

Wayland Public Schools
Office of the Superintendent

To: Wayland School Committee
From: Gary A. Burton
Date: May 23, 2007
Re: The Wayland Public Schools: Today and Tomorrow

It has been said that, "If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there!"

To be clear about the ongoing planning efforts of the district, I am summarizing the reports and other documents that are annually submitted to the School Committee for review, highlighting the use and findings of each report. These reports help us plan from one year to the next. This collection of information may help the Committee confront the realities of state and federal mandates, limited town resources, organized special interest groups, and suggestions from individual constituents for or against school practices and/or initiatives.

Each year the district's administrators submit no less than ten reports on topics ranging from enrollment projections and budget requests to curriculum initiatives and test scores. Each report serves a purpose in planning for the months and years ahead, and most end with predictions or recommendations for future actions by the district's administrators and/or the School Committee. All of the reports are meant to inform and, to some degree, to influence the thinking of the School Committee members and ultimately their budget discussions.

"The long range success of an organization depends on its ability to establish a central mission, design appropriate activities for it and modify those activities as society changes."

Michael E. Hickey

While acknowledging the importance of each report, Committee members have suggested that a summary document that highlighted findings and recommendations would be more useful to them and other members of the community. This memo attempts to do this; however, it is not a strategic plan, and the School Committee may certainly want to initiate changes in district operations or programs that are not directly tied to any of these annual reports.

All annual reports are public documents and posted on our website at www.wayland.k12.ma.us.

Superintendent's Annual Goals: Each September/October, district goals, presented in the form of superintendent's goals, are discussed and approved by the School Committee. I report on the collective progress in reaching or completing each goal at the conclusion of the school year. This year's goals center around (1) school facilities, (2) staff recruiting and training, (3) collective bargaining, and (4) long range strategic planning. These are familiar agenda topics at monthly School Committee meetings and Committee members, as well as many in the public, are actively involved in activities designed to fulfill these goals. I view these goals as continuous challenges that the administration and School Committee will confront in the months and years ahead.

Each June, as part of a more comprehensive annual performance review, the superintendent is publicly evaluated on his/her involvement with these goals.

Budget book: In February, the School Committee produces a “proposed budget,” with considerable input from the district's administrators. However, the budget process begins in September with a review of the most recently completed budget and concludes with voter approval of a new budget at the April/May Town Meeting. Often in the fall, the School Committee meets publicly with the town’s Finance Committee (FinCom) to review anticipated state and local revenues and discuss short and long-range fiscal priorities. These discussions are essential to the annual budget process. This past fall, the size of the FY08 budget was agreed upon, thus eliminating any possibility of an operational override vote in the spring.

An eight-page summary of the School Committee’s proposed budget, including enrollment information, is mailed to every Wayland household in late March or early April. Two additional documents in three-ring binders are given to each Committee member. One is a complete line-by-line copy of the budget, including a five-year capital plan, and the other a Town Meeting presentation booklet. The latter anticipates questions related to the budget and supplies backup information as answers for Committee members who are assigned specific areas of the budget for response on the Town Meeting floor.

A public budget hearing is required prior to the Town Meeting at which the School Committee publicly presents its recommended school budget. Based upon community reaction, the School Committee approves a budget for presentation at the Annual Town Meeting.

“What the best and wisest parent wants for his child, that must we want for all our children.”

Jean Piaget

Throughout the year, a copy of the School Committee’s budget message and other school-related materials are sent to all new homeowners shortly after they arrive in town.

Enrollment Report and Projections: The Business Administrator produces this document each fall. It is a complete accounting of all children enrolled in the district on October 1, including enrollment by grade and school building. A series of projections, based upon past enrollments, are made at this time as to the number of students expected to be in the district the following October. This prediction is essential to the budget process. It is given to the administrators in November of each year for planning purposes. Class sizes and the number of instructional staff needed are based upon the number of students predicted to be in the district. To date, our one-year predictions have proven highly reliable, with kindergarten numbers being a notable exception. Included in this report are New England School Development Council’s five to ten year enrollment projections for Wayland. NESDEC long-range projections for Wayland are based upon actual K-12 enrollments, live births, housing starts, private school enrollments, and grade level retentions. While helpful, NESDEC numbers are less reliable moving from the present into the future.

Our projected enrollment for October 2007 is 2781, a reduction of 78 students or 1.5% from October 2006. NESDEC's prediction for October 2016 is 2021 students, a loss of 838 students or 30% of the student body over the next ten years. I do not believe that NESDEC’s numbers are reliable for planning purposes for

“To its credit, public education may well be the responsive institution in the modern world. It is, perhaps, the political system, which an American citizen can approach directly, have a hearing and get a decision. When people talk the system does respond. The problem is, it responds to just about everyone.”

William J. Banach

numerous reasons, including the Town Center project, an improving economy, potential home sales, building permits, and, most importantly, the reputation of the district. To date, all long-term enrollment projections have proven unreliable.

Staff Deployment and Class Size Report: Each fall the Assistant Superintendent submits a report on staff utilization and the assignment of students to individual classes and instructors. This report accounts for all school personnel, including certified part and full-time instructors. Teaching loads and class size trends are tracked historically. Administrators use this data for staffing decisions for the ensuing year. Presently, average elementary class sizes (19.7) are at a 32-year low, while longitudinal data on teaching loads in grades six through twelve remains constant in spite of recent student enrollment increases. The hours worked by the district's support staff is also tracked and accounted for.

“When I see how much education can be reformed, I have hope that society may be reformed.”

Godfried W. Leibniz

MCAS Analysis Report: This fall report is the work of the district's curriculum leaders under the supervision of the Assistant Superintendent. The report is a careful analysis of the last round of MCAS testing and includes historical data from previous testing cycles. At least three teachers,

one from each school level, two or more administrators, plus the curriculum specialists and department heads examine each subject matter's test results in depth. Each group does this to formulate a series of recommendations that are used to (1) guide and assist classroom instructors, (2) establish professional development training opportunities, (3) communicate test results to parents, and (4) establish budget priorities. The Assistant Superintendent prepares an executive summary of this work for School Committee review. Currently, we are obligated to test children in grades three through ten in reading, English/language arts, math and science. The state will be testing children in history and social studies soon and is reportedly developing foreign language tests for children who are studying a second language. I continue to believe this testing is excessive; however, the results are useful in determining curriculum and student and staff strengths and weaknesses.

Wayland METCO Program Review: Each spring, the METCO Director produces a report that reviews Wayland's participation in this state-sponsored voluntary desegregation program. The report highlights recent community activities, fund raising efforts, student participation levels in school activities and, most importantly, the students' academic progress for the past year. The METCO budget, which is a combination of state and private funds, is discussed at this time. No local funds are earmarked or used in support of METCO, though all students and their families benefit from Wayland's participation in this program. Recommendations for program improvements are highlighted at an annual meeting with the School Committee.

“Unlike business, schools have causes, not products. Causes are hard to initiate. They are harder still to stop...which is why new programs are added but old ones aren't dropped.”

Peter Drucker

Special Education Report: Each summer, the Director of Student Services submits a comprehensive report on the district's special education program. The report is a full accounting of all services provided for qualifying Wayland children. The report contains historical information, highlights of the current year, and acknowledges challenges that confront the district.

Recommendations serve as the basis for future budgetary considerations and program initiatives. Specific goals for the Special Education Department are clearly identified and detailed. Due to the unpredictable nature of special education needs from one year to the next, cost projections sometimes prove unreliable.

Technology Report: Also in June/July, the Director of Technology submits a detailed report on the use of technology throughout the district. Annual goals are acknowledged and future goals presented. All computers within the district are accounted for by age, condition, location and usage. Problems to overcome and challenges that are yet resolved are highlighted. The state's mandated three-year District Technology Plan is updated annually and properly referenced within this report. In the 1990's, the district, in cooperation with FinCom, agreed to smaller annual allowances for the purchase of newer technologies, rather than a large expenditure at eight to ten year intervals. This strategy of limited annual expenditures for hardware, software, and training has served the town well and has allowed the district to realize many of its initial goals in the use of technology, K-12. Still, the district's investment in newer technologies could be much greater, and our failure to do so constitutes one of the district's most noticeable shortcomings.

Annual Town Report: This town report, which is published each year in late fall, includes a section authored by the School Committee. In it the School Committee includes an overview of the most recent school year, a review of committee policies, district goals, budget information, and a variety of other information for public consumption. The Town Report is distributed widely throughout the community, and serves as a historical documentation of town and school activities for the most recently completed fiscal year. While not a planning document, per se, this report helps explain district priorities and communicates past accomplishments and future challenges to interested readers.

“There is not uniformed public opinion. There are many publics and many opinions ...from the well informed to the absurd.”

William Wayson

End of the Year Curriculum Reports: As the title implies, this report is a collection of individual reports from the district's curriculum leaders by subject area and is issued each year during the summer. This is an internal planning document and reflects the curriculum needs of the district by disciplines from that date forward. In nine specific areas of study, the curriculum leaders are expected to assess their areas of responsibility and bring forth timely recommendations for changes in programs, instruction, professional development and staffing levels. The numbers of recommendations by discipline vary from year to year. In subjects that are tested by the state, recommendations may be influenced by student MCAS results. In other disciplines, recommendations are greatly influenced by budget priorities as determined by the district's administrators and the School Committee. This report represents the "heart and soul" of the district's instructional programs. It is a document that is constantly under revision. As student achievement results, teacher and parent feedback, funding levels, and current educational research become known, key administrators work with the curriculum committees to revise recommendations and determine immediate responses.

School Improvement Plans: By state law, each of the five schools in the district is expected to submit a School Improvement Plan that is authored by members of its School Council. The Massachusetts Education Reform Act requires schools to have school councils comprised of teachers, parents, community members, and the building principal. Each council is responsible for advising its principal on matters specific to that school, including the identification of

educational needs and a review of the building's budget. Each council is also expected to produce a school improvement plan that is submitted to the School Committee. These plans must fit within the district's overall goals.

Special Reports: Over the years, the School Committee or Superintendent has authorized reports from committees or groups that have been charged with specific short-term tasks. Most recent examples are the **Time and Learning Report, Staff Deployment and Class Size Report, Elementary Foreign Language Study, Substance Abuse Prevention Report, Sleep Needs: School Starting Times, High School Building Committee Report(s), and The High School's Response to NEASC Accreditation Report.** Each of these reports or studies is vital to the overall planning and direction of the district from one year to the next. Presently, the administration is gathering information (via a survey) from the families of children who enroll in private schools. A report on the findings will be presented to the School Committee by July 2007.

Challenges Before the District and Community:

As a result of these reports and a School Committee initiative (**Long Range Strategic Planning**) the direction of the district is well established and well known to those who follow the activities of the School Committee. Currently, the most pressing matters before the Committee as acknowledged in its April 9, 2007 budget presentation are:

"I hope the children affected by our voters on their school budgets will remember us kindly when later they vote on our retirement benefits."

Unknown

- **The High School Building Facilities:**

This project is under the direction of Lea Anderson and the High School Building Committee.

- **Long Range Strategic Planning:**

This ongoing initiative is under the direction of the School Committee.

- **Curriculum Effectiveness:**

This annual assessment is under the supervision of the Assistant Superintendent.

- **Closing the Achievement Gap:**

This district-wide initiative is under the direction of the Superintendent.

- **The Certainty of Financial Resources:**

This task is under the direction of the School Committee and the town's Selectmen.

- **Staff Quality and Stability:**

This responsibility is under the direction of the Administrative Council.

What Lies Ahead:

Over the past few years, a number of ideas have been voiced as activities and/or school-related experiences that would improve our programs and the Wayland schools in general. Many of these suggestions emerged from Administrative Council meetings and bear repeating in any discussion of future planning for the Wayland Public Schools. These include:

- A Chinese language program beginning in Grade 7.
- A senior year experience that possibly involves apprenticeships, internships, job shadowing, and community service learning.
- An accelerated program at the elementary level that highlights math and science exploration.
- A revamping of the district's traditional physical education curriculum to include a much greater emphasis on health and wellness.

- Additional after school opportunities at the middle school with an emphasis on critical thinking skills and physical activities, i.e. science clubs, expanded intramurals, and community service.
- More electives at the secondary level, including art, business, environmental sciences, computer science, etc.
- Technology upgrades that span all grades. The need for improved infrastructure, equipment, software, and professional development is immediate.
- A teacher-mentoring program that closely monitors younger and/or new instructors to Wayland. The importance of ensuring quality classroom instruction cannot be over emphasized.
- An expansion of the school day and school year to gain more time for direct student instruction and professional development opportunities for the staff.
- The greening of Wayland's schools to continuously make them more energy efficient, environmental friendly, and serve as an example for the entire community.

Some Closing Thoughts:

Alvin Toffler, a noted futurist, wrote that if an organization stands still, it is moving backward. Similarly, Dr. John Gardner, former United States Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, has written of the need for a renewal in the spirit and vision of an organization.

“Form triumphs over spirit. The founders design an institution to serve some vibrant purpose. They have a vision and, to perpetuate the vision, they give it institutional form. The trouble comes when the institution ends up serving the purposes of institutional self-enhancement. People forget what they started out to do.”

With respect to these two premises –moving forward into the future and providing direction for the district – I hope this summary of the district's planning efforts and public reports will prove useful to the School Committee. While it is difficult to describe with certainty where the district will be in five years, I acknowledge challenges already identified by the School Committee and believe the following:

- By 2008, the early stages of an expansive high school building construction project will be underway with an expected completion date of 2012/13.
- By 2008, the district will have a School Committee-approved strategic plan that clearly identifies where the district is at specific points in time and where the district hopes to be in three-to-five years. Most of the goals contained within the strategic plan will center around capital projects, alternative funding sources, curriculum initiatives, professional development opportunities and improved communications with community groups. All goals will be measurable.
- There will continue to be an ample supply of quality instructors and administrators who will want to work in Wayland. Previously announced retirements that are pending include the Director of Student Services and an elementary principal, while four classroom instructors will also be retiring in June 2008.
- By 2009, there will be analytical evidence that the achievement gap for children of color is closing, and the administration will be able to prove that the academic performance levels between the top and bottom of each class has narrowed. Also, the district will

<p>A thousand-mile journey begins with the first step. <i>Chinese Proverb</i></p>

experience a more even distribution of children by race in all extra curricular and athletic activities.

- By 2009, the district will be financially stable, as the results of a successful override and a community that remains committed to securing the fiscal and human resources necessary to operate a high-performing, world-quality school.

<p>The decisions we make today...make the future. <i>Unknown</i></p>
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For the most part, the financial stability of the district is beyond the control of the administrators; still, the image of the district and the belief of residents that the district is properly focused on meeting the needs of the students are essential to ensuring that the schools are supported from one year to the next. To this end, a school district worthy of public support is critical to the district's continued success and vice versa. Most importantly, the education of Wayland's children and the long-term desirability of the community are unquestionably dependent upon a strong and vibrant school system. It is to this vision of an academically strong and financially secure district that I am personally and professionally committed.

District Mission Statement

Personal and civic responsibility, love of learning, and empathy for others: these are the qualities that the Wayland Public Schools seek to instill in its students. At its core, our mission is to provide a rigorous and stimulating academic environment that promotes the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Yet we deem it equally important to nurture self-confident, collaborative, and conscientious individuals. We strive to create a climate where risk-taking is safeguarded, open expression is encouraged, and free association is protected. Our goal is to advance our students' growth into principled, informed, and capable citizens who will help guide a democracy that follows humanitarian principles in the global forum, and shape a just society where individuals may reach their full potential.

Adopted 2006

An Afterthought:

I am optimistic regarding the numerous challenges and changes that lie ahead. My years as a superintendent have taught me that successful school committees and their administrators have always worked together cooperatively to lead the schools under a variety of ever-changing conditions. To this end, Wayland's Mission Statement, which is beautifully written, yet unfulfilled, is certainly worthy of our pursuit.