

Weston Public Schools

LONG RANGE PLAN FY 2015-2020

October 14, 2014

**CHERYL MALONEY
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**

October 10, 2014

Weston Public Schools
Long Range Plan 2014-2019
Dr. Cheryl Maloney, Superintendent of Schools

“High achievement always takes places in the framework of high expectation.”

- Charles Kettering, American inventor

“All human beings are born with unique gifts. The healthy functioning of our community depends on its capacity to develop each gift.”

- Peter Senge 'The Learning School.'

“Parents and educators...need to establish a culture in which security and clarity of expectations are balanced with the encouragement of playfulness, inquisitiveness and self-reliance.”

-Guy Claxton in 'Wise -Up'

Introduction

This long range plan is built upon the goals set and completed in the 2009-2014 Long Range Plan. The final report on that LRP was presented to the School Committee during the June 16th meeting. With the combined effort of faculty, administration, parents, and Weston community members, the goals set in the spring of 2009 were met, including: two building projects (high school science lab addition and Field School); curriculum articulation and improvements in all disciplines; expanded student support programs in both special and regular education; renewed support for diversity in our community; and improved infrastructure and integration of technology. As a result of these and other improvements, such as the new teacher evaluation system mandated by the state, the district is now poised to focus the next five years on enhancing curriculum and instruction, the heart of our work. To sustain and improve a high quality of instruction requires adequate resources, diligent hiring practices, effective mentoring, rigorous evaluation of teachers and administrators, and highly effective professional development. The new overarching goal will be to implement and sustain a consistency of practice within each classroom based on high expectations, differentiated instruction and strong pedagogy. This commitment to consistency does not mean an end to creativity, innovation or risk-taking by teachers, as those are hallmarks of excellence in schools and classrooms.

Input

In addition to building upon the substantial successes of the previous long range plan, both community feedback and faculty input guided the development of this plan. During the 2012-2013 school year, a consultant, Janice Kinder, worked with the Administrative Council, other district administrators, and Teacher Leaders (Department Heads and Directors, Curriculum Specialists, Nurse Leader, and Grade and House Leaders) to imagine the ideal schools of the future. Notes from those meetings summarized a vision of an educational system “where every child is...happy, engaged and emotionally supported.” There would be a high priority in these ideal schools on interdisciplinary work, more co-teaching, and faculty collaboration in support of

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the highest capacity of learning, challenges based on readiness, no achievement gaps and equal concern for social, emotional and academic development. These visions were then used by the consultant to create an online survey that was sent to parents and community members in the spring of 2013. The results of that survey were then shared at a School Committee meeting on September 9, 2013 and subsequently reviewed by the Administrative Council. From the data, further discussions and careful reflection, this plan was presented in draft form to solicit more feedback before the School Committee votes final approval.

Unlike previous long range plans, however, this one is designed to be more fluid and dynamic. The 2009-2014 Long Range Plan outlined goals for each of the five years. In this plan, goals for the first two years will be articulated and then upon careful review, the subsequent goals will be set. This practice reflects some of the latest thinking in strategic planning, that these plans need to be “adaptive and directive” because “the future is no longer reasonably predictable based on the past.” (O’Donovan, Dana & Rimland Flower, Noah, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 40, January 10, 2013). Even looking five years out into the future to map a timeline-which was done for the 2009-2014 plan- is not considered best practice. Improvements in technology, availability of more and more data, changing government regulations, and evolving community demographics underscore the need to be nimble in setting goals. In addition, at the end of the second year, the new Superintendent will be in a position to assess accomplishments and propose goals for the subsequent years. However, the vision of a school district in which all children are supported and challenged as they develop into skilled learners, reflective community members, and healthy participants in the world around them will remain the center of this work.

Weston Public School Vision Statement

The Weston Public Schools is committed to excellence in learning for further education and work, for civic responsibility, and for the love of learning.

The Weston Public Schools will achieve excellence in learning through collaboration among community, parents, administration, faculty, and students. Recognizing that learning is a lifelong process, all partners in the school community will use imagination, reflection, invention, rational inquiry and judgment to anticipate the demands of the future and to support the learning of others.

The curriculum will include both subject-based and interdisciplinary instruction for grades K-12. A Weston education will provide students with a broad knowledge base, integrating the arts, technology, communications and core academic areas. Graduates will be able to write and speak effectively, and will develop the problem solving and critical thinking skills necessary to participate productively in a constantly changing, culturally diverse and complex world.

The learning environment in Weston will stimulate and support all students in their intellectual, social, and personal growth to prepare them to become good citizens and to enable them to achieve whatever personal or career goals they pursue. Students will be encouraged to take risks and assume responsibilities; they will respect themselves and others, and be committed to serving the wider community with honesty and integrity.

Approved by Weston School Committee 7/10/96

Teacher Leaders and Faculty Members

Throughout 2012-2013 the District Leadership Team (Principals and Administrators, Department Heads, Directors, House Leaders, Grade Leaders, and Nurse Leader) met and discussed the vision statement reviewed and approved by the School Committee in 1996. After much discussion, they reached consensus that this statement continues to express what is most important in our district: a commitment to excellence and the importance of becoming involved citizens. Some teachers also believe the statement should read global citizens instead of good citizens. Others believe there should be an emphasis on students progressively taking ownership for their own learning as well as a district commitment to inquiry-based problem solving. In the end faculty agreed that statement did not need to be modified significantly. The vision continues to frame our values and define the essence of our work.

Teacher leaders subsequently worked in small and large groups to imagine their dream schools. They held similar discussions within their departments and grade levels to engage the faculty in the process. As noted previously, what emerged from these conversations was a vision of schools in which all students would be empowered and supported through an engaging, flexible, project-based curriculum. Areas highlighted as being important to realizing this vision were identified as: student engagement; global perspectives and multicultural awareness; emphasis on creativity, risk taking and resilience; effective use of technology; celebrating accomplishments of all levels of students; building a culture of empathy, respect and enjoyment of work; and focusing on skills needed to be a contributing member of a pluralistic, multi-lingual society.

Teachers articulated three questions to help frame their work in this vision:

- How do we help our students to be passionate learners and doers?
- How do we get our students to ask a question other than, "Is this going to be on the test?"
- How do we help our students, and our faculty, 'connect the dots' between subjects?

Parent/Community Survey

A summary of the results of the parent/community survey, conducted in the spring of 2013 are found in Appendix A. Survey respondents, most of whom were parents, placed a high priority on improving and standardizing teaching and instruction and providing robust professional development for teachers. They believe instruction should include problem- or project-based instruction as well as global education. Many would like to see Weston High School partner with a college or colleges to provide more choices for students, particularly those who excel in certain content areas. Technology is viewed as important when it helps with individualization, increased rigor, opportunities for practice, assessment and choice, but parents are clear that technology should not be utilized in lieu of teacher-student interaction. There was also clear consensus from the parent community that teachers should focus on helping students develop competencies in: writing, critical thinking, research and analysis, the ability to synthesize information, problem-

solving, innovation, and creativity. Self-direction, resiliency and working well with others also ranked high on the list.

Measuring Progress in Meeting LRP Goals

In two to five years if the district is successful in fulfilling the goals articulated by administrators, faculty, staff, and the parent community, change will be apparent. These driving questions will guide the district in planning as well as assessing progress.

- How will the WPS district reflect success in fulfilling the goals of this Long Range Plan?
- How do new or re-purposed structures support the improved consistency in teaching and learning for our students?
- What will these new practices look like? These are important questions that will need to be reviewed and addressed each year.
- How do we design a professional development program to support teacher growth?
- How can we best communicate change to the community?
- For all the above, what are potential budget implications?

Monitoring Progress At each Opening Day Faculty and Staff meetings for the last four years, educators have renewed their commitment to knowing our students as:

- Individuals with unique personalities, dreams and passions
- Learners with different learning styles
- Achievers with their own pacing in meeting or surpassing the Weston Learning Goals and Standards.

Our commitment will continue in support of the academic, social and emotional needs of all students. Monitoring progress and success in meeting these goals will include focusing each of the following district practices on the collection of related feedback and data:

1. Program review process
2. School Improvement Plans
3. Attention to specific areas of the new teacher evaluation protocol
4. Parent/student feedback surveys (which are scheduled to become a part of the state mandated teacher/administrator evaluation process in 2015)
5. Student health and wellness survey results
6. Collective grade/subject and/or individual assessment data utilizing district determined measures (DDMs) and other standardized testing
7. Curriculum Report by the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
8. Other annual reports including the Principal's High School Performance and the Director of Student Services End of Year Report
9. Annual report of the Superintendent

It will be important to identify in advance questions and/or data from these district reports that will illustrate ways in which the district is supporting student growth. This will be done in collaboration with the Administrative Council and the District Leadership Team (all teacher leaders) this fall.

Budget Implications. There must also be financial support in each annual school budget for: a rigorous and comprehensive academic program, mandated and general education student support, technology tools and infrastructure, and professional development. The district will continue to be sensitive to changes in enrollment and fiscally responsible in developing annual budgets. However, our priority in budgeting is our commitment to the educational needs of all students, which includes: the need to provide effective, current and quality professional development to faculty and staff, our responsibility to maintain the security and safety of our facilities, and all state and federal mandates.

Classroom Consistency. Parents and faculty agree on the importance of professional development to help all teachers possess the necessary knowledge and skills to be successful in the classroom. “It is what teachers think, what teachers do, and what teachers are at the level of the classroom that ultimately shapes the kind of learning that young people get.”(Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan) Classroom consistency in supporting student growth is important, but this goal is not intended to limit teacher creativity. The key to serving all students well is to have each teacher possess and utilize a powerful range of pedagogical skills, a deep understanding of content knowledge and the ability to modify lessons to student needs. As previously noted, assuring that all teachers are trained in these areas will involve a very focused and rigorous professional development program, individualized to the needs of faculty members. Following the model implemented several years ago to train teachers in technology integration, teachers will be surveyed to identify and create the appropriate range of workshops, online courses and/or individual support in areas such as: response to intervention; supporting ELL students and/or students with individual educational plans; integrating technology tools and utilizing blended or online learning; expanding understanding of content knowledge and differentiated instruction; developing student skills in reading and writing across the curriculum, integrating problem solving, critical thinking and project-based learning across the curriculum; promoting creativity; effectively collecting and utilizing data to inform instruction; and collaborating on interdisciplinary lessons. The development of a survey for teachers to assess their skills and knowledge in that broad range of expertise will be a high priority. This spring teachers completed a survey regarding professional development that was analyzed and reviewed by administrators and teacher leaders this summer. In the future, more focused surveys will be utilized.

Program Review. It is anticipated that there will be two external program reviews next year. The Foreign Language Department will welcome an external review team in the fall to review and evaluate the current grade 1-12 program. The self-study in K-12 English Language Arts will be completed in anticipation of the external review in the fall of 2016. It will be a two year self-study process with the first year focused on transitioning to PARCC. Finally, there will be a targeted review of the continuum of new special education programs. Other program reviews that are tentatively scheduled to take place are listed in the Goal Setting section and again in Appendix B.

Communication Guidelines. Being an educational professional in the 21st century is highly demanding and districts that are committed to excellence will focus on supporting the health and welfare of their teachers as well as their students. In Weston this will be addressed through the growth of mindfulness or other stress relieving practices. It will also include the clear articulation

of a respectful communication protocol between home and school. While it is essential that parents and teachers partner in supporting students, there is a need to identify guidelines and set expectations for interactions so that parents and faculty share a clear understanding of process and protocol. A committee of volunteers from the faculty, staff and parent community met several years ago to work on these same challenges, but there is a need to review that work and develop new guidelines and communicating expectations. Finally the district should hold routine celebrations of good practice and ongoing successes to underscore the positive cooperation that has long been the tradition between home and school in the Weston Public Schools.

Professional Development. Next year will be year three of the new teacher/administrator evaluation protocol, which requires a fall goal-setting meeting between each teacher and principal and principal and superintendent. One of those goals for each educator will be related to their professional development. Faculty and Administrators will complete a self-assessment of knowledge, comfort and practice in: 1) utilizing a powerful range of pedagogy; 2) employing a deep understanding of content; and 3) modifying curriculum and instruction to meet the needs of the full range of learners, including ELL, those with Individual Education Plans, and all others. To develop responsive professional development, the district will build upon the current strengths of our professional development program, improved in the 2009-2014 LRP, including: electronic processing and data collection; program review self-study requirement of visiting other districts and conducting research; funding for conferences and consultants; effective use of summer workshops; ongoing involvement and responsibility by District Leadership Team for professional development; district-wide professional development faculty/administration committee; annual surveys; online options; and the self-assessments. All newly hired teachers are required to participate in two days of preliminary training in technology and curriculum as well as a year-long mentor program in their first year of employment in the Weston Public Schools. These programs will be reviewed and revamped as necessary.

Goal Setting. Most of the following goals were included in the FY'15 Budget Presentation. They will be used to establish the sub-goals in 2014-2015 and 2015-2016. Many of them are also included in Appendix B in graphic organizers similar to the one utilized in the 2009-2014 Long Range Plan.

I. Curriculum and Pedagogy

A. Consistently strong academic rigor, student support and achievement in all classes

1. Survey teachers on professional development
2. Use survey and self-assessment results for goal setting in evaluation process
3. Utilize survey and self-assessments to design district, building, and department or grade level professional development plan to increase capacity of faculty to support all students (e.g. differentiated instruction, universal design, response to intervention, progress monitoring, data collection and utilization, special education, and project-based learning)
4. Focus PD conducted by curriculum leaders on teacher content knowledge as well as in reading and writing across the curriculum

B. Train Principals and teacher leaders to monitor and help teachers set annual goals tied to individual needs and PD programs

1. Collaborate to identify building based goals
2. Address in evaluation
3. Compile goals and outcomes in data base

C. Review and revise new teacher mentor program

1. Conduct two day new teacher training to include curriculum and instruction as well as introductory program
2. Focus on goal setting
3. Set clear expectations for teaching and learning

D. Continue Program Reviews

1. Complete external program review in Foreign Language in FY15
2. Begin self-study of ELA, K-12 in FY15
3. Conduct focused external review of new SPED programs in FY15
4. Follow schedule:
 - FY 17-External ELA; Self-study SPED
 - FY 18-External SPED; Self-study Math
 - FY 19- External Math; Self-study Library and Technology
 - FY 20-External Library and Technology; Self-study History and Social Studies

II. Student Support and Engagement

1. Encourage sharing and supporting in professional development.
2. Review class size policy in the Middle and High School
3. Charge a committee to study lengthening of elementary school day for students and revisit starting High School day later.
4. Expand on-line learning options at the High School, including summer edX initiative and as alternative or additions to Program of Studies
5. Create a summer workshop on project-based learning to review and advise on implementation throughout the curriculum.
6. Organize a committee of high school teachers, administrators, students, and parents to investigate creating senior-only courses that would be interdisciplinary and thematic and would involve a capstone project
7. Track and report on effectiveness of student support programs: Reading Recovery, Auxiliary Reading Program, Early Math Intervention, Title I, Guidance Seminar, Career Seminar, Bridges, Topics, DSP and TEC

III. Other Areas

- Communication
 - Review current protocols with Committee of Faculty, Staff and Parents
 - Create and post on website “a who do you call when guide” for parents
 - Renew commitment to civility and respect in all discourse

- Management
 - Continue to analyze per pupil costs as part of budget process

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- Review cost effectiveness of programs and organizational structure
- Facilities
 - Open Field School, demolish old Field School and complete grounds
 - Begin multi-year Middle School science classroom renovations, one per summer
 - Complete redesign for safety and efficiency of Woodland School traffic pattern
 - Focus on sustainability and commitment to reduce, reuse and recycle
- Town collaboration
 - Case Master Plan Phasing and Legacy Trail
 - Land's Sake strategic planning
 - Field Maintenance
 - Technology
 - Energy conservation
 - Solar power

Appendix A

**Weston Public Schools Community Survey:
Long Range Plan 2015-2020**

**Survey Designed Collaboratively by Weston Public Schools and Janice Kinder, Workplaces
Can Work**

Results compiled independently by: Janice Kinder, Workplaces Can Work

September 2013

Executive Summary

The objective of the survey was to gather feedback from Weston parents and key community stakeholders to inform the long-range, five- year plan 2015-2020.

Audience and Methodology

An online survey link was distributed via Weston Grapevine and made available on the WPS website for three weeks in May 2013. Responses were sent directly to an independent consultant and participants could choose to remain anonymous. There were 161 responses, the majority of which were WPS parents. The number of responses represents about 16 % of the total number of WPS parents. This survey was designed to be both qualitative and quantitative. However, it was informal in nature and results cannot be viewed as “scientifically accurate” or even necessarily representative of the entire Weston community. That said, WPS intends to take these opinions, comments and suggestions fully onboard as we finalize our long-range plan.

Top 10 Key Findings:

1. There is a high level of confidence that WPS is preparing students well for the future and 70% said that WPS more than meets their vision of an ideal school system.
2. There is strong alignment about the district’s core values and guiding principles. For example, there was particularly strong support for commitment to excellence, quality, competence, continuous improvement and resilience, as well as for the value of respect: for self, each other, learning, and property
3. A primary focus over next five years should be improving and standardizing across the district quality of teaching and instruction and providing professional development for teachers.
4. While respondents recognize the importance of technology in curriculum, they do not want to see the role of teachers and staff or the relationship between teachers and students

to be sacrificed. Respondents felt that reading, and particularly writing, ranked higher even than math and financial literacy when asked what core academics would be most critical for graduates over the next five years.

5. When asked to prioritize social skill and personal competencies, there was a high value placed on critical thinking, research and analysis, the ability to synthesize information, problem-solving and increasing innovation and creativity. Self-direction, resiliency and working well with others also ranked high on the list.
6. Problem- and project-based learning and individualized instruction were considered to be the most effective and useful learning techniques. Global education and partnerships with colleges for high school courses were also considered very important. Respondents expressed reservations about game-based learning and half rated online learning as less important than the relationship between teachers and students and each other as learning tools.
7. When asked about awareness levels of progress towards the goals in the current long range plan, survey participants said they were most aware of progress in the areas of improving technology, upgrading facilities, and improving communication between the school system and the community. The lowest level of awareness was about the goal of diversifying faculty and staff to reflect the student body. A more effective communications strategy should be part of the next 5-year plan to increase awareness levels of progress on all goals.
8. The top priorities WPS should focus on over the next five year were clear. Seventy three percent said the #1 top priority should be the rigor of curriculum and quality of teaching; related to that, a quarter of respondents also identified professional development of teachers as a top priority. Only 36% identified utilization of technology in curriculum as a top priority.
9. Overall, respondents gave WPS high marks in terms of its capacity to lead, plan and act strategically.
 - 79% say WPS students are well prepared for their next step in life and three quarters say administrators are effective leaders who anticipate future needs and seek continuous improvement
 - Two thirds agree that WPS has a clear vision and direction for the future and communicates effectively with the community about future needs.
10. Weston Grapevine appears to be the best way to communicate with parents and community about long-range plans and progress. Specific suggestions about ways to improve communication will be considered as part of the communications strategy for the next 5-year plan.

To those who participated, we express deep appreciation for their thoughtful and valuable opinions, suggestions and insights. These are our next steps:

- Share survey results with respondents and make results publicly available in community
- Share feedback with administration, faculty and staff
- Incorporate priorities and suggestions into Long Range Plan 2015-2020
- Communicate final goals and key strategies internally and externally
- Effectively communicate regular progress reports to parents and community

Appendix B

I. Curriculum and Pedagogy

GOAL A: Consistent strong student support, academic rigor & achievement in all classrooms						
NOW FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	THEN FY19
Learning goals and standards are clearly articulated and posted on line; RTI, progress monitoring and tiered intervention Teacher knowledge and experience varies.	Survey teachers on professional development <u>Deliverables:</u> Survey results and PD	Ongoing PD modified by survey results and summer workshops <u>Deliverables:</u> Review of PD and new survey results	New Superintendent collaboration with Asst. Super and Curriculum leaders creates next steps. <u>Deliverables:</u> TBA	TBA <u>Deliverables:</u> TBA	.TBA Deliverables TBA	Consistently strong teaching based on robust PD in content; universal design; RtI; progress monitoring; and use of data, all to support student growth.

I. Curriculum and Pedagogy

GOAL B: Continue Program Review Process						
NOW FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	THEN FY19
Multi-faceted rigorous program review process involving lengthy self-study, external review and two year response process	<p>External Review: FL</p> <p>Self-study ELA, K-12 (two year process – PARCC first year focus)</p> <p>Focused external review: New SPED programs</p> <p><u>Deliverables:</u></p> <p>Presented to SC:</p> <p>Report from Chair of FL Review and Department Response.</p> <p>Report from Chair of Review of new SPED programs</p>	<p>Self-study: ELA (two-year)</p> <p><u>Deliverables:</u></p> <p>Presented to SC in Spring:</p> <p>Report from Self-study of ELA</p>	<p>External: ELA, K-12</p> <p>Self-study : SPED, K-12 and Outplacement</p> <p><u>Deliverables:</u></p> <p>Presented to SC:</p> <p>Report from Chair of ELA Review and Response from Department</p> <p>Self-study from SPED</p>	<p>External: SPED, K-12 and Outplacement</p> <p>Self-study: Math, K-12</p> <p><u>Deliverables:</u></p> <p>Presented to SC:</p> <p>Report from Chair of SPED Review and Response from Department</p> <p>Self-study: Mathematics</p>	<p>External: Math, K-12</p> <p>Self-study: History and Social Studies, K-12</p> <p><u>Deliverable:</u></p> <p>Presented to SC:</p> <p>Report from Chair of Math Review</p> <p>Self-study: History and Social Studies</p>	<p>Through Program Review Process, affirmation of practices and/or improvement to curriculum pedagogy, student support, communication, professional development and goal setting</p>

II. Student Support and Engagement

GOAL A: Integrate more problem-based learning activities throughout curriculum						
NOW FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	THEN FY19
<p>Problem-based learning embedded in some grades and disciplines, but no common definition or review of effectiveness.</p>	<p>Encourage additional use of PBL through sharing and PD</p> <p>Utilize summer workshop to create support materials, such as guidelines, resource list, and common rubric.</p> <p>Assess value of a PBL scope and sequence as resource in K-12</p> <p><u>Deliverables</u> Workshop report</p>	<p>Implement ideas from summer workshop to support and expand PBL</p> <p>Continue PD</p> <p><u>Deliverables:</u></p> <p>Asst. Supt. Includes in fall Curriculum report to SC.</p>	<p>Assess progress and follow direction of new Supt.</p> <p><u>Deliverables</u></p> <p>TBA</p>	<p>TBA</p> <p><u>Deliverables:</u></p> <p>TBA</p>	<p>TBA</p> <p><u>Deliverable:</u></p> <p>TBA</p>	<p>Rigorous, authentic problem based learning implemented consistently throughout grades and disciplines, with annual review of each for effectiveness, engagement and</p>

II. Student Support and Engagement

GOAL B: Review class size policy in the Middle and High School						
NOW FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	THEN FY19
General guidelines exist that recommend that class sizes fall between 12 and 24.	Gather data with multi-year history of class sizes by discipline <u>Deliverables</u> Data presented to SC. Workshop Report	Establish a committee patterned after elementary study charged with presenting recommendation to School Committee. <u>Deliverables</u> Final report from Secondary Class Size Committee	TBA <u>Deliverables:</u> TBA	TBA <u>Deliverables:</u> TBA	TBA <u>Deliverables</u> TBA	New guidelines implemented