

MELROSE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

# STRATEGIC PLAN

School Years 2010-2015



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## Executive Summary

The Melrose School District contracted for professional strategic planning assistance from Future Management Systems, Inc. (FMS) in September, 2009. Lyle Kirtman, President of FMS, and Mary Murray, Senior Consultant, were involved in the planning, design, and facilitation of the strategic planning process with Joseph Casey, Superintendent, and the district's School Committee.

From September 2009 through May 2010, FMS worked closely with the Superintendent and the Strategic Planning Steering Committee on data collection and analysis, vision-setting, and development of plan components.

### **Objective**

The purpose of this work was to assist the Melrose School District in the development of a strategic plan for the years 2010-2015. The creation and implementation of this strategic plan provides both direction and priorities for district-wide and school-based initiatives over the next five years.

### **Approach and Scope**

At the onset of the planning process, an ad-hoc Steering Committee was organized to provide representation of the major constituents of the school district. The committee consisted of 8 individuals who met several times over the course of the planning process to review key findings and draft documents, and offer input and suggestions for future work. A Leadership Team, that included the Superintendent, representatives from the Administrative Council and the strategic planning consultant, served as a working group around specific topics internal to the schools and their relationship to the planning process.

The district's strategic planning consultant, working with the school district, conducted the internal assessment using a number of internal and external data sources. The consultant then met with the Steering Committee to begin external data collection. Key stakeholders in the greater school community and town were identified, whose thoughts, suggestions, and feedback should be solicited about current programs and the effectiveness of the school system. These constituents participated in either one of 12 focus groups or telephone interviews. A community meeting was also held.

Upon integrating the findings from these structured interactions with stakeholders, several common themes became evident. These findings were also used to identify goals and priority areas in the plan.

The Superintendent, Steering Committee, and Leadership Team spent time ensuring that a Vision Statement was developed that accurately reflects the findings and what the district wants to be like in five years. They also ensured that the goals and strategies of the plan demonstrate the school district's commitment to achieving its vision. Seven strategic priority areas were identified.

**Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment**  
**School System Culture and Climate**  
**Facilities and Technology**

**Student Support**  
**Human Resources and Professional Development**  
**Communication and Partnerships**  
**Governance, Organizational Leadership and Funding**

For each of these priority areas, the Steering Committee and Leadership Team developed goals and strategies to provide direction for organizational improvement and growth. They also developed measures of success and specified timeframes to define targets for improvement and benchmarks for monitoring and adjusting strategies to meet those targets.

The annual action plan defines the work plan to meet the plan's priorities, including specific initiatives or actions, measures of success, timeframes, and the key contact people responsible for each effort. The next step of the strategic planning process involves the dissemination and implementation of this strategic plan to all key constituencies, and integration of the plan in the district and school improvement planning process and accountability reporting.

## Letter from the Superintendent

Dear Members of the Melrose Community,

On behalf of the Melrose School Committee I am pleased to present our new strategic plan covering the years from 2010-2015.

The Melrose School Committee appointed a Strategic Plan Steering Committee comprised of eleven members who worked together with Future Management Systems (FMS) to create this document. We wish to thank the steering committee members, and all of the focus group participants for their commitment to this process, which included input from many stakeholders: students, parents, teachers, administrators, city officials, business partners, and our village elders. In total, over 172 people contributed to the process.

We feel it is important for the Melrose community to reflect upon where we have been over the last five years and it is equally important to look forward to where we, as a district and as a city, need to focus our educational efforts over the next five years. The strategic planning process enables the district to articulate what will be most important for all students to achieve academic excellence. We have identified seven focus areas which include the following: Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, Student Support, School System Culture and Climate, Human Resources and Professional Development, Facilities and Technology, Communication and Partnerships as well as Governance, Organizational Leadership and Funding.

As the world around us becomes more complex, it is essential that we steer a course that will allow our students to be active and contributing members of the 21st Century. The work that lies before us is important and has at its heart the success of our students. We look forward to growing, sharing and improving ourselves, our students and our district over the next five years with your help, understanding and support. We invite you to be part of this process as together we begin to implement the goals included in this strategic plan.

Sincerely,

*Joseph F. Casey*

Joseph F. Casey  
Superintendent of Schools

## Overview of the Strategic Planning Process

From June 2009 through May 2010 the Melrose School District carried out a strategic planning process for the purpose of providing the schools with a framework to guide priority-setting over the next five years.

The Melrose School District, with its consultant Future Management Systems, Inc. (FMS), worked closely with the Melrose community in the formulation of the plan. Interviews, group meetings, and focus groups were conducted and data was reviewed both within and outside of the system, throughout the planning process to solicit information and viewpoints. The process was specifically designed to include stakeholders, and to encourage dialogue within the community about the future direction of the schools. A variety of activities took place during the planning process for this purpose.

An eight member Steering Committee, representing the Melrose community, was formed. The Steering Committee met on five occasions between November 2009 and May 2010 to review draft planning documents including the Retrospective, Internal Assessment, and Success Measures, and to identify stakeholders to include in focus groups and interviews, review findings, and provide valuable input at every step of development.

District representatives wrote a Retrospective, a report of activities of the District from 2005 to 2010. The Retrospective served as a launching point, for the strategic planning process.

FMS conducted an internal assessment and analysis of several key topics. This internal assessment responded to the following questions:

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of Melrose Public School's internal structures, programs and practices that support the improvement of student achievement?
- What current or future opportunities and threats are likely to influence the internal structures, programs and practices of Melrose Public Schools and possibly affect efforts to improve student achievement?

The internal assessment process surfaced improvement themes and critical issues on which to focus the strategic planning process and address future district improvement.

FMS and the district conducted an external assessment in the winter of 2010 and included 12 focus groups with 102 participants, a community meeting involving over 70 participants and interviews with six key stakeholders. The Steering Committee reviewed the key findings resulting from the external assessment and in the context of the internal assessment findings. All of these findings are reflected in the plan's goals, strategies and success measures.

The Steering Committee revisited and reviewed the district's Mission Statement and Core Values, and the Superintendent, Leadership Team, and Steering Committee led the development of a vision statement.

From all of these internal and external activities and interactions with stakeholders, several common themes and priorities became evident. The seven priority areas and related goals served as the basis for the development of the Strategic Plan.

Measures of success were developed to define annual targets for improvement and benchmarks against which to measure progress, as well as monitor and adjust strategies to meet those targets.

Annual action plans, using strategies identified in the planning process, will define each year's actions to meet the plan's priorities, including specific initiatives, timeframes and positions responsible for leading each effort. A template, which will be updated annually, is included in the plan. The district's Leadership Team will annually report to the School Committee on the prior year's actions and present action plans for the coming year, reflecting current strategic issues and problems.

To the best extent possible, this strategic plan has been developed with both an awareness of past achievements and the goal of setting new standards for performance. The Strategic Plan will be reviewed on an on-going basis to ensure that goals, strategies and actions are addressed as appropriate. The plan, in time, may be modified to reflect achievements and address new priorities.

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|---|
| <b>Key Participants in the Planning Process</b> |
|---|

**Strategic Planning Steering Committee**

Mary Murray, Consultant, Future Management Systems  
Joseph F. Casey, Superintendent  
Margaret Driscoll, Chairperson, School Committee  
Christine Casatelli, School Committee  
Brent Conway, Principal  
Naomi Baline, Teacher and MEA President  
Susan Herook, Teacher  
Kathy Downey, Parent  
Arlene Frasca, Parent  
Adam Cervenka, Student  
Kathy Harlow, Community Representative

**Leadership Team**

Joseph F. Casey, Superintendent  
Gregory Zammuto, Business Manager  
Patti White-Lambright, Director, Pupil Personnel Services  
Patricia Muxie, Director, Curriculum and Instruction  
Jenny Corduck, Director, Early Childhood Center  
Dennet Sidell, Principal, Hoover School  
Jeffrey Strasnick, Principal, Horace Mann School  
Brent Conway, Principal, Lincoln School  
Kerry Clery, Principal, Roosevelt School  
Bryna Lakin-Davis, Principal, Winthrop School  
Thomas Brow, Principal, Melrose Veterans Memorial Middle School  
Joseph Dillon, Principal, Melrose High School

**School Committee**

Margaret Driscoll, Chairperson, School Committee  
Christine Casatelli, School Committee  
Donald Constantine, School Committee  
Mayor Robert Dolan, School Committee  
J.D. LaRock, School Committee  
Carrie Kourkoumelis, School Committee  
Kristin Thorp, School Committee

## **Vision Statement for the Year 2015**

*The Vision Statement provided below describes the desired state of the Melrose Public Schools in the next five years. The Vision is an expression of possibility, yet realistic enough to be achievable. Its purpose is to inspire those involved and interested individuals to help the Vision become a reality. The Vision provides the basis from which the organization determines priorities and establishes targets for performance.*

### **In 2015 we envision that.....**

Melrose Public Schools has well established and strong partnerships among families, individual schools and the community. Working together, we ensure every student has the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills/tools to excel and be a contributing member of the global society. We seek to educate the whole child not only with strong academics, but also in the areas of athletics, health and wellness, music and the arts. We engage all students in learning, raising the aspirations of all students by embracing them in a learning environment designed to meet the needs of all learners and connecting classrooms with communities. We promote a positive, caring culture across the school district that fosters a sense of belonging for all students, to ensure that students know they are active participants in the learning process and valued members of the community. Each school provides a welcoming, respectful, and inclusive environment that supports students' social-emotional development and demonstrates acceptance and respect for the diversity of its students.

We provide a comprehensive curriculum aligned with state and national standards that challenges and prepares all learners from Pre-K to 12 and beyond. The curriculum is research-based and consistently integrates best practices to provide a focus that is aligned horizontally and vertically across all grades and addresses the needs of all students. Student learning and access to the curriculum are supported in all classrooms, Pre-K-12, through the use of differentiated instructional tools that build on flexible grouping models and hands-on, inquiry-based learning, while encouraging innovation and creativity. We integrate technology into the curriculum and provide access to technology at all levels. Our decisions regarding technology and its infrastructure are driven by student learning needs and the curriculum. Educators use both formal and informal assessments to identify student progress, refine and revise instructional practices, and target professional development offerings as part of a comprehensive curriculum plan.

The Melrose Public Schools employs highly-qualified teachers and administrators who engage students in a positive and dynamic manner, are student-focused, and work individually and collaboratively to effectively deliver instruction and assessment and advance student performance in all areas of learning. The district is committed to helping teachers develop and strengthen the necessary skills and knowledge to provide high-quality instruction. Teachers consistently work collegially within the school and community as leaders and partners in the education of students and maintain a culture where individual and group learning are valued and modeled. The district provides targeted, quality professional development that supports ongoing professional growth. Policies and procedures that ensure accountability and promote teacher growth support the retention of effective and highly-qualified staff.

In their efforts to support staff and students, the Superintendent, Leadership Team and the Melrose School Committee work collaboratively to build a strong learning community. They advocate for and manage resources across the district in a fiscally responsible manner, while working to build community understanding of the district's educational program and needs.

The school district uses 21<sup>st</sup> century communication tools to disseminate accurate and timely information regarding school policies, programs, procedures, achievements, decisions and critical issues that impact families and the district. Respectful two-way communication with families is the norm. As the district engages parents, staff and community members in an ongoing discourse about education in Melrose and how to best serve the needs of all learners, we work with the members of our educational community to provide opportunities for participation, communication and dialogue and seek opportunities for partnerships beyond the district.

## **Mission Statement and Core Values of Melrose Public Schools**

*The mission statement defines our shared sense of purpose, direction, and opportunity.*

*Core values are the underlying support to our mission, vision, and goals and therefore provide a shared foundation for working and learning.*

### **Mission Statement**

We inspire, engage, support, prepare and challenge all students to achieve personal and academic excellence, to become life-long learners, and to be responsible, respectful and successful participants in our global community.

### **Core Values**

The following core values of the Melrose Public Schools espouse the high expectations we have for all of the school community, directing how we conduct ourselves in fulfilling the school system's mission.

1. All students can learn.
2. All students can achieve personal learning success.
3. Quality and reflective teaching is essential in helping students reach academic and personal success.
4. Rigorous, relevant and research-based curricula promote quality learning for all.
5. Honesty and integrity guide our individual and group actions, interactions and decisions.
6. By working collaboratively and collegially, we will be better able to overcome obstacles, solve problems and achieve goals.
7. We honor and celebrate differences, respect individuality and take pride in and respect ourselves, each other, our schools, our work, and our environment.
8. Strong, respectful partnerships between educators and parents are critical to the successful education of children.
9. Ongoing and meaningful collaboration and communication between educators and community members promotes a dynamic school system.

## Melrose Public Schools Strategic Plan 2005-2010 Retrospective

*The primary purpose of our work on strategic planning is prospective, looking ahead, agreeing on what we need to accomplish together, and determining how best to get there through the cost-effective use of District resources. The completed strategic plan will function as a roadmap to achieving agreed-upon goals and objectives for the district. Before looking ahead, however, it is essential that we first consider where we are now by revisiting the accomplishments that got us here. This retrospective serves as a launching point, a stake in the ground so to speak, for the strategic planning process.*

The retrospective provides a chronological look back at how successful the district was in addressing the goals of the prior strategic plan and identifying the mission critical development and needs that arose during the preceding five (5) years. While many of the prior goals were met, some require additional attention and resources and their status remains "In Progress" additionally, some new challenges have been identified by the district and these will be integrated into our successor plan.

### **Review of Accomplishments for the 2005-2010 Strategic Plan**

The following delineates the progress made in each of the Four (4) Focus Areas:

#### **Strategic Focus Area #1 - Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment**

- Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment
  - Curriculum Development
    - The District has implemented Math (K-6) and Early Literacy Pre-K-3\* curriculum adoptions (\* grades 4 & 5 Literacy Adoptions are in progress) The district has integrated the use of DRA and DIBELS as progress monitoring tools in support of the Early literacy initiative. The district has also instituted tri-annual benchmark assessments at all levels Pre-K-12 to monitor student progress and tailor instruction to meet the needs of all students.
    - A sample of the technology applications that supports the curriculum and/or helps with data analysis include, but are not limited to: Study Island, Harcourt Math, Harcourt Storytown, Type to Learn, Pasco Science Probes, United Streaming, student response clickers, SmartBoards, on-line databases, TestWiz, Digital Classroom (middle school), Brain Pop and Follet library software in the district's libraries. Further work will need to be done to consistently implement and coordinate use of these applications.
    - STEM initiatives are in progress and collaborations are being established with UMASS Lowell and Salem State to support and expand the initiative.
    - Social Studies, Health and Wellness, Fine Arts expansions have been minimal due to funding limitations. However, it is important to note that this past year we bought music instruments and band uniforms for the marching band.
    - ELL Coordinator position created and filled to address student needs and DESE requirements.

- Annual Technology plans filed with Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).
  - Current District Technology Plan informed the expansion of technology including infrastructure, computers in the classroom most notably at the secondary level and professional development for staff in the use and integration of technology in the classroom. Additional training is required to support staff and students. The current build out of fiber optic network serving all school and municipal sites is due to be completed in Spring of 2010. A new technology plan is due to be revised starting in the 2010-2011 School Year.
  - Franklin Early Childhood Center (ECC) created to blend and expand district programming and is currently serving approximately 240 three and four year olds and is regarded as a model program for surrounding districts.
  - Title I remains a successful program which has been revised and expanded to serve students at the ECC and the Lincoln Elementary School.
  - Vocational Opportunities have been expanded for our Post Graduate Special Education Program with input from the Education Task Force's findings and no substantive change at the high school level.
- Recruitment and Training of Highly Qualified Staff
- Director of Curriculum works with Central Office Administrators and Principals, Directors and Department Chairs to identify targeted professional development for administrators as well as staff with a strong focus on supporting district initiatives.
  - The district has hired a Library Media Specialist (LMS) for the Elementary grades. We have also hired an LMS for the Middle School, which added to the existing LMS at the high school, now ensures that we have certified Library Media Specialists at all levels.
  - Administration works closely with the Melrose Education Association to target professional development opportunities in support of teacher licensure and to give staff the skill sets they need to support district initiatives and to support student achievement using current research and best practices. The district is also building out in-house professional development opportunities to allow teachers to share and model best practices in the class room with one another.
  - Paraprofessionals are able to attend professional development offered to teachers. Beyond that, focused trainings for special education paraprofessionals has been built out in a targeted manner over the last two years under the direction and supervision of the Administrator of Pupil Personnel Services.
  - Surveys are administered by the Director of Curriculum to solicit feedback on professional development offerings to improve targeted trainings. Staff and administrative feedback is used to plan further offerings and to rate the presenters. The Director of Curriculum also seeks input from regional Curriculum Directors to inform and enhance our offerings. It is important to note that the Director of Curriculum works with surrounding districts to cost share professional development and identify common training needs thereby achieving an economy of scale.

- A formal mentoring program for beginning teachers is in place and adheres to DESE requirements. The district holds regular meeting and surveys all participants (mentors and mentees) to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and to make any necessary changes going forward.
- Student Services
  - The district successfully developed and implemented a Corrective Action Plan that addressed the concerns raised by the DESE and subsequently signed off by them.
  - The district worked with the Education Task Force to review and implement recommendations to improve Special Education and support inclusive practices in the district.
  - The district continues to build out in-district programs to support students and families in Melrose (e.g. Autism program, Language based classroom and a Post Graduate program).
  - The district continues to work with parents to revitalize the Special Education PAC and engage parents as partners. The district works to build a two way communication process and support an ongoing dialog about special education programs and student services with PAC members and members of the community. As part of ongoing communication the PPS Administrator meets monthly with the PAC leadership and the district has provided a link through the district website for the PAC website. To facilitate communication, pertinent information is posted and made available for parents through both of these sites.
  - The district has expanded its capacity to meet the needs of all learners and has relocated resources by decreasing the number of paraprofessionals and increasing the number of special education professionals at each of the elementary buildings and at the Early Childhood Center. This increase of professional staff has resulted in expanded programming options for academically at risk students and special education students.

### ***Strategic Focus Area #2 - Finances, Facilities and Operations***

- The budget process and documents now contain MUNIS line details to support a transparent budgeting process to help the community understand the financial position of the MPS. The Business Manager continues to work with the School Committee to make the budget process more streamlined and accessible. Budget documents are now available on the district website.
- The district has developed and posted on-line a Five Year Capital Plan that is updated annually.
- Academic offerings are reviewed and input sought at all levels by Central Office staff, Principals, Directors, Department Chairs and staff submit

programmatic materials costs which are included as part of the Five Year Capital Plan.

- The current configuration of grade levels at the elementary level is reviewed by Central office with input from the Elementary Principals annually. It is important to note that the district supports the current K-5 school configuration.
- The Franklin Early Childhood Center (ECC) is an example of the district combining two programs located in two schools to develop a successful expanded Early Childhood program serving the families in Melrose and surrounding towns.
- The Franklin Early Childhood Center (ECC) has built out a limited after school extended day program as well as a summer program called Franklin Friends as a response to an identified community need.
- The District has also built out an after school enrichment program in response to a community identified need. The program is called Education Stations and it services students K-5. The program has provides three time based options for after school enrichment running from 2:20 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- Education Stations is also being expanded K- 5 as a summer program beginning in the 2010 summer. A similar range of enrichment options will be offered to families 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- Funding has been expanded through partnership with the McLaughlin Foundation, Launch and a variety of booster clubs. Most federal and state grants are written by the Curriculum Director and the Administrator of PPS. Some small private grants are often written by teachers. There is no paid grant writer or formal mechanism to apply for grants.

### ***Strategic Focus #3 - Leadership and Governance***

- Melrose Public Schools enjoy a strong collaborative working relationship with the City of Melrose. As part of the revised City Charter, the Mayor now sits on the School Committee. Some examples of the areas in which the schools and the city work closely are in the areas of the DPW, Information Technology, Health, Recreation, Human Resource, Police Department School Resource officer, Melrose Public Library, and the school department taking on the supervision of the Traffic Supervisors to name a few. Melrose Public Schools remains committed to working with the City of Melrose in a collaborative manner.
- Melrose Public Schools supports and partners with a variety of community groups ranging from the Human Rights Commission, the Senior Center, the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, Melrose Symphony, MAAV, and promotion of the Arts in Melrose to name a few.
- The district's Leadership Team has worked closely over the last several years to enhance and clarify the roles of school site councils. A district wide training for Site Councils was held and the Melrose School Committee has called on Site Councils to be more involved in the budget development process. This is especially apparent at Melrose High School in part due to the work being done to prepare for our upcoming NEASC Accreditation visit in the fall of 2010.

- The district's Leadership Team works closely together to help improve communication, and partner with individual PTO's by making them aware of district initiatives and to respond to parent requests for information not only through school based PTO's but also by working with our City-wide PTO that meets monthly to address common concerns and work collaboratively to solve mutual problems. An example of this is how the PTO's representing each school came together to found PTO Inc. to establish themselves as a 501c organization. This now allow them to seek outside grant monies to further support the mission of the schools.
- The Hoover School this year is piloting a parent resource group which focuses on communication. They have revised the school's website to inform and welcome parents to become part of the initiative and to help plan and create a Parent Resource Center that will have free and paid programs that parents can use at home to help their children practice and challenge themselves.
- The district's Leadership Team has seen a major change over the last five years with the hiring of all new elementary principals, the high school principal, Administrator of PPS, the Business Manager and the Superintendent. Working closely with the School Committee we are working to revise, update and norm administrative practices and procedures across the district. This remains a work in progress. It is important to note that a strong collaborative model has evolved within the leadership team and members take ownership for educational issues based on what is best for the district and they have become a support group for one another. The principals individually and collectively work as the educational leaders of the district partnering with Central Administration on curriculum, professional development and staffing needs with a Pre-K-12 focus on transitions and student achievement. Two examples of their efforts can be seen in the recasting of student handbooks, the rescheduling of the elementary schedule to support instruction and the district's initiative *Meeting the Needs of All Learners*.

#### ***Strategic Focus #4 - Communication and School Community Relations***

- Melrose Public Schools remains committed to providing clear and timely information using a multi-modal approach. We are working to provide the district with a clear vision to move the district forward with the help and support of all stakeholders. The district uses multiple channels for the dissemination of accurate and timely information regarding school policies, programs, procedures, achievements, decisions and critical issues as well as questions and/or feedback from parents, staff and community members.
- The district and school committee have established a joint goal to create and implement a communication plan that will keep stakeholders apprised of the

progress and support a continued focus on resources needed to achieve stated goals. We are also in the process of formulating guidelines for the use of these technologies to insure appropriate usage and address security and confidentiality concerns.

- The district continues to expand the use of communication mediums that are “green” friendly that are in line with 21<sup>st</sup> century trends relying more on electronic mediums and less on print. The initiatives under review in the district make use of the following communication vehicles to name a few:
  - Electronic - web, mail, teleconferencing, Connect-Ed, On-line surveys.
  - Print – notices, letters, flyers, handbooks, reports, surveys ( while we are moving to Green Model of posting materials on-line, we recognize that some families still require that we have print copies available for them as well).
  - Face to Face – PTO meetings, educational forums, office hours, public meetings, open house hours for K/1 parents to visit elementary schools as part of registration process, transition night for students moving up to both Middle School and High School. The High School also has information nights to inform students and parents of post-secondary opportunities in the world of work and to help them be college ready.
  - Media – Public Relations, MMTV/METV, local news media.
  - Outreach partnership efforts targeting colleges, business, Legislature and other school districts.
- Beginning with the opening of the new Melrose Veterans memorial Middle School two years ago, the district began working to upgrade phones in all schools shifting to Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) to increase access to schools and to place phones in classrooms. Melrose High School upgraded and expanded their capability last year. The elementary build out is linked to the build out of the fiber optic network servicing all municipal and school sites and a positive budget climate to complete the program.
- The district’s Leadership Team continues to work with Student Council and seeks to develop opportunities for students to take on leadership/governance roles.
- Melrose High School requires all students to complete 48 hours of community service to graduate over four years. It should be noted that:
  - Community service includes service within the high school as well as the community at large.

- Community organizations are encouraged to present service opportunities for student participation.
  - All community service opportunities are posted in the school and announced daily.
  - Each of the last four graduating classes has performed over 20,000 hours of service.
  - Approximately 40% of each of those classes performed at least 100 hours of service.
  - Students are involved nationally (Habitat for Humanity, SADD) and internationally (Operation Smile), as well as locally.
- Community Service at MVMMS is explained as follows:

Melrose Veterans Memorial Middle School students will be competing in a complex global economy, and their success will largely depend on their level of knowledge and skills. Research and experience has shown that when expectations are raised, student achievement improves. In addition to acquiring knowledge and skills, students need to have certain “personal qualities” that are necessary for success. The following five school-wide “personal qualities” are stressed at Melrose Veterans Memorial Middle School: honesty, responsibility, self-management, sociability and self-esteem. Sociability means being friendly and helpful, working politely, working well with others, being cooperative and kind, and showing empathy for others. In an effort to demonstrate “helpfulness,” we have instituted a community service component to our program. Each team will discuss individual and/or team community service projects. A record of each student’s community service is recorded and placed in his/her cumulative record.

The students complete an annual Community Service log that follows them to Melrose High School. The following is an example of recent community service project:

Melrose Veterans Memorial Middle School students **Rebecca K. 8B** and **Jillian H 8C**, along with their classmates, watched the special report title “Earthquake in Haiti” on the January 14, 2010 morning broadcast of WMVMMS-TV 85. The two students quickly organized a collection effort for the people of Haiti. Within one week the students collect \$850.00 by setting up donation table in the cafeteria.

## Summary of Internal Assessment

***Melrose began this strategic planning process by engaging in an internal assessment to gauge the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities available to the school district that can be addressed through the planning process in support of improving student achievement. The district's strategic planning consultant, working with the school system, conducted the internal assessment using a number of data sources. These included student data regarding enrollment and attendance, achievement, and school system accountability reported to and through the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Individual School Improvement Plans, reports to and from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) and the New England League of Middle Schools (NELMS), district budgets, previous Strategic Plans (2003-2008 and 2005-2010) and other district documents related to the internal operations of the school system were also reviewed and considered. Document and record reviews were followed up by related interviews with numerous administrators.***

***This assessment process identified improvement themes and critical issues on which to focus the strategic planning process and address future District improvement. This assessment summary is organized around the improvement themes and critical issues identified and is linked to the focus areas of the previous Strategic Plan\* . (\* see italicized note under each theme)***

### **Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment**

*Curricula, Instruction, and Student Learning*

District analysis completed for the spring 2008 administration of MCAS demonstrates a thorough and ongoing effort to use data contained in the results towards improvement of curriculum and instruction. Teachers need to continue to be engaged in and fully understand this analysis and its implications while being supported in determining how to apply the knowledge that is gained.

It is noteworthy that student English/Language Arts scores on spring MCAS administrations annually (2006-2008) demonstrate a healthy percentage of students (from 60-70+%) scoring in the Proficient or Advanced categories in all grades tested; well above state averages. Mathematics and Science scores reflect a somewhat different picture, with 50 - 60% of students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced categories in Grades 4-8; only slightly above, or at times at, state averages. This appears to be changing in grade 8 mathematics and science and in grade 5 mathematics as the district changes practices and places greater emphasis on these areas of curriculum and instruction, such as the recent implementation of the Harcourt math program at the elementary level. However, ongoing focused analysis and attention will be required to assess changes in curriculum and instruction, determine additional changes needed and provide support to teachers in order to effectively implement such changes.

The district is to be commended for achieving Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) criteria in the aggregate for all grade spans in English/Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics (Math) for the past two years. However, for the past year, special education and low income subgroups in grade span 3-5 did not make AYP in ELA and Math and the special education subgroup in grade span 6-8 did not make AYP in ELA

and Math for the past two years. A comprehensive plan, addressing all contributing factors must be clearly communicated and understood by all involved with these subgroups in order to adequately address this AYP issue.

Elementary School Improvement Plans reflect a focus on district-wide assessment and end of year benchmarks at each grade level. A focused and coordinated approach to addressing data driven instruction and decision making will best serve all elementary schools towards improving student achievement.

The middle school has made a substantial commitment, through team structural changes and provision of student support, to address mathematics achievement for all students using a more concentrated and coordinated approach. A systematic approach to collecting data to assess results of this approach is needed in order to measure the success of these changes.

The high school is approaching the end of an accreditation cycle and is undertaking a self-assessment as part of the NEASC process. A revised mission for the high school, and revised academic, social and civic expectations, have resulted in school wide rubrics for the purpose of measuring student progress in these areas. The next phase of work in relationship to accreditation will be connecting specific course content and assessments to the academic, social and civic expectations and associated rubrics. An organized approach to collecting data to assess results of such an approach will need to be established.

The district has supported teachers over the past few years in understanding and using a range of instructional strategies and instructional models through professional development. However, it is not clear that the use of such strategies or instructional models is uniformly connected to classroom practice across the district.

## **Student Support**

### *Student Support Services*

Currently the overall student to teacher ratio within the Melrose district as a whole is slightly higher than the state average. This appears to be particularly at the middle and high school levels where a number of class sizes approach or exceed 30. Early childhood class sizes have also been creeping upward in the past couple of years. Higher class sizes make it more difficult to address individual student support issues at any level of schooling.

A much needed increase in counseling/school psychologist staffing has occurred over the past couple of years to more comprehensively address special education and some counseling concerns. However, current staffing for school counselor or school adjustment counselor positions at the elementary and middle school is not always adequate in capacity for schools to address student needs or for the delivery structure needed. These positions can be viewed as preventative in nature, as they assist students and teachers in addressing school related behavioral and school adjustment matters in a proactive way.

The middle school student to administrator ratio is the highest in the school district. This has particular impact on the ability of administrators to proactively address behavior and school climate issues of significance to students in the middle school years.

Special Education staffing has increased over the past couple of years in order to address student needs and support the inclusion initiative underway in the district. This is critical to building district capacity to meet student needs in the least restrictive environment and should continue to be promoted and supported. Paraprofessional staffing has shown greater increase than special education teacher staffing. Criteria should be established to regularly assess the need for such staffing, the benefits to students of paraprofessional support versus increased professional staff and the most effective structure for service delivery.

Instructional Support Teams are functioning in each school. These teams seek to proactively identify students in need of alternative instructional models that can be implemented first in the classroom and if needed, through additional supports, termed Tier II supports. The district does not have many options related to Tier II supports other than Title I in one school and limited availability of a reading specialist in some elementary schools. With a recent reduction in Title I funds for Melrose and lack of Title I availability in every school, there is a need to address the issue of options for Tier II supports across the district.

### **School System Culture and Climate**

Some elementary School Improvement Plans speak to implementing a district-wide or school-wide program to address peer to peer social issues and behavioral expectations and reference is made to use of the Second Step Program. Evidence of the implementation of such a program across the elementary level is not consistent. With all elementary schools feeding into the same middle school, it would be beneficial to the system as a whole to have commonly understood behavioral expectations, protocols and procedures.

Similarly, there is a need to address and provide a consistent message about student to student respect and bullying at all levels, including middle and high schools. Results of the recently administered Youth Risk Behavior Survey should be helpful in identifying the focus for this.

### **Human Resources and Professional Development**

*Recruit, Train, and Develop Quality Educational Staff to Provide Excellence in Teaching*

The district has supported teachers over the past few years in understanding and using a range of instructional strategies and instructional models through professional development. It would be advantageous to the district to ensure district wide understanding of common instructional models, such as differentiated instruction and co-teaching, in order to more uniformly effect classroom practice across the district and reinforce use of these best practices.

The district is in the process of completing a review of teacher supervision and evaluation processes and tools for possible revisions. Any update/revision should ensure that there is linkage within process or evaluation tools to evidence of the implementation of knowledge and skills gained through the district's professional development program, as well as to the goals of the strategic plan.

There is an ongoing need to emphasize how the district goes about recruiting candidates for high demand positions in fields such as mathematics and science.

## **Facilities and Technology**

### *Facilities and Plant*

A major accomplishment in the area of facilities was the completion and opening of the Melrose Veterans Memorial Middle School in 2007. This facility provides a modern and state of the art environment for middle school education in Melrose. This spurred the implementation of technological upgrades across the district, with particular focus on the high school, as outlined in the district's Technology Plan. Those upgrades have proceeded over the past two years.

It will be important to ensure that technological support for the district does not lag behind the increase in technology availability. Individual sites do not have technology integration specialists to support teachers in the process of integrating technology into the curriculum and ensuring that technology benchmark standards are met by teachers and students. Technology support was revitalized through the technology department's reorganization and hiring and retaining personnel with the skill sets to provide hardware and infrastructure support. Upkeep and support of the new technology and maximizing its use should be a priority of the district in order to ensure the greatest benefit from the investment that has been made.

External and internal demands continue to increase for the creation and maintenance of multiple databases and use of data to inform district administrative and instructional decisions. Data management for the district should be addressed in planning for the district.

A Facilities Capital Improvement Plan, developed in relationship to the previous Strategic Plan, is updated annually. Facilities maintenance should continue in all buildings in order to address cost savings and safety issues.

## **Communications, Partnership and Planning**

### *School Community Relations*

A number of communication systems are in place across the district that provide substantial communication with parents and community members. Many of these are unconnected to one another and do not always provide a reliable voice for the school district. A comprehensive plan and approach to communications to ensure coordination among various groups and individuals would provide the district with a more consistent and unified system.

Melrose has a number of strong community partnerships, the Bridge: School and Community Partnership being one of the most noteworthy. This organization provides volunteers to the schools significantly adding to their resources in numerous areas. Melrose Chamber of Commerce, MAAV, the Melrose Human Rights Commission, Rotary International, North Suburban Family Network and others partner with the school on a number of initiatives. Continued enhancement of opportunities for partnership with community agencies and organizations such as these should continue be sought out as vehicles to augment school curriculum and programs, to build capacity of resources available to teachers and students and to provide a stronger understanding of what is going on in Melrose's schools.

## **Governance, Organizational Leadership and Funding**

### *Leadership and Governance*

While many administrators within the Melrose district are recent arrivals to the district, the leadership team has accomplished a number of substantial achievements within the past few years. However, coordination and consistency across the district in the implementation of various initiatives is not always apparent. This is especially clear among the elementary schools, but also evident from elementary to middle and middle to high school. District leadership needs to play a strong role in ensuring that school to school understanding of expectations and procedures related to initiatives are common and are monitored for consistency.

Melrose ranks ninth out of eleven districts that are similar in district structure, wealth<sup>1</sup> and enrollment in a comparison of FY08 per pupil expenditures and is below the state average in per pupil expenditure. Compared with four neighboring districts<sup>2</sup>, Melrose ranks fifth in both FY07 and FY08 per pupil expenditures. There is a clear need for increased funding for Melrose schools.

A number of organizations associated with Melrose schools, such as PTOs, Melrose Sharing and Caring, and Launch work to seek alternative funding possibilities for the schools and conduct fundraising activities. The school district does not have an Educational Foundation or similar organization that could conduct such activities on a larger, more comprehensive basis. Such an organization could be of help to the district now and in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> based on equalized property valuation per capita and median income per household (see Mass. DESE web site – <http://finance1.doe.mass.edu/schfin/statistics/ppx08>)

<sup>2</sup> Reading, Stoneham, Wakefield and Winchester

## Focus Groups and Interviews

Reaching out to stakeholders was a critical element in the development of the District's Strategic Plan. Focus groups served as the means for gathering data and feedback from the community about our schools. Future Management Systems (FMS), our consultant, facilitated three of the 12 focus groups and volunteers from the community, trained by FMS, facilitated the remaining 9 focus groups. In addition, FMS conducted phone interviews with six key local stakeholders who have a unique perspective about the schools, based on their positions in the community.

The following table summarizes pertinent information about these activities.

### Information about Stakeholder Groups

| Focus Group   | No. of Participants |
|---|---------------------|
| Teachers, Early Childhood & Elementary                              | 3                   |
| Teachers, Secondary   | 4                   |
| Parents, Early Childhood Center                                     | 9                   |
| Parents, Elementary   | 14                  |
| Non-Public Parents<br>(Home School, Private School, Charter School) | 7                   |
| Parents, Secondary  | 7                   |
| Parents of recent alumni  | 9                   |
| Students (High School)  | 9                   |
| Business/Charitable/Civic/<br>Clergy/Community Leaders              | 9                   |
| Youth Sports/Recreation/ Arts Community Leaders                     | 9                   |
| Elected Officials   | 10                  |
| Village Elders  | 6                   |
| Interviews Conducted with Town Officials and Community Partners     | 6                   |
| Community meeting participants                                      | 70                  |
| <b>TOTAL PARTICIPANTS</b>   | <b>172</b>          |

**Focus Group and Interview questions** were organized around the central planning question: What does the Melrose Public Schools need to do over the next five years to effectively ensure that Melrose's children are prepared for their roles as adults during the twenty-first century? In order to respond to that question as we developed the plan, the following questions were asked of all focus groups and interview participants:

1. What is the school district doing now that will serve its students well in preparing for their future?
2. Where could the school district improve in preparing students for their future?
3. What are the biggest obstacles the school district faces in this task?
4. Do you see current or future opportunities the school district should take advantage of in order to better prepare students for their future?

## Key Themes and Findings

The information provided below summarizes the key themes and overall findings of the focus groups and interviews. All groups responded to the same questions. Copies of notes can be viewed on the district's web site.

### **1. What is the school district doing now that will serve its students well in preparing for their future?**

#### **A. Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment**

- ◆ Strong curriculum and instruction provided at Early childhood and elementary programs.
- ◆ Implementation of new math at elementary and ELA curriculum implementation at Pre-K - elementary level.
- ◆ Good preparation for college provided at high school level, especially through AP and Honors courses and diversity of other course offerings.
- ◆ Strong, good quality Music program throughout the system.
- ◆ Support for the arts, increased arts offerings and demonstrations of top quality results.
- ◆ Focus on identifying all types of learners, providing accommodations and emphasizing differentiation of instruction and flexible grouping to meet the needs of all learners.
- ◆ Foreign language program offerings at high school, middle school and 5<sup>th</sup> grade.
- ◆ Middle school team concept, developmental appropriateness and integrated learning approach.

#### **B. Student Support**

- ◆ Beginnings of gifted and talented initiative planning.
- ◆ Services provided through special needs program.
- ◆ Early childhood center uses a very effective early intervention model.
- ◆ Guidance department collaboration, involvement and resources to help students plan for post graduation.
- ◆ After school program, Education Stations, is well structured, provides good enrichment emphasis, has well trained staff and children are well supervised.
- ◆ Clubs and athletic program and other extra and co-curricular offerings are diverse and accessible and have strong student involvement.

#### **C. School System Culture and Climate**

- ◆ Character development related programs help promote a caring community among younger children (i.e. Second Step).
- ◆ Peer mediation and student leadership opportunities.
- ◆ ECC model provides a positive experience and welcoming atmosphere.
- ◆ Diverse sports program at various levels and for all ages.
- ◆ High school and middle school student involvement in community service opportunities.

## **D. Human Resources and Professional Development**

- ◆ New hiring - good quality teachers and administrators.

## **E. Facilities and Technology**

- ◆ Continued commitment to capital facilities project over time.
- ◆ New facilities and upgrades, including investments in technology K-12.

## **F. Communication and Partnerships**

- ◆ Automated call systems (i.e. Connect Ed), emails very informative and useful.
- ◆ Open House in Middle school and 8<sup>th</sup> grade orientation provide parents with welcome information.
- ◆ Good communication with staff at the Early Childhood Center (ECC) with almost daily feedback to parents.
- ◆ Bridge volunteer program.
- ◆ Partnerships and communication with city departments.
- ◆ Strong PTOs and parent contributions to the schools.

## **G. Governance, Organizational Leadership and Funding**

- ◆ New leadership of the school system making greater efforts, positive changes, demonstrating greater visibility and community outreach and bringing the school system to a more current level.
- ◆ Good building leadership at some schools (ECC and Middle school given as examples).
- ◆ Strategic planning process is beneficial and proactive.

## **2. Where could the school district improve in preparing students for their future?**

### **A. Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment**

- ◆ K-12 curriculum and programs are fragmented and need better coordination across all levels. Need greater consistency, accountability and rigor and assurance that students are academically prepared to move from one level to the next.
- ◆ Start foreign language education earlier, middle school or elementary level and provide other language opportunities like GAPP exchange.
- ◆ Greater consistency of expectations for honors and AP courses at high school.
- ◆ Better management of multi academic levels in high school courses; not allowing such a large gap in curriculum and instructional expectations between college prep and honors level courses.
- ◆ Need a comprehensive health and wellness curriculum K-12 and use to address substance abuse and underage drinking issues.
- ◆ Insure consistency of curriculum program implementation and monitor for full implementation.

- ◆ Arts (i.e. visual, music and performing) need to be fully a part of the school curriculum, required K-12, and accessible for all students.
- ◆ Smaller class sizes K-12 – class sizes are too large.
- ◆ Better use of multiple intelligences and learning styles, differentiated instruction and flexibility in order to meet the needs of and challenge all learners K-12, including those in the middle.
- ◆ Improve on the implementation of co-taught model of teaching where special education students are included in general education classes.
- ◆ Lengthen the school day and the school year.
- ◆ Teach to the curriculum frameworks not to the MCAS.
- ◆ Demonstrate consistently high expectations for student learning and performance across K-12 and at each level.
- ◆ Improve the district's MCAS scores, especially in mathematics.

## **B. Student Support**

- ◆ Improve how parents can access timely support services for their children.
- ◆ Facilitate a speedier SPED process and improve what at times is an adversarial environment around accessing Special Education.
- ◆ Provide greater flexibility in how students progress through the system.
- ◆ Expand and strengthen the co-taught model of teaching and implementation of differentiated instruction in all classrooms.
- ◆ Provide consistent and inclusive preparation and planning that result in smoother transitions for students and parents from elementary to middle and middle to high school.
- ◆ Provide better explanations and feedback to students, beginning in freshman year, of what is needed to prepare for post-secondary planning for both college bound as well as non college bound students.
- ◆ Engage more middle and high school students by providing additional clubs and activities and expanding athletic offerings.

## **C. School System Culture and Climate**

- ◆ Build a positive, inclusive culture within all schools that addresses individual student needs, partnerships with parents and a caring and welcoming environment for all.
- ◆ Greater collaboration and interaction across school levels (i.e. elementary, middle, high school) to create greater understanding and pride (e.g. sharing special program information, mentoring, tutoring, etc.).
- ◆ Update and standardize school policies and practices across all schools and demonstrate consistency of expectations, procedures and guidelines across the school system.
- ◆ Address bullying and social emotional issues across the district and provide a home component to school curriculum around bullying and social skills.
- ◆ Change attitudes and consistently enforce rules around substance use and underage drinking.

## **D. Human Resources and Professional Development**

- ◆ Provide quality teaching staff across the system who are well qualified for their positions.
- ◆ Provide best practice evaluation and assessments of teachers to insure consistent, rigorous accountability for all teachers with consequences for underperforming teachers.
- ◆ Insure that teachers are accountable for implementation of district's curriculum and programmatic expectations.
- ◆ Provide consistent and quality leadership in each of the district's schools.
- ◆ Full commitment to training staff to feel comfortable in the use of technology and to optimize its use.
- ◆ Use multiple and creative means, using internal and external resources, to offer quality professional development opportunities that address district needs, as well as those of teachers, and to follow through on implementation of instructional models. (i.e. co-teaching, differentiated instruction).

## **E. Facilities and Technology**

- ◆ Provide greater access to facilities by the community beyond school hours
- ◆ Improve the quality of all facilities – from cleanliness to updating of older facilities' physical plants and ways to accommodate practice and performance spaces.
- ◆ Maximize potential of the new Middle School facility.
- ◆ Establish criteria and expectations for use of technology by all staff and enforce implementation.
- ◆ Demonstrate a full commitment to the use of technology, its integration into curriculum and classroom practices.
- ◆ Keep technology well maintained and regularly upgraded throughout the district.

## **F. Communication and Partnerships**

- ◆ Be more proactive, open, consistent and timely in communication between school/teachers and parents; insure that communication is 2-way.
- ◆ Improve online communication tools to better deliver information to parents from teachers and the school system about individual students, course/grade requirements, policies and school logistics.
- ◆ Provide greater information and more consistency about programs to the community...such as progress reports with measurable goals addressed..
- ◆ Provide orientation program to kindergarten parents and any parents of children who are new to the school system or to a school. Initial exposure to the district, as well as to a new school, is hard to navigate, e.g. registration, policy differences from school to school etc.
- ◆ Provide easily accessible means for getting prompt answers to questions or relaying concerns.
- ◆ Improve internal communication about students, new programs, and policy between grade levels, as well as district-wide.
- ◆ Do a better job of marketing the positive aspects of the school system.

- ◆ Build stronger individual parent/teacher partnerships that encourage more parent involvement K-12 and provide better support for parents to understand educational process and decisions.
- ◆ Need to strengthen communication, collaboration, and partnerships between the schools and city departments, community stakeholders, organizations, agencies, business community and alumni.

### **G. Governance, Organizational Leadership and Funding**

- ◆ Insure consistency of program implementation and provide progress reports on newly implemented programs, with measurable goals addressed.
- ◆ Regularly review and standardize school building and school system policies and practices.
- ◆ There has been limited innovation and flexibility in approach to solving problems.
- ◆ Consider lengthening the school day and school year.
- ◆ Provide a stronger commitment to fund Athletics and Fine Arts.
- ◆ Eliminate fees across the district (e.g. kindergarten, athletics, etc.).

### **3. What are the biggest obstacles the school district faces in this task?**

#### **A. Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment**

- ◆ Implementation of new programs lacks district prioritization and adequate time is not provided within the planning phase for effective implementation.
- ◆ Standardized testing (MCAS) and teaching to the MCAS test.
- ◆ Teachers need to provide less volume (i.e. busy work) and more focused work to most effectively support students in preparing for college.
- ◆ Inability to effectively use data (i.e. classroom assessments and standardized assessments).

#### **B. Student Support**

- ◆ Limits on support from Guidance counselors at the high school level to help students with guidelines and access to assistance in the college application process.
- ◆ Student placement policies at the high school level are not consistent - parental override is overused and student accountability is not adequately built in.
- ◆ Early detection of disabilities and implementation of interventions.

#### **C. School System Culture and Climate**

- ◆ The mindset of “this is the way we have always done it and we’re not interested in, nor do we see a need to change”... the culture of “just enough”.
- ◆ Viewing parents as the enemy instead of as partners.
- ◆ Cultural and diversity issues.

#### **D. Human Resources and Professional Development**

- ◆ Difficulty in attracting and retaining high quality staff members and administrators and having a parochial attitude in hiring new teachers and administrators.
- ◆ Lack of rigorous accountability for employee performance and ineffective approach with those who are not meeting job expectations.
- ◆ Contractual limitations and obstacles that make it difficult to hold underperforming teachers fully accountable, change instructional practices, and develop new systems of operations.
- ◆ Adequate degree and length of training for teachers to effectively address implementation of new programs and best practice.

#### **E. Facilities and Technology**

- ◆ Level of sophistication needed to manage the complex systems of new Middle School facility.
- ◆ Disparity of elementary facilities; overcrowding, limitations on core spaces.
- ◆ High school facilities in relation to current educational standards.
- ◆ Lack of technology knowledge and sophistication among the staff.

#### **F. Communications and Partnerships**

- ◆ Limited use of electronic communication.
- ◆ Perceptions of the quality of the school system and its value to the community.
- ◆ Lack of adequate communication and connection between people who fund the school system and the school system.
- ◆ Internal communication – inter department, school to school and within curriculum/content areas.
- ◆ Limited opportunities for parent involvement and viewing parents as the enemy instead of the partner.

#### **G. Governance, Organizational Leadership and Funding**

- ◆ Lack of consistency and accountability at all levels for implementing programs and school practices while trying to address many initiatives at once with little or no prioritization.
- ◆ Time limitations – e.g. length of school day and school year, teacher training and planning - Too many issues too little time.
- ◆ Lack of consistent leadership quality in all schools and across the district's administration.
- ◆ The lack of acknowledgment, at some levels, of need to change, the pace of change and resistance to it, as well as limitations on ability to lead change given size of school system and resources available.
- ◆ Pressure and stress of competing with Charter Schools and private schools and distorted perceptions of public schools.
- ◆ Lack of systems and infrastructure that promote a performance based culture.
- ◆ Money and resources available for the school system's needs and demographic limitations on access to certain benefits, grants and funding formulas.
- ◆ State and federal funding mechanisms (i.e. prop 2.5, NCLB, Chapter 70 funding-local aid formula inequality).

- ◆ People's perceptions across demographics of the city of what education is worth and their willingness to pay; lack of trust in how money is going to be spent, and limited commitment to improving and maintaining schools.
- ◆ Dealing with unpredictable, large special education costs.

**4. Do you see current or future opportunities the school system should take advantage of in order to better prepare students for their future?**

**A. Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment**

- ◆ Develop procedures to address inconsistency of curriculum K-12; from school to school, from elementary to middle and middle to high school, and among levels at multi-level schools (i.e. high school).
- ◆ Follow through on new program implementation.
- ◆ Better communication grade level-to-grade level about individual student learning needs to assist in transitions.
- ◆ Greater and more consistent use and application of differentiated instruction, knowledge about multiple intelligences, learning styles, multi-age grouping and grouping by readiness to learn rather than ability grouping or gifted and talented programs.
- ◆ Extended learning time through a longer school day.

**B. Student Support**

- ◆ Improve process and communication to improve transitions from grade to grade and one level to another K-12.
- ◆ Increase understanding of internship opportunities, their benefits for students and their accessibility.
- ◆ A sharper focus with students, beginning at freshman year and continuing through senior year, on what is needed for post secondary preparation and post secondary success.

**C. School System Culture and Climate**

- ◆ More opportunities for student participation in community service, starting early on. (i.e. elementary).
- ◆ Helping students to accept and embrace diversity and promote inclusion for all.

**D. Human Resources and Professional Development**

- ◆ Be more aggressive in attracting a more diverse staff (i.e. gender, racial, ethnic).
- ◆ Develop career paths for talented teachers and administrators, while mentoring and modeling best practices.
- ◆ Provide professional development for the district that most effectively provides teachers with more applied and specialized training to support district programs and initiatives.

**E. Facilities and Technology**

- ◆ Be more proactive in investment in facilities' energy improvements and savings, using state and federal incentives.
- ◆ Use the facilities for revenue generating (e.g. night school, community education), while encouraging use of school facilities by school and community members.
- ◆ Continue to embrace technology, staying current and applying its use to all aspects of how the district conducts business and its mission.

## **F. Communications and Partnerships**

- ◆ Use communication technology to promote more effective, proactive communication internally and with parents, students and the community.
- ◆ Promote positive school programs (e.g. robotics) and activities and the progress of initiatives through an enhanced public relations outreach, using existing media/tools (e.g. MMTV, newspapers, websites) and designate an individual who will lead such an effort.
- ◆ Establish a more user friendly means of two-way, proactive and direct communication with parents and the community.
- ◆ Create better ways to harness parent enthusiasm, energy, talent, and skills.
- ◆ Promote greater collaboration with other communities, organizations, the Melrose business community and the educational community. (i.e. colleges and universities) to enhance all athletics, arts, academic offerings and opportunities and strengthen student support such as mentoring and internships.
- ◆ Utilize The Bridge more creatively and extensively across K-12 and expand the volunteer program for use both inside and outside of classrooms.
- ◆ Partner with alumni by establishing a vigorous MPS alumni association to increase community pride in schools, provide connections to student population and fund raising sources.
- ◆ Outreach to colleges and universities and students themselves, to survey preparedness of MHS graduates.

## **G. Governance, Organizational Leadership and Funding**

- ◆ Investigate extended day options.
- ◆ Demonstrate accountability and openness to constructive criticism and be flexible and proactive in approach in order to take advantage of opportunities.
- ◆ Effectively use the strategic planning process.
- ◆ Use committee of parent/community/school members to more aggressively seek grants and alternative funding sources and maximize use of new federal and state programs.
- ◆ Establish an education foundation to seek out greater community support and funding.

## Planning Themes and Goals

Presented below are the seven themes with accompanying goals of the Melrose Public Schools' strategic plan.

### **Theme: Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment**

**Goal:** Ensure that rigorous, well coordinated Pre-K-12 curricula and highly effective instruction and assessment practices are consistently implemented across levels to meet the needs of and challenge all learners and provide an academic pathway that effectively supports students' transitions from one level to the next and their preparation for post-secondary experiences.

### **Theme: Student Support**

**Goal:** Anticipate, plan and provide for the academic, emotional, physical, and social needs of learners, across the range of abilities and backgrounds to support all students in their learning, growth and development.

### **Theme: School System Culture and Climate**

**Goal:** Ensure a safe, caring and welcoming environment for all students, where the unique qualities and diversity of students are recognized and respected and where collaboration and support among teachers, staff, administrators, parents and community members are the norm.

### **Theme: Human Resources and Professional Development**

**Goal:** Ensure the quality, effectiveness and continuity of staff through consistent use of comprehensive and exemplary recruitment, staff development, supervision and evaluation practices.

### **Theme: Facilities and Technology**

**Goal:** Provide equitable educational facilities, technological tools and the associated infrastructure needed across the district to meet teaching and learning needs and provide a quality 21<sup>st</sup> century education for children of Melrose.

### **Theme: Communication and Partnerships**

**Goal:** Implement comprehensive communication systems and partnerships with parents and the community that build shared understanding and trust and enhance the educational program.

### **Theme: Governance, Organizational Leadership and Funding**

**Goal:** Establish strong and coordinated leadership and organizational structures across the school district that support continuous improvement, adequacy of resources and provide a quality education for all students in Melrose.

## Measures of Success

The following pages contain multiple concrete measures of success and targets for each goal. Measures of Success are 3-5 concrete indicators of successful fulfillment of each goal. Benchmarks are annual targets for each indicator, against which we can measure progress.

## Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

Ensure that rigorous, well coordinated Pre-K-12 curricula and highly effective instruction and assessment practices are consistently implemented across levels to meet the needs of and challenge all learners and provide an academic pathway that effectively supports students' transitions from one level to the next and their preparation for post-secondary experiences.

| Success Measures  | Benchmarks  |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|   | Y1<br>'10-11  | Y2<br>'11-12  | Y3<br>'12-13  | Y4<br>'13-14  | Y5<br>'14-15  |
| A web-based curriculum map, showing horizontal and vertical articulation of Pre-K-12 curricula, is in place, consistently and effectively used by teachers and administrators, and is available to parents and the community. | Curriculum mapping process begun with previously trained staff. Concepts introduced to all staff. | Training completed for all staff and mapping teams established    | Data entry completed  | Curriculum map published. Revision/update process in place.       | Curriculum map is fully implemented and utilized by all staff and is accessible by parents. |
| 80% of Melrose students in the aggregate will have a student growth percentile of 40% or higher based on DESE data.<br>* projections based on '09 data indicating 54%   | Baseline established-54%<br>Concepts introduced to all staff.                                     | 60% of students in aggregate have 40% or higher growth percentile | 66% of students in aggregate have 40% or higher growth percentile | 72% of students in aggregate have 40% or higher growth percentile | 80<br>X% of students in aggregate have 40% or higher growth percentile                      |
| 80% of Melrose students in subgroups will have a student growth percentile of 40% or higher in ELA and Math.<br>*projections based on'09 data indicating 45%  | Baseline established-45%<br>Concepts introduced to all staff.                                     | 53% of students in subgroups have 40% or higher growth percentile | 62% of students in subgroups have 40% or higher growth percentile | 71% of students in subgroups have 40% or higher growth percentile | 80% of students in subgroups have 40% or higher growth percentile                           |
| PK-12 staff members trained in instructional models relative to their teaching responsibilities through district professional development programs.<br>* N.B. Percent of teachers trained will be based on prior year's data. | Instructional models identified and training needs assessed                                       | * X% of teachers trained  | * X% of teachers trained  | * X% of teachers trained  | * X% of teachers trained  |
| Classroom observations provide evidence that instructional strategies from new district professional development initiatives are effectively applied in classroom instruction at all levels.                                  | Baselines established based on previous training: 20%   | Increase by 20% (40%)   | Increase by 20% (60%)   | Increase by 20% (80%)   | Increase by 20% (80%)   |
| A Pre-K-12 assessment system and accompanying rubrics are developed, piloted and in use in relation to grade level skills and strategies/course outcomes.   | Develop   | Develop   | Development completed and pilots begun                            | Pilots continued & implementation begun                           | Implementation  |
| Common methods for using data to inform instruction and improve student performance are established and in use by teachers and administrators.  | Data use training begun   | Data teams in place for administrators                            | Data teams functioning by grade level                             | Data teams functioning by specific academic domains               | Data teams functioning at all levels  |

## Student Support

Anticipate, plan and provide for the academic, emotional, physical, and social needs of learners, across the range of abilities and backgrounds to support all students in their learning, growth and development.

| Success Measures   | Benchmarks  |   |                                 |                               |                               |
|--|---|---|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
|  | Y1<br>'10-11  | Y2<br>'11-12  | Y3<br>'12-13                    | Y4<br>'13-14                  | Y5<br>'14-15                  |
| Parents, teachers, and students report that revised transition practices and services (school-to-school, grade-to-grade) at the Pre-K-K; K – 1; 5 – 6; 8 – 9 grade levels meet their needs as measured by parents and student surveys. | Baseline established  | 80% report positively                                   | 85% report positively           | 90% report positively         | 95% report positively         |
| System-wide tiered academic and behavioral approaches using Student Support Intervention Teams and clearly delineated academic, emotional, physical and social protocols and procedures are developed, piloted and implemented.        | Developed where not in place<br>Assessed and refined where in place | Implemented at all school sites                         | Implemented at all school sites | Reassess and revise as needed | Implement revision            |
| Procedures and criteria are developed and consistently in use for new special education program development and regular evaluation of all student support programs.  | Develop   | Institute and reassess                                  | Institute and reassess          | Institute and reassess        | Institute and reassess        |
| The needs of low incidence special education population are met through quality in-district program development and help to prevent unnecessary out of district placements for special education.                                      | Program development baseline established                            | Maintain or decrease baseline                           | Maintain or decrease baseline   | Maintain or decrease baseline | Maintain or decrease baseline |
| High school guidance program evidences focused and expanded services as determined by NEASC standards and the Massachusetts School Counselors' Association's Model for School Counseling Programs.                                     | Identify expanded services  | Develop and train counseling staff on expanded services | pilot                           | Implement and assess          | Implement and assess          |

### School System Culture and Climate

Ensure a safe, caring and welcoming environment for all students, where the unique qualities and diversity of students are recognized and respected and where collaboration and support among teachers, staff, administrators, parents and community members are the norm.

| Success Measures  | Benchmarks  |                           |                               |               |               |
|---|---|---------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
|   | Y1<br>'10-11  | Y2<br>'11-12              | Y3<br>'12-13                  | Y4<br>'13-14  | Y5<br>'14-15  |
| Decreased levels of bullying and harassment infractions as measured by the number of referrals Pre-K-12.  | Baseline established  | 20% decrease              | 40% decrease                  | 60% decrease  | 80% decrease  |
| Students and staff at least annually participate in formal initiatives that promote awareness and sensitivity to diversity and celebration of student growth and accomplishment in all schools. | Initiatives identified at each school   | Fully implemented         | Assessed annually for updates |               |               |
| Staff, parents and students participate in shared-decision making through the schools, school councils, and district-wide committees.   | Shared decision making constructs established in school councils and district-wide committees | In place                  | In place                      | In place      |               |
| School district climate and culture is monitored annually through student, teacher and parent surveys to determine improvement initiatives and monitor results.                                 | Survey developed  | Baseline data established | 75% favorable                 | 85% favorable | 90% favorable |

## Human Resources and Professional Development

Ensure the quality, effectiveness and continuity of staff through consistent use of comprehensive and exemplary recruitment, staff development, supervision and evaluation practices.

| Success Measures   | Benchmarks  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Y1<br>'10-11  | Y2<br>'11-12  | Y3<br>'12-13  | Y4<br>'13-14  | Y5<br>'14-15  |
| The district annually publishes a professional development plan, with clearly identified outcomes, that demonstrates linkage to the priorities of the Strategic Plan.  | A professional development committee with representation from all levels and units is formed  | A district-wide professional development plan with clearly identified outcomes is created and communicated.                                   | The professional development plan is implemented and evaluated                            | The district-wide professional development plan is revised according to evaluation and current student and staff needs. | The district-wide professional development plan is implemented and evaluated              |
| The district's professional development opportunities for staff are rated as meaningful, productive and effective by 85% of participants.  | A professional development evaluation form is created by the professional development committee and utilized for all professional development experiences | PD opportunities are rated as meaningful, productive and effective by 75% of participants   | PD opportunities are rated as meaningful, productive and effective by 80% of participants | PD opportunities are rated as meaningful, productive and effective by 85% of participants                               | PD opportunities are rated as meaningful, productive and effective by 85% of participants |
| Evaluation processes for teachers, teaching assistants, nurses, custodians, office personnel, administrators, and superintendent are reviewed, refined and revised to reflect district commitment to high expectations, best practices and effective job performance, and are linked to professional development outcomes and strategic plan priorities. | Evaluation processes and procedures are discussed with all bargaining units.  | Evaluation tools are refined and approved to reflect district commitment to high expectations, best practices, and effective job performance. | Implement use of new evaluation tools and survey their effectiveness.                     | Revise and refine tools   | Utilize revised instruments   |

## Facilities and Technology

Provide equitable educational facilities, technological tools and the associated infrastructure needed across the district to meet teaching and learning needs and provide a quality 21<sup>st</sup> century education for children of Melrose.

| Success Measures  | Benchmarks   |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|
|   | Y1<br>'10-11   | Y2<br>'11-12   | Y3<br>'12-13   | Y4<br>'13-14   | Y5<br>'14-15   |
| Winthrop Elementary School and the high school building facilities are on par with other educational facilities in the district.  | Evaluate needs and prepare cost analysis   | Prioritize upgrades based on needs of the schools and fund work within budget  | Prioritize upgrades based on needs of the schools and fund work within budget  | Prioritize upgrades based on needs of the schools and fund work within budget  | Prioritize upgrades based on needs of the schools and fund work within budget  |
| A multi-year district technology plan is developed and implemented with a focus on strengthening the reliability and capacity of the infrastructure and maintenance and replacement of equipment.   | Evaluate system status including currently planned upgrades And prioritize needs in district technology plan | Prioritize upgrades based on needs of the schools and upgrade as budget allows | Prioritize upgrades based on needs of the schools and upgrade as budget allows | Prioritize upgrades based on needs of the schools and upgrade as budget allows | Prioritize upgrades based on needs of the schools and upgrade as budget allows |
| Technology skill goals and benchmarks for staff at all levels are developed implemented, and consistently referenced to measure technological proficiency<br><b>N.B.</b> The STaR Chart can help any institution answer three critical questions:<br>1. Is your school using technology effectively to ensure the best possible teaching and learning?<br>2. What is your school's current education technology profile?<br>3. What areas should your school focus on to improve its level of technology integration? | StaRS benchmarks adopted and method of assessment established  | Implement High School  | Implement Middle School  | Implement Elementary schools   | Full implementation  |
| The district's five year plan for facilities, grounds, maintenance and capital expenditures is annually updated and implemented as funding is available in order to maintain parity among facilities.   | Evaluate needs and update current plan to reflect cost and priorities  | Evaluate needs and update current plan to reflect cost and priorities          | Evaluate needs and update current plan to reflect cost and priorities          | Evaluate needs and update current plan to reflect cost and priorities          | Evaluate needs and update current plan to reflect cost and priorities          |

## Communication and Partnerships

Implement comprehensive communication systems and partnerships with parents and the community that build shared understanding and trust and enhance the educational program.

| Success Measures  | Benchmarks   |   |  |                                      |   |
|---|--|---|--|--------------------------------------|---|
|   | Y1<br>'10-11   | Y2<br>'11-12                              | Y3<br>'12-13   | Y4<br>'13-14                         | Y5<br>'14-15  |
| A district web-based student data management tool that is also a parent communication tool is developed and implemented.  | Data management tools explored   | Purchase of tool and training             | Implementation   | Analyze and evaluate actions         | Make revisions as needed                              |
| A computerized report card at the elementary level, designed to accurately report the skills and strategies obtained by students, is developed and implemented.                                 | To gather data on current report cards being used and explore other options. | Develop report cards for grades K- 2      | Develop report card for grades 3 - 5<br><br>Piloted K-2 grade levels | Fully implement K-2<br><br>Pilot 3-5 | Fully implement and analyze and evaluate report cards |
| District parents report an increasingly favorable rating of school parent partnership on school effectiveness surveys to achieve a 90% rating.  | Survey developed   | Survey in place and baseline established  | 75% favorable  | 85% favorable                        | 90% favorable   |
| District parents report an increasingly favorable rating of the school system overall and their knowledge of the school system's goals on school effectiveness surveys to achieve a 90% rating. | Survey developed   | Survey in place and benchmark established | 75% favorable  | 85% favorable                        | 90% favorable   |
| 95% of community groups give the school system a favorable rating related to their knowledge of the school system's goals on annual feedback surveys.   | Survey developed   | Survey in place and benchmark established | 75% favorable  | 85% favorable                        | 90% favorable   |

**Governance, Organizational Leadership and Funding**

Establish strong and coordinated leadership and organizational structures across the school district that support continuous improvement, adequacy of resources and provide a quality education for all students in Melrose.

| Success Measures   | Benchmarks   |  |   |   |   |
|--|--|--|---|---|---|
|  | Y1<br>'10-11   | Y2<br>'11-12   | Y3<br>'12-13                                | Y4<br>'13-14                                | Y5<br>'14-15                                |
| Collaborative efforts that support consensus building and distributed leadership are implemented at school sites and across the school community to support the goals of the strategic plan. | Establish plans for teams' collaborative efforts to support strategic plan | All school sites and school community groups put into practice focused collaborative initiatives that tie back to district and school based priorities | Ongoing based on work done in prior year(s) | Ongoing based on work done in prior year(s) | Ongoing based on work done in prior year(s) |
| Strategic Planning benchmarks are reported to the School Committee and community annually and resulting priorities for the next school year are established and reported.                    | Fully establish and refine benchmarks and reporting mechanism              | Full report  | Full report                                 | Full report                                 | Full report                                 |
| Alternative funding sources and options are established.   | Explore Alternative funding sources and options                            | Alternative funding sources developed  | Alternative funding sources in place        | Alternative funding sources in use          | X   |

## Planning Strategies

Presented below are the strategies that support the implementation of the goals of the Melrose Public Schools' strategic plan. Strategies are statements of approaches to be taken in achieving the related goal.

### **Goal: Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment**

Ensure that rigorous, well coordinated Pre-K-12 curricula and highly effective instruction and assessment practices are consistently implemented across levels to meet the needs of and challenge all learners and provide an academic pathway that effectively supports students' transitions from one level to the next and their preparation for post-secondary experiences.

#### **Strategies**

1. Implement curriculum at every grade level that is consistent within and between grade levels and ensures effective, coordinated course sequences throughout the district
2. Provide highly effective instruction in every classroom using instructional models that challenge and support all learners.
3. Ensure the effective use of multiple forms of assessment to inform teachers' instructional practices, to regularly provide meaningful feedback to students and parents, and to support progress monitoring and accountability efforts at all levels of the school system.

### **Goal: Student Support**

Anticipate, plan and provide for the academic, emotional, physical, and social needs of learners, across the range of abilities and backgrounds to support all students in their learning, growth and development.

#### **Strategies**

1. Strengthen transition planning and practices from grade to grade and from level to level across the school district, in order to meet the needs of students and parents.
2. Expand approaches and options for high school guidance services and resources for college and non-college bound students, as they plan for post secondary experiences
3. Establish a tiered model of intervention at all schools for students identified as academically or behaviorally at risk
4. Establish consistent procedures for PreK-12 special education and other student support program development and evaluation
5. Continue implementation of co-teaching model across the district

### **Goal: School System Culture and Climate**

Ensure a safe, caring and welcoming environment for all students, where the unique qualities and diversity of students are recognized and respected and where collaboration and support among teachers, staff, administrators, parents and community members are the norm.

#### **Strategies**

1. A comprehensive health and wellness curriculum, Pre-K through 12, which includes strong social competence and anti-bullying and harassment components is developed and implemented
2. Build a sense of community within all schools, where the attitudes of all are inclusive and each student and parent experiences a sense of belonging.

3. Expand and strengthen opportunities, at each school and across the district, for collaboration and support among teachers, staff, administrators, parents, community members and students.

**Goal: Human Resources and Professional Development**

Ensure the quality, effectiveness and continuity of staff through consistent use of comprehensive and exemplary recruitment, staff development, supervision and evaluation practices.

**Strategies**

1. Provide a comprehensive professional development and technical training system for all personnel that addresses the district's and schools' goals, and stays current with advancements in education and technology.
2. Develop stronger, more comprehensive faculty and staff supervision and evaluation practices and tools that reflect district commitment to high expectations, best practices and effective job performance and the district's goals.

**Goal: Facilities and Technology**

Provide equitable educational facilities, technological tools and the associated infrastructure needed across the district to meet teaching and learning needs and provide a quality 21<sup>st</sup> century education for children of Melrose.

**Strategies**

1. Ensure that the district's technology and technology infrastructure are current, with equitable access for all schools.
2. Provide adequate tools and training for teachers across the district to be knowledgeable and current in integrating technology into curriculum and instruction and introducing students to use of technology as learning and research tools.
3. Insure parity of educational facilities across the district.

**Goal: Communication and Partnerships**

Implement comprehensive communication systems and partnerships with parents and the community that build shared understanding and trust and enhance the educational program.

**Strategies**

1. Develop and implement a comprehensive district communication plan that will help parents and the community better understand school curricula, practices and policies and awareness of the school system's needs.
2. Expand and strengthen partnerships with community organizations and institutional resources to assist in supporting students, their families and the educational program.

**Goal: Governance, Organizational Leadership and Funding**

Establish strong and coordinated leadership and organizational structures across the school district that support continuous improvement, adequacy of resources and provide a quality education for all students in Melrose.

**Strategies**

1. The administrative leadership will continue to work together to maintain shared vision and goals based on a consensus model.
2. Collaboratively work with teachers, parents, students, and community members to build the capacity for leadership in support of the vision and goals of this plan.
3. Insure that annual benchmarks are used to regularly report on the progress of the plan's implementation and establishing of school system priorities, and that the results are disseminated to the community.
4. Explore ways in which parents and community members, along with school staff, can enhance access to alternative funding sources to support the educational program of Melrose Public Schools.

## Implementation and Accountability

The implementation of the Strategic Plan is the next critical step in successfully navigating the district's future. This requires the development of an annual action plan that links the goals and strategies to what the district specifically will do each year toward achieving our defined goals and reaching annual benchmarks.

The strategies serve as the departure point for the action plan template that follows. The template also includes accountability data, including due date, person(s) responsible, and success measures. The strategies were developed from focus group, stakeholder interview and internal assessment findings. District staff will identify actions needed to be taken each year that utilize the strategies that fulfill goals.

The actions of numerous initiatives already underway in Melrose Public Schools will need to be identified and integrated into the annual action plan. The developers of the actions must be as forward-thinking as possible in considering current issues, new ideas, innovative methods, and possible resources in fulfilling goals.

A system of reporting and of reviewing the results of the annual action plan will be established in consultation with the School Committee. A timeframe for such reporting will involve interim reports during the school year, as well as a final annual report. Reports will contain clear outcomes of the actions taken and will be shared and communicated with stakeholder audiences through public venues, keeping accountability at the forefront.

**Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment**

Ensure that rigorous, well coordinated Pre-K-12 curricula and highly effective instruction and assessment practices are consistently implemented across levels to meet the needs of and challenge all learners and provide an academic pathway that effectively supports students’ transitions from one level to the next and their preparation for post-secondary experiences.

| Strategies   | Actions | Due Date | Person(s) Responsible<br>(Lead, Implement, Support) |
|--|---------|----------|---|
| Implement curriculum at every grade level that is consistent and coordinated across grade levels and course sequences.                             |         |          |   |
|  |         |          |   |
|  |         |          |   |
|  |         |          |   |
|  |         |          |   |
| Provide highly effective instruction in every classroom using instructional models that challenge and supports learners at all achievement levels. |         |          |   |
|  |         |          |   |
|  |         |          |   |

### Student Support

Anticipate, plan and provide for the academic, emotional, physical, and social needs of learners, across the range of abilities and backgrounds to support all students in their learning, growth and development.

| Strategies   | Actions   | Due Date         | Person(s) Responsible<br>(Lead, Implement, Support)   |
|--|---|------------------|---|
| Strengthen transition planning and practices from grade to grade and from level to level across the school district, in order to meet the needs of students and parents. | Expand the utilization of a database tool to coordinate the academic performance and skill information for the incoming 6 <sup>th</sup> graders from the 5 elementary schools | May/June 2011    | Middle School Admin. (L) (I)<br>Elementary Principals (S)<br>Curriculum Coordinator (S)<br>5 <sup>th</sup> Grade teachers (S) |
|  | Assess and if necessary, revise practice of clustering in the development of elementary class lists based on performance and growth data                                      | May 2011         | Elementary Principals (L) (I)<br>Meeting the Needs Building coordinators (S)<br>Curriculum coordinator (S)                    |
|  | Continue practice of site visits by elementary school teams to the Early Childhood Center   | April 2011       | ECC Director (L)<br>Elementary Principals (I)<br>ECC Educational Team Facilitator (S)   |
|  | Institute an Special Education parent info night for 8 <sup>th</sup> grade to 9 <sup>th</sup> grade students, similar to the 5 <sup>th</sup> to 6 <sup>th</sup> grade         | March/April 2011 | PPS Director (L)<br>Secondary Special Ed. Administrator (I)<br>MS Principal (S)<br>HS Principal (S)                           |
|  |   |                  |   |
| Expand approaches and options for high school guidance services and resources for college and non-college bound students, as they plan for post secondary experiences.   | Explore expanded capabilities of Naviance computer program to implement greater support systems using the targeted data.  | June 2011        | HS Principal (L)<br>HS Guidance Staff (I)   |
|  | Review Guidance Survey results to target areas of need for further student support  | November 2010    | HS Guidance Staff (L) (I)   |
|  |   |                  |   |

| Strategies  | Actions  | Due Date                    | Person(s) Responsible<br>(Lead, Implement, Support)  |
|---|--|-----------------------------|--|
| Establish a tiered model of intervention at all schools for students identified as academically or behaviorally at risk.    | Purchase technology tools at the elementary level for reading and math intervention at the Tier II level for academically at-risk students, providing data for progress monitoring     | Sept. 2010                  | Elementary Principals (L)<br>Technology Dept. (S)<br>Classroom teachers (I)  |
|   | Restructure Middle School MCAS class to provide targeted intervention to students in need of Tier II supports  | Sept. 2010                  | Middle School Admin. (L)<br>Teachers (I )<br>Curriculum Coordinator (S)  |
|   | Revise Instructional Support Team (IST) Documentation and procedures to reflect a 3 Tier approach to supporting students and data collection from interventions                        | Sept. 2011                  | Curriculum Coordinator (L)<br>PPS Director (S)<br>Elementary Principals (L) (I)<br>IST Teams (I)                           |
|   | Identify professional development needs of general education and special education staff on a tiered model of instruction and incorporate into district Professional Development Plan  | June 2011                   | Building principals (L)<br>PPS Director (L)<br>Curriculum Coordinator (I)  |
|   | Establish common elements of elementary building based positive behavior systems   | June 2011                   | Building principals (L)  |
|   | Establish procedures for clinical supervision and consultation with staff on behavioral/emotional concerns, while exploring expanded funding sources for future expansion of supports. | June 2011                   | PPS Director (L)<br>School Psych/Social Workers (I)<br>Building Principal (I)<br>ETF (S)                                   |
| Establish consistent procedures for PreK-12 special education and other student support program development and evaluation. | Develop and distribute a current and comprehensive Special Education Procedural Manual   | September 2010              | PPS Director (L)<br>Educational team Facilitators (I)<br>Principals (I)<br>Special Education Staff (S)                     |
|   | Program evaluation and re-design of the Middle School Alternative program  | September 2010-January 2011 | PPS Director (L)<br>Middle School Principal (I)<br>Secondary SPED Administrator (I)<br>Middle School Special Ed. Staff (S) |

| Strategies  | Actions   | Due Date       | Person(s) Responsible<br>(Lead, Implement, Support)   |
|---|---|----------------|---|
| Continue implementation of co-teaching model across the district. | Implement co-teaching at Hoover, Horace Mann, and Winthrop Elementary schools   | September 2010 | PPS Director (L) (S)<br>Elementary Principals (I)<br>Special Education Teachers (I)<br>General Education Teachers (I) |
|   | Hire two special education teachers at Horace Mann, two special education teachers at Hoover, and one special education teacher at Winthrop | August 2010    | Elementary Principals (L) (I)<br>PPS Director (S)   |
|   |   |                |   |
|   |   |                |   |

## **Appendices**

**A: References**

**B: Glossary**

## References

The following are some of the sources referenced in the development of the strategic plan:

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education web site:

<http://www.deo.mass.edu>

School/District Profiles: Melrose – general, students, teachers, finances, assessment, and accountability  
Reading, Stoneham, Wakefield - finances

<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/> retrieved August, 2009

Melrose Public Schools documents –

Strategic Plan 2005-2010

SIMS report for 2008-2009 school year

EPIMS report for 2009

FY2010 and 2009 Budgets

Individual School Improvement Plans 2009-2010

NEASC special reports for 2002 and 2003

Facilities Capital Improvement Plan

Melrose Public Schools web site – <http://www.melroseschools.com/>

## Glossary of Terms

The following abbreviations are used in the Action Plan located in Appendix A, in the Success Measures and in other parts of the plan.

- Actions:** The steps that will be needed to enact the strategy and reach each goal.  
*(These are the specific steps we will take ...)*
- Action Plans:** Specific, detailed strategies, actions, improvement targets and timelines based upon data analyses which address a critical issue within a goal statement.
- Core Values:** The underlying beliefs that shape decisions and choices of the school district.
- Curriculum Mapping:** Curriculum mapping is a procedure for collecting data about the actual curriculum in a school district using the school calendar as an organizer. Data are gathered in a format that allows each teacher to present an overview of his or her students' actual learning experiences. The fundamental purpose of mapping is communication. The composite of each teacher's and/or discipline's map in a building or district provides access to a PK-12 curriculum perspective both vertically and horizontally.
- Differentiated Instruction:** Instruction that uses varied teaching methods, materials and assessments to meet different needs of students such as learning styles, learning levels and interests as opposed to adopting a standard approach that presumes all students of a given age or grade are alike.
- English Language Learners (ELL):** Students enrolled in U.S. schools who speak a language other than English and are unable to complete class work in English. They are known as limited-English-proficient (LEP) students. They are either immigrants or children born in the United States. Each LEP student receives English-as-a-second-language services.
- Focus Group:** Members of the schools and community working together to review and respond to specific questions about the school district; generally meeting only once.
- Goal:** A statement of a desired situation or state. *(What we want to do or be...)*; outline in broad terms how the mission and vision will be fulfilled.
- Inclusion:** The practice of educating children with disabilities alongside their non-disabled peers in a general education classroom. The Individuals with Disabilities Act requires that disabled children be educated in the "least restrictive environment" possible.

**Measures of Success:**

The factors that will tell us that we have succeeded in implementing the actions.  
*(We will know if we are successful if ...)*

**Mission:**

A clear concise statement of the school district's purpose and intentions; it defines why an organization exists and provides the rationale for goal setting; it serves as a standard by which all plan components are judged

**NEASC:**

New England Association of Schools and Colleges, which is responsible for school accreditation in the New England region.

**Person(s) Responsible:**

The key personnel who will lead, implement, and support the strategies and actions of the Action Plan. The "lead" person is the one to be contacted for further information about this action.

**PK – 12:**

Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12.

**Professional Development:**

Education and training to provide teachers and other school professionals with additional knowledge and skills to support improved student learning and achievement.

**Strategic Plan:**

A long range guide detailing specific steps that an organization will take to achieve its vision and mission.

**Strategic Planning:**

A complex and ongoing learning process of organizational change oriented towards the anticipated future; it is based upon the analysis of internal and external data and it intends to focus effort and resources to reach its purposes

**Strategies:**

The manner in which the school district's goals will be approached. *(What we will do to achieve this goal...)*

**Student Growth Percentile:**

Massachusetts has developed a statistically valid method of measuring growth in student, group, school, and district performance over time. The growth model complements the MCAS year-by-year test scores, since it reports change over time rather than criterion-based results in any one year. Student progress is measured on MCAS by tracking the scores of the same students from one year to the next. Traditional student assessment reports tell you about a student's performance in relation to specific standards, whereas growth reports tell you how much change or "growth" there has been in performance from year to year.

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/growth/faq.html> provides answers to a series of frequently asked questions related to the growth model for clarification.

**Timeframe:** The fiscal year/s in which an action will be initiated and completed, or initiated with ongoing action and progress in subsequent years.

**Vision:** Describes the future attributes expected to be seen and demonstrated in the Melrose School District.