

New Milford Public Schools

Update on Strategic Plan August, 2009

Strategy #1 – We will improve communications to ensure all members of our collaborative partnership understand our mission and objectives and are actively engaged in achieving them.

There are **eight** action plans in this area. All plans have progressed.

Dr. Paddyfote has taken the lead in directing this area with the help of a committee. Examples of all correspondence were collected. Contacts have been established in all buildings to help coordinate communications. The website has greatly improved and contains much more information, and is regularly updated. Press conferences have been held as have a “brown bag” press lunch. Model surveys of parent feedback have been obtained for review. A master schedule of events is now operational and each school hosts events open to the entire community. Dr. Paddyfote does meet regularly with all unions to help encourage dialogue.

Ideas to focus on in this area include the following:

- Create a flowchart/checklist that outlines our communication strategies and operation (Plan #1).
- Provide staff training on effective communication techniques, target specific groups for outreach and plan and execute more outreach to English Language Learners (ELL) students and families (Plan #2).
- Design and implement a feedback system for each school and for the school system (Plans #5 and #8).
- Systematize the dialogue mechanisms to ensure timely staff feedback (Plan #7).

Strategy #2 – Develop and implement a system-wide Character Education Program consistent with our mission and our objectives.

There are **six** action plans in this area. One plan is complete. Significant progress has been made in all other areas.

The **ten** character attributes were chosen, adopted by the Board of Education and have been publicized regularly. Committees on Character Education exist and operate in each school. Workshops have been held to train staff. There has been support from the P.T.O.; the level of involvement varies by school. The character attributes are being systematically infused into all curriculum documents.

Items that will need additional attention include the following:

- Provide additional training and planning time to help staff guide activities for their classes that will underscore the character initiatives (Plan #3).
- Increase ways to partner with parents, the community, businesses and civic groups to advance Character Education including offering training programs for parents (Plan #4).
- Increase monthly media contact to highlight an “attribute of the month” (Plan #4).
- Redesign report cards/discipline forms to reflect aspects of the Character Education program as necessary (Plan #2).
- Begin to design and administer surveys to measure effect of initiative (Plan #4).

Strategy #3 – We will actively engage students, families, and educators in implementing a system that will enable each student to set, pursue, and achieve educational goals tailored to specific interests, abilities, and aspirations.

There are **six** action plans in this area. Major progress has been made in two action plan areas. Two more areas have made progress and will implement major initiatives in 2009-2010. There has been some progress on a fifth action plan. Little progress to date has been made on the development of advisories in grades 7-12.

Personalized learning plan initiatives have been started at the primary schools and at Sarah Noble Intermediate School.

In 2009-2010, the high school will initiate the use of the COIN program (an on-line comprehensive career guidance program) which is aimed at helping create individualized learning plans for all students. The guidance department is leading that initiative.

Career days have been held and the career center remains active. Speakers have been identified and invited to schools to address students.

The Middle School Guidance department is designing a comparable initiative for their students, which they will kick off in 2009-2010.

Items to focus on in this area in the future include:

- Ensuring the implementation of all plans K-12 goes smoothly.
- Creating a task force 7-12 advisor/advisee programs that make sense (Plan #5).
- Assign a counselor/staff responsibility to ensure career exploration activities through the career center are on-going and systematized (Plan #6).

Strategy #4 – We will effectively and appropriately integrate technology throughout the system to achieve our mission and objectives.

There are **seven** action plans related to this area. At this time, progress was expected in six of the areas. Action plan #6 was not expected to start until next year (2009-2010). We are happy to report progress has been made on parts of all **seven** plans.

A Technology Committee was re-established. A Five-Year Capital Plan was developed and has been updated. The Technology Curriculum is being re-written. Inventories and an accessibility survey have been completed. A mobile lab was purchased. A video/t.v. show was produced for Channel 17 about You Tube, Internet Safety, and Ethical Use of Technology. The Acceptable Use Policy has been posted and is distributed annually. Extensive piloting of technology and increasing training of staff has begun. The Technology Plan for the district has been updated.

Future focus must be maintained on:

- Securing technology resources.
- Identifying and implementing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) rubrics for students and staff (Plan #6).
- Training to ensure staff has the competencies necessary to use technology effectively for instruction (Plan #6).
- Establishing an ICT Literacy Coordinator in the district (Plan #6).

Strategy #5 – We will provide the necessary time, resources, and support to ensure that teachers can implement the approved curriculum, use effective instruction, and analyze assessment data so that students are engaged in achieving strategic objectives.

There are **nine** action plans in this area. Two of the nine areas are difficult to evaluate progress at this time. In four areas substantial progress has been made. In the remaining three areas some progress has been made. Student achievement has remained about where it was when the Strategic Plan started, however there have been places in the school system where there have been notable spikes in achievement that approach the overall goals set in the strategic plan (85% at goal, 100% at proficiency on all state tests).

Notably, the Five Year Plan has been maintained and Character Education has been worked into the mix. There are specific new areas where staff assumes leadership roles (CT Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI), Department Chairs at the middle school). A district-wide professional development committee exists and training towards system initiatives has been more focused. The new teacher evaluation plan will provide an opportunity for a process to obtain feedback from students (and colleagues) about instructional effectiveness. Data teams (CALI) exist in all K-6 schools. Teams will be organized in 2009-10 for Schaghticoke Middle School (SMS) and the New Milford High School (NMHS). Time to plan and analyze data has been created either by funds from grants or by innovations in scheduling or both. The school calendar has been changed to provide greater amounts of time for staff to confer/consult, especially

through occasional shortened days. Workshops or meetings have been held to improve articulation between grades 6 and 7 and grades 8 and 9. Disruptions to instruction have been reduced, especially at New Milford High School. There have been increases in the levels of ELL staffing through increased tutor time paid for by grants.

It is difficult to monitor the extent of community involvement through volunteering, tutoring, or mentoring. Those levels appear unchanged, which means that K-3 continues to have large numbers of volunteers, but those numbers shrink in schools serving the older children and teenagers.

There has been little documented progress at providing staff time for parent communications and or reductions in non-teaching responsibilities.

In the ensuing years focus will need to occur on the following:

- Increasing volunteering/mentorships in all schools (Plan #1).
- Increasing collaboration among staff around effective instructional practices (Plan #6).
- Ensuring that CALI initiatives become operational at SMS and NMHS (Plan #5).
- Reducing further any disruptions viewed as troublesome by staff and supporting staff in non-teaching assignments (Plan #7).
- Improving student-staff ratios where resources allow (Plan #8).

Strategy #6 – We will attract, develop, evaluate and retain a highly qualified staff.

There are **four** action plans associated with this strategy. Significant progress has been made in two areas; in the other two areas some progress has been made.

A Human Resource Director position was created and filled. The website has been strengthened for information and recruiting purposes. A new teacher evaluation process has been finalized and is designed to not only evaluate staff, but to help develop more competencies among the professional staff. That will be implemented in 2009-2010. A school system newsletter (electronic) has been developed which highlights student and staff achievements. Teachers are regularly honored or recognized at Board of Education meetings. Professional Development is clearly linked to system goals which also tie into the evaluation system.

Focus on the following will take place in the next years:

- Broaden links with local colleges and universities for recruitment purposes (Plan #1).
- Redesign other staff evaluation systems (administrative, paraeducator, etc.).
- Formalize dialogue among staff (Plan #4).
- Look to ensure competitive salaries and/or other programs such as childcare programs for staff, tuition assistance, or career advancement opportunities are studied and, where prudent, pursued (Plan #4).

Strategy #7 – Identify and utilize the support and resources available within the community to enable all students to achieve our strategic objectives.

There are **six** action plans associated with this strategy, only five from which any progress is expected at this juncture. Substantial progress has been made in two of the six or five expected areas.

A community resource directory has been updated and will be put up on the website very soon. A Freshman Careers Program was held at New Milford High School. The guidance department at New Milford High has reached out to the community through such programs. Also, a positive relationship has been formed with the Economic Development Commission leadership.

Action plan #1 calling for an information fair has not been held per se; however there have been events that have brought the community into the schools, such as health fairs and speaker days.

In the future, work will begin to help build on alumni directory and association. Plans for an alumni basketball evening are underway for next December to raise funds to support the effort. (Plan #4)

Publicizing the community resource directory and having the school system organize an event (or events) to get word out regarding the resource directory will be undertaken. (Plans #1 and #2)