, and the Bancroft School Building Committee directed activities related to the design and construction of the new Bancroft School.

In conjunction with the town, the district selected MGT of America to conduct a detailed analysis of all town and school district facilities. Meetings were held to inform and involve the public in this months-long process. MGT's report, which is expected this spring, will form the basis of town-district development of a long-term facilities improvement plan.

With support from the school superintendent and town manager, the School Committee will be leading the charge to form a school building committee for the study of the relocation of the preschool program. Also on the horizon is the need to form a facilities subcommittee of the School Committee to study space utilization needs for additional classroom space at the high school and to make recommendations for further actions. At this time it appears that a realistic strategy will be to develop phased addition/renovation options.

COMPLETED

- In collaboration with Plant and Facilities, capital improvement plans have been developed annually in a prioritized format. Prior to June 2015, school building tours had always been

scheduled during the month of August with requests due to the Town Manager during the second week in September.

- Working closely with town government, the district and IT Department have successfully upgraded the network infrastructure, Internet access, wireless capabilities, and telecommunications system throughout classrooms, school offices and the central office.
- In August 2014, the new Bancroft Elementary opened its doors to teachers and students. The district then implemented a major redistricting plan and by September 2015, Bancroft was fully occupied.
- In a report dated May 22, 2014, Drummey Rosane Anderson (DRA) completed an initial High School Feasibility Study to provide some possible designs for renovations to the library media center as well as renovations to address overcrowding in the high school.

IN PROGRESS

- The district is working closely with Community Planning and Development to formulate a plan that consistently updates student enrollment projections and includes Andover's increased housing development.
- The design phase for renovating the AHS Library/Media Center is underway.
- The district anticipates that MGT of America will provide the town with a draft of the comprehensive assessment of town and school facilities by late April or early May as a basis for developing a long-term facilities improvement plan.
- Upgrade/conversion of the existing phone system to VOIP is approximately 90% complete. Additional phones for school and administrative offices were included in the project budget. The entire VOIP project should be completed by fall 2016.

NOT YET MET

- The district has yet to gain support for making the much-needed AHS additions/ renovations recommended by DRA in its May 2014 report.
- The district has yet to develop a relocation plan for the preschool program.