

*Together, we inspire
and challenge all
learners to realize their
unique potential and
become active
contributors to their
community*

Office of the Superintendent
Kirk Downing, Superintendent
Laura Friend, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning

Superintendent's Report to the NRSD School Committee September 14, 2022

Announcements:

- 1. Opening of schools:** The opening of schools was a joyous and optimistic occasion. Teachers reported a high morale and students were seen enjoying the excitement of a new year. Center School opened with a new principal, Shelley Dulsky, who was just as excited as the students as staff. We welcome Ms Dulsky to the Nashoba family. We began the year by revealing the mission, vision and values of the strategic plan to the faculty and staff of the school system. During the month of September, Mr. Downing and Ms Friend will visit each school to talk in detail about the goals of the plan. Our first visit, which was Center School, was well received and teachers expressed enthusiasm about digging into the work.
- 2. Transportation:** The opening of school brought some challenges regarding school bus transportation. Those challenges have greatly improved since the first day. Collaborating with officials at Dee Bus we have rectified most of the challenges that were causing delays. We are tracking the timing of buses across all of our buildings and recognize that there are still timing issues that need to be worked out. On Friday, September 9th, Ross Mulkerin met face-to-face with the transportation coordinator at Dee Bus to review GPS timing of buses and discuss concerns brought forth by the community. The need to re-assess the impact of construction in Lancaster was also discussed. Dee Bus is aware that we want to know if there needs to be any consideration for increasing the number of routes.

Regarding students receiving specialized transportation, Van Pool continues to be understaffed and our PPS office is in communication with Van Pool daily to address the needs of students that are being impacted by those challenges. Van Pool is doing their very best to hire and assign drivers. Currently, we have a wait list for requests and the district is offering reimbursement for those wait-listed families that are choosing to drive their students to school.

3. MSBA submission

On June 27th Skanska and KBA submitted the Preliminary Design Program to the Massachusetts School Building Authority for review regarding the NRHS building project. On August 15, 2022 we received the MSBA comments for review and resubmitted our responses On August 25, 2022. The

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Patricia Marone, Director of Business and Operations
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review period is an interchange between the district and the MSBA to provide clarity and rationale for the design of the building to match the educational program. This will be reviewed the the School Building Committee meeting.

4. Negotiations

This year we will be negotiating for contracts with both Units A and B. This will be the first time we have had full negotiations since before the pandemic. During the pandemic we negotiated salary increases only, so we are looking forward to these fuller conversations with the association. We are arranging now for dates to begin our discussions, and we are looking forward to conducting negotiations in an Interest Based format for the first time. It's a more problem-solving and collaborative process, and serves to improve the relationships between the parties as well as come to a fair contract.

5. **30B:** As a school district, we operate under Chapter 30B of Mass General Law when procuring supplies and services which ensures that there is integrity and uniformity in public procurement. The cost of services and supplies has increased significantly since the limits of Chapter 30B were last set. Recently, Governor Baker signed Chapter 198: An Act Relative to School Operational Efficiency, which includes an increase in the threshold for being able to solicit quotations instead of the higher workload and extended timelines of invitations for bids or requests for proposals. This allows more flexibility and efficiency for our district as we seek to enact the Strategic Plan within our operating budget and grant opportunities.

Updates on Strategic Work

Topic 1: Website Redesign

Strategic objective #1: Improve communication systems and protocols to strengthen culturally responsive home/school relationships that foster understanding and community engagement

Strategic Initiatives:

1. Develop consistent communication structures and protocols across the district
2. Ensure universal access to information for all stakeholders

This summer, a representative team of Nashoba administrators and staff worked with the District's website vendor to update and refresh the current website design. The website refresh launched on August 26th. Goals of the redesign included improvements to both form and function. The website reflects the District's new Strategic Mission and an updated design that visitors should find more visually appealing and easier to navigate. Families seeking information will find information with fewer "clicks," less redundancy, and clearly labeled quick links. A newly added quick link, "All Events at Nashoba," provides a composite view of all events happening across the District, and a "Weekly Updates" tab provides families with current and archived news. Supporting efforts to improve consistency in communication, each school site has been redesigned to reflect the same structure and access to information. Moving forward, the District will continue to expand its efforts to maximize the benefits the current website offers while exploring the potential of a more enhanced and

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multi-dimensional communication system.

Topic 2: The Common, Superintendent's Weekly Update, & School Newsletters

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Strategic Initiatives:

1. Develop consistent communication structures and protocols across the district
2. Ensure universal access to information for all stakeholders

The Superintendent's Weekly Update, "The Common," and all school newsletters will now use Smore, an online newsletter interface. Not only will the use of Smore support consistency in communication format across schools for families, Smore is ADA compliant. Smore newsletters provide accessibility features such as font size, text contrast, and translation features ensuring universal access to information for families. Smore also provides an analytics feature for users. This analytics platform will provide metrics for us to better understand how many visitors are reading our weekly updates and what content visitors are interacting with the most.

Topic 3: New Curriculum Directors: Math & Science; ELA & Social Studies

Strategic Objective #2: Support and inspire all learners through improving and implementing clearly aligned and articulated curricula, equitable innovative instructional and assessment practices, and shared leadership

Strategic Objective #4: Maximize the potential of students, staff, caretakers and community through effective resource allocation

Strategic Initiative #1: Build and create a distributive leadership plan that fosters shared responsibility for leading and learning

The Department of Teaching and Learning welcomes new curriculum directors, Courtney Philbin, Director of Curriculum, math and science, and Laura Pagington, Director of Curriculum, ELA and social studies. Ms. Philbin joins Nashoba from Acton Boxborough and Newton Public Schools having served as a STEM coach and highly talented math educator. Ms. Pagington has served the District as an outstanding educator for over 20 years, bringing a deep skillset in curriculum development and knowledge of effective and engaging pedagogy at multiple grade levels.

Topic 4: NRSD Text Study, Universal Design for Learning, 2022-2023

Strategic Objective #2: Support and inspire all learners through improving and implementing clearly aligned and articulated curricula, equitable innovative instructional and assessment practices, and shared leadership

Strategic Initiative #1: Engage in an audit of district-wide curriculum and conduct a curriculum revision cycle

Last week, the Department of Teaching and Learning launched this year's District Text Study for Nashoba educators. The goal of this year's Text Study is to support educators in developing their expertise and understanding of Universal Design as an effective and powerful framework for instruction and curriculum design. The Text Study provides educators with an option to engage

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independently through an online self-paced micro course or with colleagues in a more traditional book study format. [NRSD Text Study, Universal Design for Learning](#)

Topic 5: Curriculum Alignment, Development, and Mapping

Strategic Objective #2: Support and inspire all learners through improving and implementing clearly aligned and articulated curricula, equitable innovative instructional and assessment practices, and shared leadership

Strategic Initiative #1: Engage in an audit of district-wide curriculum and conduct a curriculum revision cycle

Plans and structures have been developed to support the focused curriculum work of the District this year. To date, curriculum maps have been updated to reflect the intentional integration of learner competencies within the context of academically rigorous, relevant, and aligned curriculum design. Curriculum working groups have been identified and the plan for curriculum facilitation through a shared distributive leadership model has been defined and developed. Curriculum mapping outcomes, along with structures and templates for forward-facing curriculum documents, have been developed in coordination with curriculum directors. Currently, an audit of the curriculum review cycle is underway with a specific lens on content, K-12. The Teaching and Learning Department looks forward to providing more detailed information to the Committee in November once the audit of the curriculum review cycle has been completed.

Topic 6: Calm, Compassionate Teaching Approach, Dr. Larry Epstein

Strategic Objective #3: Ensure equitable opportunities and outcomes for all through increased awareness, representation, practices, and communication around diversity, equity, and inclusion

Strategic Initiative #3: Integrate social emotional learning best practices into daily instruction and student life

Dr. Larry Epstein, licensed clinical social worker, health service provider, and originator of Calm, Compassionate Parenting™ and Calm, Compassionate Teaching™ will present a two-part workshop to the District's mental health professionals during the upcoming September and October early release professional development sessions. Dr. Epstein presented to the leadership team this summer. Dr. Epstein's extensive experiences includes having served as a Clinical Instructor in Psychology in the Department of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and the Director of Training and Implementation for Think:Kids at Massachusetts General Hospital, overseeing the implementation of Collaborative Problem Solving in schools and various settings. The District welcomes Dr. Epstein as he works to help support and strengthen the social emotional learning foundation that has been built within the District over the past three years with specific and practical student interaction strategies. Later this school year, Dr. Epstein will return to Nashoba to present a workshop for parents and community members.

Topic 7: Update the Strategic Plan

Strategic Objective #4: Human Resources, Facilities and Finance

Strategic Initiative: Two new initiatives to be considered

- **DRAFT: Review school safety protocols and develop priority actions for the district and each school**

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- **DRAFT: Improve and sustain physical environments that promote healthy and vibrant learning conditions in all buildings.**

In reviewing the final draft of the strategic plan over the summer, we identified two important gaps that need to be addressed in the plan. The first initiative is relative to school safety and ensuring we have up to date policies and procedures in place. While we are up to date in submitting our coordinated safety plans to state authorities (June 2021) we need to always be proactive when it comes to school safety.

The second initiative should be included in the plan to ensure we have a more robust short and long term capital plan for the district. While we can articulate capital expenditures in strategic initiative 4.2, we believe it is important to call out short term and long term capital planning as its own initiative.