

**Newburyport Public Schools FY09 Strategic Plan**  
***2008 – 2013***

**Approved December 1, 2008**

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# Letter of Introduction

Dear Newburyport citizens, parents, teachers, administrators and, most of all, students:

The 2007-2008 school year was a tumultuous one for Newburyport Public Schools. It was the first year in which the schools operated in a completely new configuration. The massive budget cuts put in place during the 2006-2007 school year forced this reconfiguration. Teachers, parents, students and administrators all used the year to redefine themselves and their role in the school system. Many teachers were in new classrooms, and were surrounded by new and different colleagues. Many students – especially at the younger grades – were in new school buildings and were surrounded by new kids. Parents, too, were surrounded by new people and many were driving farther in the mornings and afternoons to transport their children to several school buildings. Out of this turbulence grew new communities. Each school building created its own new personality and community of students, teachers, parents and administrators. The PTO redefined itself. By the end of the year, these new communities had taken root and begun to grow and flourish.

In this midst of this redefinition, the staff and administration embarked on several new programs. They instituted a new literacy program, where teachers began learning and implementing new techniques for instruction and assessment of literacy, especially at the younger grade levels. The District also began study and training toward creating an inclusionary instructional philosophy and practice. Of course, everyone continued to strive for academic improvement for all our students, with our eye on improved MCAS results. The superintendent commissioned a team of teachers, health professionals, and parents to create a new Wellness policy for Newburyport's school community.

Turbulent growth is a good descriptor for the 2007-2008 school year. There were many, many changes occurring and simultaneously everyone was striving to grow and improve the education for our students. However, the ultimate direction was unclear. Newburyport Public Schools' five-year strategic plan expired in June 2008. That plan had not been updated in several years, and, although a strong and visionary document when it was originally created, it had little applicability to the schools' current situation. The schools clearly lacked direction. Efforts to improve student achievement, health and wellness, safety, and to create a supportive educational environment were all good, but ad hoc. The District was “playing things by ear.” It lacked clear vision and direction.

Recognizing this, the School Committee made it a goal to complete a new strategic plan for use in the 2008-2009 (FY09) school year. Dr. Lyons began the process by sitting down with educators and administrators throughout the district in the fall of 2007 and asking them for their vision of the future. He conducted hundreds of interviews individually and in groups, took reams of notes, and created his Aspirations document.<sup>1</sup> The strategic planning effort then used this document as the basis for its work. The Aspirations document would provide direction and long-term vision; the strategic plan would provide the concrete steps for achieving the vision. In March of 2008, the two of us began the process of strategic planning by establishing a working and an oversight group. We kept the working group small in order for it to make quick and effective progress on the plan. In contrast, the Oversight group

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1 Kevin M. Lyons, Ed.D., Newburyport Superintendent of Schools, “Aspirations for the Newburyport Schools,” Spring 2008.

was larger, and included representatives from all corners of Newburyport: parents, teachers, seniors, city leaders, business leaders, and educational experts, to name a few. In April we convened the first group meeting. The groups worked steadily through April, May and June 2008, and completed a rough construction of the strategic plan's components by the end of the school year. After taking the summer off, the groups finalized the document during September, October, and November. They completed the final version in November 2008.

The strategic plan captured on these pages is a condensation of the wisdom from each individual in both these dedicated groups. We always used a group process. The groups identified our values. The group articulated goals. The group zeroed in on root causes, and strategized together to solve them. The result of this collaboration is collected here. It was a pleasure to be a part of this team, and we would like to thank these individuals for all their hard work, and congratulate them on a remarkable result. They are:

### **Working Group**

Dave Archambault	Principal, Molin Elementary
Gordon Bechtel	Vice Chair School Committee, parent
Lori Clemens	NHS Math Teacher
Kristina Davis	Principal, Bresnahan Elementary
Shawn Flaherty	Middle School Teacher, NTA Pres.
Lisa Furlong	Middle School Teacher
Pamela Jamison	Elementary Art Teacher
Penny Lazarus	Parent
Kevin Lyons	Superintendent
Ralph Orlando	Doctor, parent
Mark Wright	NEF board member, parent

### **Oversight Group**

Thayer Adsit	NHS student
Dale Bishop	Director, River Valley Charter School
Mary Anne Clancy	Institution for Savings, parent
Nancy Colbert	Newburyport City Planner
Steven Cole	School Committee member, parent
Art Currier	NEBC, past President
Cynthia Curtis	Reading specialist No. Andover Schools, parent
Nick deKanter	School Committee member, parent

Andrea Egmont	Director of Youth Services
Ginny Eramo	Parent, owner of Interlocks
Deirdre Farrell	Asst. Superintendent
Alice Gould	Director of Curriculum, retired
Donna Holaday	City Council member
Irene Jacqz	NHS student
Walter Klein	Boston College, Prof. Emeritus of Strategic Management
Dorothy LaFrance	Newburyport Head Librarian
John Landergan	Youth Council member
Ted Nelson	Parent, partner at Mechanica
Brenda Palmisano	Parent, Mother's Club member
Mike Parent	Principal, NHS
Grace Pezella	Youth Council member
Paula Sable	Educational consultant
Greg Smith	Director, FireHouse
Joe Wennik	Member of Council on Aging
Richard Welch	Parent, Superior Court Judge

Hopefully this strategic plan sets the stage and provides the direction for the large amount of work in front of us. Newburyport's schools have set some difficult but important goals in these pages. Their achievement will require hard work and perseverance. We look forward to working with each member of the Newburyport community to achieve them.

Sincerely,

Gordon Bechtel  
 Vice Chair  
 Newburyport School Committee  
 November 6, 2008

Kevin Lyons  
 Superintendent  
 Newburyport Public Schools