
Newburyport School Committee Policy Subcommittee Meeting

Date: 19Oct2007

Time: 12pm

Location: Superintendent's Conference Room

Attendees Gordon Bechtel
Mark Wright
Andrea Jones (absent)
Kevin Lyons

Please bring: •

Topics

Num	Topic	Responsible
1.	Benchmark Communities	All
2.	Health Component of Benchmark	Andrea Jones
3.	Academic Component of Benchmark	Kevin Lyons

Benchmark Communities

The group briefly reconsidered the communities against which we would benchmark ourselves. Dr. Lyons indicated that the set of communities identified in 2006 by the Policy subcommittee were still good. Their demographics are a reasonable match to Newburyport's. The group also noted that adding, subtracting or changing communities in the benchmark at a later date is relatively easy. Gordon Bechtel pointed out that much of the data we'll be benchmarking (such as MCAS and financial data) are common to all communities in the State. With readily available data, changing our benchmark communities is easy.

The group noted that it's important to not how we picked these communities in the first place. This will help us to choose appropriate communities in the future, as each community's demographics change. Our benchmark communities were based on a combination of the following demographic factors:

- Average per capita Income
- Equivalent Property Evaluation
- % SPED students
- % low income students
- District size
- Geography: Essex or Middlesex counties

As a reminder, our five benchmark communities are:

- Burlington
- Wakefield
- Swampscott
- Bedford
- Scituate

Health Component of Benchmark

Discussion then moved onto the Health portion of our Benchmark. This component consists of the results from two surveys: the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) and the Youth Behavior Assets Survey (YBAS). As the names suggest, these two surveys focus on opposite ends of our students' health spectrum. The YRBS focuses on risky behavior, while the YBAS focuses on items that encourage and support health behavior. By incorporating results from both surveys, the Policy subcommittee and the health personnel in the Newburyport School District feel that we'll gain a good picture of the health of our students.

The YRBS is based on a national survey constructed by the CDC (Center for Disease Control). Newburyport administers it every other year (it will be administered in fall 2007) at grades 7, 9, 10, 11, and 12. Newburyport works in conjunction with the Northeast Center for Healthy Communities to administer, compile and analyze the survey. The survey is funded under Newburyport's Drug Free Community grant. The

YRBS covers the following broad categories:

- Tobacco use
- Unhealthy dietary behaviors
- Inadequate physical activity
- Alcohol and drug use
- Access to alcohol
- Sexual behaviors that contribute to unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases
- Behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries and violence
- Clear parental rules and expectations
- Perceptions
 - Risk of harm
 - Parent disapproval
 - Peer disapproval
 - Peer use

The YBAS is also a national survey. Newburyport administers it every other year, in the off years from YRBS, at grades 8, 10 and 11. This survey focuses on supportive and protective factors for healthy behavior. The group did not have detailed information on this survey and plans to ask Angela Bik to attend our next meeting and supply more details and answer questions.

The group looked at the most recent data available from the 2005 YRBS. Some of the results are initially surprising, but we all recognized that we had no basis of comparison. We need help from Angela in this area, too. We deferred further conversation until we get more information.

The group also recognized that the results from the 2005 survey were not well communicated to the community. We resolved to change this in 2007.

Gordon Bechtel asked the group to think about how we can “boil” the survey information down into a summary form suitable for a quick understanding of our benchmark. He noted that the survey is quite long. It has a large amount of good information, and should be included in its entirety in our benchmark. However, it will also be necessary to summarize the data for the many folks who will not dig deep into the details, and will prefer a summary measure of how Newburyport is doing.

<Kevin Lyons> Invite Angela Bik to attend our next meeting to:

- Provide details on the Youth Behavior Assets survey
- Provide a basis of comparison. Compare Newburyport to other groups, and communities, in particular nearby communities
- Provide some thoughts on a summary form of these survey results that would appropriately summarize Newburyport's health performance.

Academic Component of Benchmark

The discussion moved on to the academic component of our Benchmark. Dr. Lyons

presented a list of metrics he jotted down as possibilities. He noted that his list is very rough and only meant as a suggestion. It is:

- Graduation rate
- Drop-out rate
- % of graduates meeting MCAS competency
- AYP performance at all grades, buildings, and district
- MCAS Advanced, Proficient, Needs Improvement and Warning percentages
 - by grade
 - by subject
 - by building
 - by gender
 - by subgroup
 - etc.
- AP course offerings
- Number and percentage of HS students successfully completing AP courses
- AP exam results
- SAT/ACT participation
- SAT/ACT scores
- PSAT scores
- College acceptances
- Number and percentage of graduates attending 4-year colleges
- Number and percentage of graduates accepted to selective colleges
- Guidance counselor/student ratio
- Number and percentage of 8th grade applicants accepted at Whittier VoTech
- Middle school math offerings
- Foreign Language offerings at each grade
- Class sizes
- Adequacy of curriculum documents, including currency, fidelity, and alignment
- Summer school offerings
 - HS
 - others
- Number and percentage of staff FTEs devoted to curriculum and instruction
- Number and percentage of administrators per school/school population
- Number and ratio of reading specialists by level
- Number and ratio of math specialists by level

- Professional development budget (non-salary, non teacher tuition)
- Teacher tuition reimbursements
- Teacher conference funding
- Teacher salary (absolute, relative to state, relative to benchmark communities, etc.)
- Administrator salaries
- School and central office support staffing (absolute and ratio)
- Textbook currency
- Number and ratio of technology support personnel (licensed)
Number and ratio of licensed library teachers
- Number and ratio of library paraprofessionals
- Number of competitive academic teams
- Number and percentage of academic electives
- Number and participation in co-curricular clubs/activities
- Number of advanced elective courses
- Number and percentage of elementary leveled readers
- Adequacy of facilities to support programs

The group agreed that it's a good list, but perhaps a little long. Mark Wright noted that several items had more to do with resources, than with actual academic performance. They measured enabling factors for good achievement, rather than achievement itself. We agreed that these metrics belong in the resource portion of the benchmark. They include items such as adequacy of facilities, number of library professionals, textbook currency, and many others. We'll move these items into the resource portion of the Benchmark.

Gordon Bechtel noted that this list provides a good measure of academic performance at the end of a student's career. MCAS, graduation rates, etc all offer good results in this area. He noted that it would be great to develop and measure the performance of our students in learning the material in our own curriculum. Dr. Lyons said this was a good idea, but that we needed to also measure how well implemented our curriculum is. To this end, the group agreed that it would be good to add three addition items to the academic benchmark:

- Implementation of an aligned curriculum
- Implementation of assessments against the curriculum
- Student performance on internal curricular assessments

<all> Cull down the list of academic measures

- Identify resource/staffing items for possible movement to the resource portion of our benchmark
- Identify items that are important and should remain; identify items which are less important and could be removed

<kevin lyons> Propose a mechanism to add curriculum implementation, common assessment, and student performance on common assessment to academic

benchmark. Implementation may be measured as a percentage of class/subjects that have curriculum and/or common assessment defined and implemented.