

Needham Public Schools
Mission, Vision, Core Values, and District Goals 2008-2009

What is our mission?

A school and community partnership that creates excited learners, inspires excellence, and fosters integrity.

What is our vision?

We envision all students engaged and fulfilled in their learning, committed to their community, and willing to act with passion, integrity, and courage.

What do we value?

Scholarship Learning Every student engaged in dynamic and challenging academic experiences that stimulate thinking, inquiry, and creativity; identify and promote the development of skills, talents, and interests; and ensure continued learning and wellness. Staff improving their practice in an environment that supports a high level of collaboration and instruction that is focused on helping every student learn and achieve.

Community Working together A culture that encourages communication, understanding, and is actively anti-racist. Sharing ideas and valuing multiple perspectives ensures a caring community committed to the promotion of human dignity.

Citizenship Contributing An environment that nurtures respect, integrity, compassion, and service. Students and staff acknowledge and affirm responsibilities they have toward one another, their schools, and a diverse local and global community.

Personal Growth Acting courageously All students developing skills and confidence through personalized educational experiences that build on student strengths and emphasize reflection, curiosity, resilience, and intelligent risk taking.

What are our learning goals?

Advance standards-based learning.

To refine and continue to put into practice a system of curriculum, instruction and assessment that engages each student in challenging academic experiences that are grounded in clearly defined standards.

Develop the social and emotional skills of all students.

To provide students with the social and emotional competencies to be self-aware, to self-manage, to interrelate with others, and to make responsible decisions.

Promote active citizenship.

To ensure students have the knowledge and skills necessary to participate productively in the local and global communities and commit them to action as learners and citizens.

What is our infrastructure goal?

Ensure infrastructure supports district values and learning goals.

To build and carry out a sustainable plan for financial, building, technological, and human resources that enables our learning goals and is responsive to student and school needs.

District Goal #1: Advance Standards Based Learning

To refine and continue to put into practice a system of curriculum, instruction, and assessment that enables each student to be engaged in challenging academic experiences that are grounded in clearly defined standards.

Objective #1:
Essential content and learning expectations that are aligned to state standards will be clearly identified for each grade level/subject area, and will be clearly communicated to teachers, students, and parents.

Action Steps	Facilitator(s)	Timeline
Identify learning expectations at each grade level: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure documents are in place that detail elementary math and science essential content and learning expectations. • Ensure documents are in place that detail middle and high school essential content and learning expectations for each subject area. 	Principals Dir. Program Dev.	2008-2009
	Department Directors/ Chairs/Science/Math Curriculum Leaders	2008-2009

Objective #2:
Common assessments, collaborative data analysis and specific student feedback will become a part of the instructional practice of all teachers.

Action Steps	Facilitator(s)	Timeline
Ensure common assessments that help teachers to gain insight into student learning are in place in each grade level and subject area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop two common assessments and pilot in at least one grade, subject area or course at each level. • Discuss results of these common assessments and modify assessment and instructional practices. 	Director Program Dev. Principals Department Directors/ Chairs	2008-2009
	Assistant Principals Curriculum Leaders	2008-2009

District Goal #1: Advance Standards Based Learning

To refine and continue to put into practice a system of curriculum, instruction, and assessment that enables each student to be engaged in challenging academic experiences that are grounded in clearly defined standards.

Objective #3:
Students in all classrooms have the opportunity to increase their achievement because they experience instruction that is differentiated and grounded in best research practices

Action Steps	Facilitator(s)	Timeline
<p>Provide teachers with the opportunities to learn, practice, and receive specific feedback on instructional methods that are grounded in best practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for teachers to learn/practice/share skills in collaborative groups. • Incorporate into Professional Development program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - opportunities that help teachers to acquire the skills to collaboratively examine student work (LASW) - opportunities that help teachers to learn how to differentiate instruction and implement these practices into their lessons 	<p>Director Program Development</p> <p>Director Student Development</p> <p>Principals</p> <p>Directors Curriculum Leaders</p>	<p>2008-2010</p>

Objective #4:
Students (and parents) receive explicit feedback regarding progress towards meeting identified learning objectives on a regular basis.

Action Steps	Facilitator(s)	Timeline
<p>Examine, plan, and implement standards based feedback systems at each level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement standards-based report card for grade 3. • Pilot standards-based report card at Grade 4. • Ensure that each school develops a plan to implement a standards-based student feedback system and that it pilots the practice in at least one area/grade level, or course. • Ensure that teachers have the skills and knowledge to provide students with explicit information about their learning. 	<p>Director Program Development</p> <p>Principals</p> <p>Assistant Principals</p> <p>SPED Directors Literacy Curriculum Leader</p>	<p>2008-2009</p> <p>2008-2009</p> <p>2008-2009</p> <p>2008-2010</p>

District Goal #1: Advance Standards Based Learning

To refine and continue to put into practice a system of curriculum, instruction, and assessment that enable each student to be engaged in challenging academic experiences that are grounded in clearly defined standards.

Objective #5:

The professional development and teacher supervision programs ensure learning opportunities that: are job-embedded; enable teachers to acquire rigorous and relevant content knowledge; enable them to implement best instructional strategies; provide support and guidance; and are directed towards individual teacher career growth.

Action Steps	Facilitator(s)	Timeline
Implement comprehensive professional development and supervision and evaluation programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult current research and solicit input from staff to develop comprehensive framework for the professional development program. • Form a committee of administrators and NEA representatives to consult current research, solicit input from staff, and develop new model of supervision and evaluation to pilot. 	Principals Assistant Principals Director Human Resources Department Directors/ Chairs	2008-2009 2008-2010

District Goal #2: Develop the social and emotional skills of all students

To ensure that students have the social and emotional competencies that enable them to be self-aware, to have social and relationship skills, to self-manage, and to make responsible decisions.

Objective #1:

All students will have a meaningful connection to an adult in the school system.

Action Steps	Facilitator(s)	Timeline
Establish structures (advisory, mentoring, etc.) at all levels that facilitate adult/student relationships:	Director of Student Development	2008-2009
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine current practices in each building to determine how best to improve or establish adult/student relationships for all students, particularly for special populations (e.g., students of color). Establish a plan for implementing effective adult/student structures in each school. 	Principals Assistant Principals Department Directors/ Chairs	2008-2009

Objective #2:

Strong school cultures will promote a sense of participation, safety, and security for all students.

Action Steps	Facilitator(s)	Timeline
Ensure school cultures are healthy and positive:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze OHI data and identify areas for improvement. Develop a response to identified areas as indicated by analysis. Increase student leadership and participation opportunities. 	Director of Student Development Principals Assistant Principals	2008-2009

District Goal #2: Develop the social and emotional skills of all students

To ensure that students have the social and emotional competencies that enable them to be self-aware, to have social and relationship skills, to self-manage, and to make responsible decisions.

Objective #3:
Schools will partner with parents to provide consistent social and emotional experiences for students.

Action Steps	Facilitator(s)	Timeline
Establish parent programs at all levels to educate parents about the social and emotional skill development of their children and to involve them in supporting these efforts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the 2007-08 survey results to establish parent communication and education efforts. 	Director Student Development Principals Department Directors/ Chairs Director of Community Education	2008-2009

Objective #4:
Students will improve social and emotional skill development through consistent, layered, and effective instruction at all levels.

Action Steps	Facilitator(s)	Timeline
Improve current instruction by ensuring fidelity, consistency, and quality of instruction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a needs assessment to determine what skills are being taught and practiced, where, and how effectively. • Develop plans based on the results of the needs assessment to address areas of inadequacy. 	Director of Student Development	2008-2009
	Principals Department Directors/ Chairs	2008-2009

District Goal #3: Promote Active Citizenship

To ensure students have the knowledge and skills necessary to participate productively in the local and global communities and commit them to action as learners and citizens.

Objective #1:
 Students will engage in age appropriate service activities that enable them to contribute to or act on local or global social needs and that provide them opportunities to develop social, civic, and academic skills through reflection and analysis of their efforts.

Action Steps	Facilitator(s)	Timeline
Design learning components to accompany service opportunities at all levels and to embed service learning as an institutionalized core instructional strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the current status of service activities, programs, and expectations in the Needham Public Schools. • Develop a framework and guide to help teachers integrate service and service learning opportunities appropriately within the Needham Public Schools. 	Superintendent Principals Department Directors/Chairs	2008-2010

Objective #2:
 Students will develop competencies to enable them to understand and effectively address matters of diversity, racism, ethnocentrism, and bias in the context of the pluralistic communities in which they live.

Action Steps	Facilitator(s)	Timeline
Ensure programs and practices allow students and staff to develop multiple perspectives, strategies, and opportunities to understand and work with diverse people: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess current staff awareness and understanding regarding diversity, racism, and bias. • Develop plan to institute best practices. 	Director of Student Development Human Resource Director	2008-2010

District Goal #3: Promote Active Citizenship

To ensure students have the knowledge and skills necessary to participate productively in the local and global communities and commit them to action as learners and citizens.

Objective #3:

Students will develop the cultural, technological, and civic skills necessary to adapt to the conditions of 21st century global change.

Action Steps	Facilitator(s)	Timeline
<p>Articulate standards, competencies and experiences that reflect the skills required to be successful in today's global environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the knowledge, skills and experiences that students should have to function in the 21st century global environment. • Identify opportunities for students to engage in experiences that develop civic, health, economic, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math), and intercultural awareness and skills. • Provide teachers with professional development that enables them to promote intercultural awareness among their students and to adapt instruction so that it addresses students' cultural learning needs. • Assess the impact the high school's Global Competency Certificate program has had on students' ability to interact in linguistically and culturally diverse settings. 	<p>Director Program Development</p> <p>Principals</p> <p>Department Directors/ Chairs</p>	<p>2008-2010</p> <p>2009-2010</p> <p>2008-2010</p>

District Goal #3: Promote Active Citizenship

To ensure students have the knowledge and skills necessary to participate productively in the local and global communities and commit them to action as learners and citizens.

Objective #4:

Students will have the opportunity to become proficient in a foreign language.

Action Steps	Facilitator(s)	Timeline
<p>Implement a continuum of instruction that enables all students to become proficient in a foreign language by graduation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather data from other school districts about models of instruction, curricula and scheduling. • Determine sources of funding for additional instructional time, alternative scheduling models, and implementation in at least one elementary grade level. • Survey the elementary parent community about choice of language for instruction. 	<p>Director Program Development</p> <p>Foreign Language Director</p>	<p>2008-2010</p>

District Goal #4: Ensure infrastructure supports district values and learning goals.

To build and carry out a sustainable plan for financial, building, technological, and human resources that enables our learning goals and is responsive to student and school needs.

Our Reality: As we work to implement an ambitious agenda, it is critical to share with the community our plans to develop, manage, and sustain operations and an infrastructure that reflect a commitment to the district’s core values. We must be strong advocates for our students and careful stewards of the community’s resources.

Objective #1:
Long-range resource planning documents will be developed that support sustainable school infrastructure and operations.

Action Steps	Facilitator(s)	Timeline
Articulate and disseminate information and plans that detail school needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and share long-range forecast of school operating expenditures, to better understand the “big picture” and inform the resource allocation process. • Correlate annual budget document to school district’s adopted goals and objectives. • Develop long-range space needs and maintenance plans for school facilities which reflect educational priorities. 	School Committee Superintendent Director of Financial Operations Director of Public Facilities	2008-2009 2008-2009 2008-2010

District Goal #4: Ensure infrastructure supports district values and learning goals.

To build and carry out a sustainable plan for financial, building, technological, and human resources that enables our learning goals and is responsive to student and school needs.

Objective #2:
 The technological infrastructure, including hardware, software, support, and training, will be sufficient to meet 21st century needs for accessibility and reliability in order to enhance communication, enrich collaboration, and sustain teaching, learning, and administrative environments.

Action Steps	Facilitator(s)	Timeline
Implement the district’s technology plan to support learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand access to technology-embedded learning opportunities by maintaining more mobile computer access in all instructional settings, including special education. • Provide Science, Foreign Language, Fine & Performing Arts, Media/Technology, and Libraries with specialized hardware, dedicated instructional facilities, and associated technology tools as required by the respective curriculum programs. • Ensure that facilities are able to maintain adequate technological capabilities for viable instructional and administrative applications. • Plan for the deployment and support of a pilot 1:1 computing model in the secondary grades. • Advance communication and collaboration among teachers, parents, administrators, and the larger community through regular use of listservs, wikis, blogs, calendaring, and cable programming. • Provide web site contributors with training and tools to update content on the district web site. • Ensure that hardware and procedures are in place and that staff is adequately prepared to communicate with each other, with town agencies, and with parents in emergency situations. 	Superintendent Director of Media and Technology Services Permanent Public Building Committee	2008-2010 2008-2010 2008-2010 2008-2010 2008-2009 2008-2009 2008-2009

District Goal #4: Ensure Infrastructure Supports District Values and Learning Goals

To build and carry out a sustainable plan for financial, building, technological, and human resources that enables our learning goals and is responsive to student and school needs.

Objective #3:

Modern and efficient information systems and training opportunities will be in place and used regularly to manage school and district operations that support staff, parents, and students.

Action Steps	Facilitator(s)	Timeline
<p>Ensure administrative technology and training facilitates efficient school operations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt a technology-based substitute teacher replacement system and obtain a web-based training program for substitutes. • Adopt a human resource information system and maintain existing management systems for employment application (AppliTrack) and professional development registration (MyLearningPlan). • Ensure administrative and secretarial support staff has training in the use of appropriate information and administrative tools. • Streamline and centralize student registration process. • Collaborate with the town to procure an integrated financial system that meets school and town needs. 	<p>Director of Human Resources</p> <p>Director of Media and Technology Services</p> <p>Director of Student Development</p> <p>Director of Transportation</p> <p>Director of Financial Operations</p>	<p>2008-2010</p> <p>2008-2010</p> <p>2008-2010</p> <p>2008-2009</p> <p>2008-2010</p>

District Goal #4: Ensure Infrastructure Supports District Values and Learning Goals

To build and carry out a sustainable plan for financial, building, technological, and human resources that enables our learning goals and is responsive to student and school needs.

Objective #4:
 Core services including staff recruitment, compensation and benefits management, employee relations and human resource information management will promote a safe and healthy work place that facilitates and promotes a positive work ethic and reflects the district's core values.

Action Steps	Facilitator(s)	Timeline
<p>Ensure human resource management programs meet district needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify critical areas where staff turnover is likely and work with affected departments to develop a comprehensive retention and succession plan. • Develop a professional development needs assessment for clerical staff and teaching assistants and build a comprehensive professional development program serving those staff. • Create an employee handbook outlining district policies, the human resources Mission Statement, and procedures to assist in the orientation of new staff and plan exit interviews to administer to all staff. 	<p>Director of Human Resources</p> <p>Director of Student Development</p>	<p>2008-2010</p> <p>2008-2009</p> <p>2008-2010</p> <p>2008-2010</p>

Glossary

Academic Achievement: The relative success of students in learning and mastering the school subjects that they study, as measured by tests of the knowledge and skills that were taught. Some educators believe that academic achievement should include a broader sample of performances than just test scores.

Achievement Gap: Persistent differences in achievement among different groups of students as indicated by scores on standardized tests, grades, levels of educational attainment, graduation rates, and other data. Narrowing or closing this gap is one of the rationales for standards-based reform, which aims to ensure that additional attention is paid to low-performing students and that expectations are similar for all students.

Action Research: The systematic investigation by teacher of some aspect of their work to help them improve their effectiveness. Action research requires that the participants identify a question or problem and then collect and analyze relevant data. It differs from conventional research in that the participants study an aspect of their own work in the classroom and intend to use the results themselves.

Assessment: A test. An assessment may be part of a system for testing and evaluating individual students, groups of students, schools, or districts. Different types of assessment instruments include achievement tests, minimum competency tests, developmental screening tests, aptitude tests, observation instruments, performance tasks, and authentic assessments. Assessment may contain questions in any number of formats—multiple-choice, short response, and open-ended response.

Benchmarks: Any specific, measurable goals or objectives for students to meet at various points during the school year. Benchmarks are sometimes represented by samples of student work either from current students or from students from previous years. A set of benchmarks can be used as checkpoints to monitor student progress in meeting performance goals within and across grade levels.

Common Assessments: An evaluation developed by a group of teachers who teach the same grade, subject, or course on a common unit of study for the purpose of using the data for making decision about improving instructional practice.

Content Standards: Standards that describe what students should know and be able to do in core academic subjects at each grade level. The purpose of content standards is to create a common curriculum, so that all students have access to the same curriculum and so that teachers know what they are supposed to teach.

Curriculum Frameworks: A grade-by-grade description of the curriculum that will be taught in each of the subject areas as determined by a state's educational agency. They determine what teachers will teach and what students are expected to learn.

Data-Based Decision Making: The process of making decisions about curriculum and instruction on the basis of analysis of classroom data, school data, or the results of standardized tests.

Differentiated Instruction: A form of instruction that seeks to maximize each student's growth by recognizing that students have different ways of learning, different interests, and different ways of responding to instruction. In practice, it involves offering several different learning experiences in response to students' varied needs.

Formative Assessment: Evaluation carried out, often continuously or periodically, for the purpose of gathering information to improve student performance; teacher performance; and instructional methods, programs, and products.

Global Education: Academic programs devoted to the study of the histories, cultures, geography, economics, and governments of the world. The emphasis is on the study of cultures over the study of political history and struggles for power between and within nations.

Learning Outcomes/Expectations: An objective that states a goal or benchmark that students are expected to meet at a particular grade level in a particular subject. Specific expectations of what students are supposed to know or be able to do as a result of a specific course or learning activity.

Professional Development: Learning opportunities that are designed to increase the professional knowledge and skills of teachers who are currently working in the schools.

Research-Based: A descriptor of a program or policy that relies on credible, long-term studies of its effectiveness in practice.

Service Learning: Service learning refers to community service by students in a non-school setting. It aims to deepen students' social learning and to promote problem solving by having them engage in socially useful activities in the local community. It also provides them opportunities to discuss their experiences and to frame their learning within the context of current social issues.

Social and Emotional Skills/Competencies: Social-emotional skills, or 'emotional intelligence', is the name given to the set of abilities that allows students to work with others, learn effectively, and serve essential roles in their families, communities and places of work. Research shows that social-emotional skills can be taught to students and that their presence in classrooms and schools improves academic learning.

Standards-Based Learning:

Unified system of research based practices in curriculum, instruction, and assessment that are focused on student learning. It is characterized by clearly defined expectations for students (i.e. standards), instructional strategies that give students multiple ways to learn and assessment practices that provide meaningful feedback for students.

Summative Assessment: Evaluation used to document students' achievement at the end of a unit or course or and evaluation of the end product of a student's learning activity.

* Excerpted from Diane Ravitch, *Ed Speak* (Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2007)