

**East Haddam Public Schools**  
**Moodus, Connecticut**

**Strategic Planning Report**

**2001-02**

# East Haddam Board of Education

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## **Introduction**

The staff and administration of the East Haddam Public Schools are pleased to provide the citizens of East Haddam with the first annual progress report on the District's strategic plan. The report is intended to describe the status of each of the initiatives approved by the Board of Education for the 2001-02 school year.

The strategic planning process began during the summer of 2000 with the formation of a twelve person Planning Team comprised of the district's administrators and four professional staff members. The Team met at LEARN on July 25, 26, and 27 with a trained strategic planning facilitator from our regional education service center LEARN. At the conclusion of the three-day planning session, the Planning Team had revised the mission statement, identified three critical issues facing the school district, defined six objectives and developed fourteen strategies that it believed were crucial to the attainment of the mission.

In the fall of 2000, a Strategic Planning brochure was created and disseminated to every household in East Haddam and to every employee of the Board of Education. The purpose of the distribution was twofold: first, to inform the general population of the Board's planning initiative and secondly, to ask for public participation in the action planning phase of the strategic plan. This effort turned out to be highly successful in that over seventy individuals from the community, including many school employees, volunteered to serve on one of five action teams.

All volunteers for the action-planning phase were provided an overview of strategic planning and an orientation to their role in the development of the action plans. In addition, Action Team Leaders were given specific training in the action planning process as well as in group facilitation. Sixty-two action plans were presented to the Superintendent on March 1, thus completing the action plan development phase of the process.

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## **Introduction (Cont'd)**

A subcommittee of the Planning Team met in early April to analyze the action plans to determine each plan's relationship to the stated mission, objectives and strategies. The revised plans along with a Cost Benefit Analysis were submitted to and reviewed by the entire Planning Team in late April.

A preliminary draft of the plan was presented to the East Haddam Board of Education on May 8, 2001.

The Superintendent then facilitated a presentation on the entire plan at a special meeting of the Board on May 22, 2001. Subsequently, an ad hoc committee of the Board was appointed to review the strategic plan in detail and to make recommendations to the full Board for its consideration. On August 14, 2001, the Board of Education approved the East Haddam Public Schools Strategic Plan 2001-06.

The strategic plan is intended to serve as the blueprint for a better future for the students of East Haddam. As you read the report that follows, I believe that you will recognize the tremendous progress that the district has made in that regard. While the professional staff acknowledges that a great deal remains to be done, the extent to which we have attained the identified initiatives in year one of the plan is gratifying.

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Respectfully submitted,

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Steven M. Durham, Ed.D.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent of Schools

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## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the East Haddam School District, where people are our greatest resource, is to develop a community of life-long learners through a rigorous instructional program delivered by a caring, competent staff dedicated to preparing productive citizens for our diverse and changing society.

## CRITICAL ISSUES

### **Curriculum**

Curriculum development is a dynamic and continuous process by which a school system plans implements, and evaluates its educational programs in a coherent and logical manner. Curriculum guides the teaching/learning process by defining what is to be learned, how it is to be learned and how it will be assessed. Inherent in this process is a need for a comprehensive professional development program, including a differentiated teacher evaluation model that will lead to improved student learning.

### **Relationships**

Relationships that are based on mutual respect and trust can have life long positive impacts on intellectual, social, and emotional growth and development of a person. The East Haddam Public Schools will nurture the development of positive relationships and maintain trust between students, staff, teachers and administrators, parents, Board of Education, town government and community members in order to create a supportive learning environment that inspires confidence and facilitates the health and wellness of its members.

### **Facilities**

The responsibility of the East Haddam community is to provide facilities to support the changing educational needs of its children. These facilities must also provide for the delivery of community-based programs. As a result of the needs of this growing community and changing educational requirements, a comprehensive plan must address modifications to present facilities and creation of plans for new facilities.

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## OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

### STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Objective 1 - Students in grades 4, 6, 8, and 10 will achieve mastery on state standardized testing.

- Strategy 1.1) We will analyze testing results and make necessary instructional revisions.
- Strategy 1.2) We will align our curriculum to reflect Connecticut State Department of Education standards.

Objective 2 -Every student will demonstrate mastery of the East Haddam Curriculum that promotes excellence.

- Strategy 2.1) We will establish a curriculum review process.
- Strategy 2.2) We will provide a support system to enable each child to maximize his/her potential

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Objective 1 - Each child will engage in an instructional program provided by a professional staff that utilizes exemplary educational practice.

- Strategy 1.1) We will develop a professional growth plan that assists teachers in the implementation of the district technology plan in their daily instructional practice.
- Strategy 1.2) Every teacher's professional development and growth plan will reflect the District's strategic plan.
- Strategy 1.3) We will establish a professional development program for all teachers on exemplary instructional practices.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

Objective 1 - All students will have equal access to and use current technological resources.

- Strategy 1.1) We will incorporate appropriate technology in all curricular areas.
- Strategy 1.2) We will provide teacher training in the area of educational technology.
- Strategy 1.3) We will provide financial support to maintain up-to-date technological resources.

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## **RELATIONSHIPS**

Objective 1 - Every student will have the opportunity to engage in a mentor/mentee relationship with an adult within the school community

- Strategy 1.1) We will provide a formal program focused on building healthy relationships between and among staff and students.

## **FACILITIES**

Objective 1 - Every child will be provided school facilities that assist the delivery of a comprehensive PreK-12 educational program, as well as community-based activities.



materials, activities, and instructional planning. The Social Studies Committee has spent much time on individual high school courses and developing a district-wide statement of philosophy. They are now beginning to review the state standards in preparation for a complete K-12 revision, which is called for by the district's master curriculum calendar.

The four core curriculum subjects (Language Arts, math, science and social studies) are well on the way to complete alignment with the state and national standards. Other subject committees have approached the review of standards on an individualized basis. Some committees have availed themselves to the standards for review with an eye toward determining what level of change is needed for their respective content area. A general review of the research has helped committees make better informed decisions about a course of action for the next phase of the curriculum process. The Language Arts Committee and the Mathematics Committee have set a standard for the other committees to follow. These two committees, in particular, have demonstrated for the entire district how the state standards are used to effectively revise our local curriculum. The process should become more efficient as groups become more familiar and gain experience with their use.

**➤ Action Step: Analyze existing curricular documents.**

All district committees are in the process of reviewing their respective curriculum. Those at the research level have been involved in curriculum review, out of district visitations and conference attendance. The analysis of present documents comes through active discussion, assessment of student outcomes from our current instructional program and a review of curriculums from other districts. This comparison of what we do to what we could do is critical to the recognition for curriculum renewal. The state frameworks guide this process. The content and delivery systems are a local responsibility and are created to meet the needs of the community. National and traditional expectations cannot be ignored but the delivery is very specific to the perceptions of the community as to what is important. This process is complete in Language Arts and in Math.

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**➤ Action Step: Revise existing curricular documents to align with State Frameworks.**

The District has made great gains this year in the alignment process. As we revisit the curricular documents the connection to the state frameworks (or lack there of) becomes obvious. Discussions among committee members on the topics of teaching & learning and "best practice" have enabled committees to integrate the state framework expectations within the curriculum that is appropriate for the students' age and grade. The alignment process in some cases is easy and obvious and in other areas shows gaping holes that need to be filled. This process will always be under review as new instructional ways are found to add meaning to the curriculum.

**➤ Action Step: Ensure CMT/CAPT goals are embedded, assessed and evaluated in each curriculum.**

Significant effort has been put forth in both the Language Arts and Mathematics Curriculum revision processes to identify those instructional activities that are critical to student understanding of the goals set forth in the State mandated testing program. An asterisk has been used in each curriculum document to denote required activities to promote student success in these areas. The connection of these activities has been made to the third generation of the CMT and to the second generation CAPT. They will need to be revisited as the state revises their expectations. Curriculum needs to be a living document subject to change. The assessment results as these curriculums are implemented will assist further review and change. Because the revisions currently underway are of such magnitude, the smaller changes along the way will seem easier to manage.

**Strategy 2: We will provide a support system to enable each child to maximize his/her potential.**

➤ **Action Step: Follow the required process to qualify for membership in the Coalition of Essential Schools.**

In August of 2001, Mr. Sheldon and Mrs. Buxton attended a two-day workshop entitled Coalition of Essential Schools 101. The membership guidelines were reviewed in detail. Also a team of three students, one parent, one board of education member, one administrator, and two teachers attended the annual Coalition of Essential Schools Convention in Seattle, Washington.

The membership guidelines along with the “Principles” of the Coalition are included in appendices B and C.

As of May 2002, membership criteria listed as steps 1a, 1d, and 3 have been completed (see Appendix D). We are presently affiliated with the Boston Center, however, the process will take at least two more years to complete, as each of the ten principles will need to be addressed individually. The Coalition’s rating scale (re: to assess the common principles) will be used to review our work on each principle. The target date for completion of this action plan is August 2004.

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➤ **Action Step: Develop a published procedure for any student to accept the challenge of taking an Advanced Placement course.**

Any highly motivated student who is interested in enrolling in a college program upon completion of high school may choose to take Advanced Placement courses while at Nathan Hale-Ray High School. Participation in the College Board Advanced Placement Exam upon completion of the course(s) at the high school is recommended, but not required for taking an Advanced Placement subject course.

Students who elect to take the College Board A.P. Exam at the end of each course may be awarded college credit by the college that the student attends after high school, depending upon the quality of the student score and the requirements for each university.

The Nathan Hale-Ray High School Program of Studies booklet gives an overview of each Advanced Placement course at Nathan Hale-Ray High School. These course descriptions outline the specific recommendations and/or pre-requisites for each course, and they include the following:

*A.P. Art History* – A pre-requisite combined with a grade of B- or better in English and History

*A.P. Biology* – A pre-requisite is successful completion of the Chemistry course.

*A.P. Calculus AB* – A pre-requisite is successful completion of the Advanced Math course.

*A.P. English* – A pre-requisite is successful completion of three years of English.

*A.P. Spanish* – A pre-requisite is successful completion of Spanish III or equivalent.

*A.P. U.S. History* – A pre-requisite is successful completion of the U.S. History course.

➤ **Action Step: Research the varied opportunities available to students to attain college credits.**

A committee that included the principal, the media center specialist, and guidance counselor was established to

research the varied opportunities available to students to attain college credit. This committee reviewed the present programs contacted area colleges and universities, and reviewed on-line programs and courses. A recommendation was made to the Superintendent of Schools and is included in the *Course of Studies* booklet.

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➤ **Action Step: Develop a published procedure for students to avail themselves of other opportunities to complete college course for high school credit.**

The committee has made the following recommendations regarding college credit opportunities for high school students:

**On-line Education (Pending approval of the Board of Education):** Nathan Hale-Ray High School is committed to helping students develop and pursue individual interests. We encourage students to design flexible schedules within the framework of district standards. The high school will provide students with the information and guidance as they seek distance-learning opportunities. Resource materials are available in the Guidance Office.

Nathan Hale-Ray High School will honor on-line high school credits toward graduation. Students may earn one high school credit per year from colleges/universities that are fully accredited through the regional accreditation association, e.g. The New England Association of Schools & Colleges. Students may take one accelerated college level course per semester on-line for credit. Permission to participate in distance learning opportunities will be granted after completion of the "On Line Education Form." These forms are available and require signatures of student, parent, administration, and guidance. These forms are available in the Guidance Office.

Students taking advantage of this opportunity are responsible for the cost (tuition and books) associated with enrollment in the on-line education coursework.

**High School Scholars Program:** College courses are available to Nathan Hale-Ray High School students in grades 11 & 12 through two area colleges, Middlesex Community Technical College and Wesleyan University. Juniors and seniors, who have a minimum cumulative average of "B" and are in the top 20% of their class, may apply to enroll in one course per semester at either college. Both of these high school honors programs require applicants to complete a college "Student Application" packet that is provided to the high school the semester prior to student enrollment.

Applications for the fall program are available in April of the previous academic year and applications for the spring program are available in November of the previous semester. Students taking advantage of this opportunity are responsible for their own transportation to classes at the college and for taking any placement tests required by the college before admission. Parental approval is required for students to leave the high school building in order to drive to college classes during the high school day.

**Tech-Prep Program:** Certain students in grades 10-12 are eligible to participate in a partnership program between Middlesex Community Technical College and Nathan Hale-Ray High School or the University of Connecticut and Nathan Hale-Ray High School. The Tech-Prep program is a planned, goal oriented pre-tech curriculum in grades 10-12 that allows certain courses in high school to be awarded college credits.

Students who maintain a "C" average are eligible to meet the program requirements. Course work at Nathan Hale-Ray High School that can earn college credit includes CAD, Word Processing I, Advanced Word

Processing, Accounting I, and Algebra II if one is enrolled in the Tech-Prep Program.

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➤ **Action Step: Develop a published procedure for students to avail themselves of other opportunities to complete college course for high school credit. (Cont'd)**

*Alternative Learning Opportunities:* Nathan Hale-Ray High School supports learning opportunities that are of individual benefit to students. For example, the Rotary Club Student Exchange Program is available to eligible students who may want to spend the school year living and studying in another country. Other students could pursue artistic interests in the Wesleyan University Center for Creative Youth or the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts.

Academic credit for alternative programs will be reviewed on an individual basis. Determination of credit will be assigned by administration in consultation with the counselor and student. The student is responsible for submitting the "Application for High School Credit" prior to the start of the alternative learning opportunity.

➤ **Action Step: Create a multi-faceted performance based process that requires students at the exit grade of each school to demonstrate mastery.**

The high school program leader committee has been working on required portfolio courses for grades 9, 10, and 11. A portfolio management workshop was presented to the entire staff in March. Recently a smaller committee including the principal and two program leaders has been created to complete the individual portfolio assignments for each grade level. This group met for the entire day on Tuesday, April 24, to begin to finalize their recommendations. These recommendations will be given to the entire group of program leaders in early May.

The grade 9, 10, and 11 portfolio requirements will be presented to the Superintendent by the end of May 2002. The program leaders committee will evaluate these requirements throughout the 2002-2003 year and make recommended changes where necessary. The committee will also develop the follow-up portfolio requirements for grades 9, 10, 11 and add a grade 12 portfolio course during the 2002-2003 school year.

➤ **Action Step: Form an Advisory Committee to establish the criteria for graduation (9-12).**

The program leaders committee has also been working on the new criteria for graduation. Recommendations have been sent to the Superintendent of Schools for a review by the Board's Policy Committee and for approval by the full Board. The recommended changes in graduation requirements follow.

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➤ **Action Step: Implement the requirements at the appropriate levels starting in the 2002-2003 school year.**

The recommendations for increased graduation requirements are a part of an overall reform effort at the high school that is intended to add to the academic rigor by providing additional academic opportunities of a more challenging nature and by requiring more time on task for students. Pending approval of the Board of Education the following will be required of students for graduation from Nathan Hale-Ray High School:

### **Class of 2003**

Graduation Requirements – Total Credits = 24

Seniors are required to take 6 credits;

Freshmen, sophomores, and juniors are required to take 8 courses (7.5 credits).

English - 4 credits

Mathematics - 3 credits

Science - 3 credits

Social Science - 3 credits (including American History)

Physical Education - 1 credit

Health - 1 credit

Art and/or Music (Fine Arts) - .5 credit

Vocational Education - .5 credit

Computer Applications - .5 credit

Electives - 7.5 credits

Total - 24 credits

### **Class of 2004**

Graduation Requirements – Total Credits = 26

All students are required to take 8 courses (7.5 credits, seniors 8 credits) (Study Halls no longer available).

English - 4 credits

Mathematics - 3 credits

Science - 3 credits

Social Science - 3.5 credits (including American History and Civics)

Physical Education - 1 credit

Health - 1 credit

Art and/or Music (Fine Arts) - .5 credit

Vocational Education - .5 credit

Computer Applications - .5 credit

Academic Seminar-Portfolio - 1.5 credits

Requirement (junior year .5 credit and senior year 1 credit)

Electives - 7.5 credits

Total - 26 credits

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➤ **Action Step: Implement the requirements at the appropriate levels starting in the 2002-2003 school year. (Cont'd)**

### **Class of 2005**

Graduation Requirements – Total Credits = 28

All students are required to take 8 courses (7.5 credits, seniors 8 credits).

English - 4 credits

Mathematics - 3 credits

Science - 3 credits

Social Science - 3.5 credits (including American History and Civics)

Physical Education - 1 credit

Health - 1 credit

Art and/or Music (Fine Arts) - .5 credit

Vocational Education - .5 credit

Computer Applications - .5 credit

Academic Seminar-Portfolio - 2 credits

Requirement (sophomore year .5 credit, junior year .5 credit and senior year 1 credit)

Electives - 9 credits

Total - 28 credits

**Class of 2006\***

Graduation Requirements – total credits = 28

All students are required to take 8 courses (7.5 credits, seniors 8 credits).

English - 4 credits

Mathematics - 3 credits

Science - 3 credits

Social Science - 3.5 credits (including American History and Civics)

Physical Education - 1 credit

Health - 1 credit

Art and/or Music (Fine Arts) - .5 credit

Vocational Education - .5 credit

Computer Applications - .5 credit

Academic Seminar-Portfolio - 2.5 credits

Requirement (freshman year .5 credit, sophomore year .5 credit, junior year .5 credit and senior year 1 credit)

Electives - 8.5 credits

Total - 28 credits

**\*Each local Board of Education must specify the basic skills necessary for graduation for the Class of 2006 and thereafter. (PA 01-166) This information will be recommended to the Superintendent of Schools by the end of May 2002.**

**Action Plan 2: Professional Development**

**Strategy 2: Every teacher’s professional development and growth plan will reflect the district’s strategic plan.**

➤ **Action Step: Provide one day of professional development for new teacher orientation related to district goals, curriculum, the strategic plan and technology resources.**

The East Haddam Public Schools hosted a one-day professional development teacher orientation for all new teachers on Monday, August 27, 2001. The orientation consisted of a four-part presentation to the new staff members. The agenda was as follows:

1. Orientation in home base school
2. District Informational Session
3. Bus Tour of East Haddam and Moodus
4. Computer Technology Orientation

The Elementary School orientation included the following:

1. Support Team
2. Personal leave/professional development/ tuition reimbursement
3. THT/PPT process
4. Office staff support
5. Emergency Procedures
6. Placement of Computers
7. Computer lab introduction

The Middle School orientation included the following:

1. PPT and 504 modifications
2. Parking/bathrooms/copiers
3. Budget
4. Leave requests/sub procedures
5. Tuition reimbursement
6. Student management
7. Calendar/bell schedule

The High School orientation included the following:

1. Philosophy of Administration
2. History of School
3. Loyalty
4. School reform
5. Program leaders meetings

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➤ **Action Step: Provide one day of professional development for new teacher orientation related to district goals, curriculum, the strategic plan and technology resources. (Cont'd)**

The District Information session included the following:

1. Introductions
2. Superintendent's welcome
3. Strategic Plan and District Goals presentation
4. EHEA welcome

The Computer Technology orientation included the following:

1. Introduction of technology support staff
2. Network orientation
3. Email orientation
4. Technology safety procedures
5. Computer lab procedures and usage

➤ **Action Step: Provide in-district before and after school for ongoing professional development related directly to district goals.**

The district offered two full days of professional development during the school year. The topics presented were as follows:

October 26, 2001

- Phonemic Awareness and Alphabet Skill Training
- Topics in Technology
- Developing a Multicultural Curriculum
- Looking Collaboratively at Student Work in the Block
- Holistic Scoring
- Assessing Math Responses the CMT Way
- Teaching in the Block School Wide Enrichment
- Pre-Assessment for Differentiation

March 22, 2002

- Guided Reading Management
- Marco Polo Training
- Differentiated Instruction
- Instructional Strategies Using CMT Results (Math, Language Arts)
- Differentiation Strategies Pre-Assessment in Science and Social Studies
- Teacher's Resource Pro-Math Technology
- Holistic Scoring
- Portfolio Assessment Seminar
- Differentiation Strategies: Tiered Assessment

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➤ **Action Step: Provide in-district before and after school for ongoing professional development related directly to district goals. (Cont'd)**

Additional Professional Development Opportunities Offered to the Entire Staff

- Retelling Workshop
- Teacher as Peer Coach
- Coaching Colleagues I, II, III
- Teacher as Reflective Learner
- Taking and Analyzing Running Records
- Phonemic Awareness and Alphabet Skills Training

(A complete list of all of the professional development activities experienced by the professional staff can

be found in Appendix E)

➤ **Action Step: Provide summer institutes designed around district-wide themes and identified exemplary practices.**

The following lists those opportunities that were offered during the summer of 2001 and those that are being planned for the summer of 2002.

Summer 2001

|  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| Guided Reading                         | June 21-27, 2001    |
| UConn Confratute (Enrichment Learning) | July 7-17, 2001     |
| Teaching Strategies in the Block       | August 8, 2001      |
| Workshop on Eudora Basics              | August 22, 23, 2001 |

Summer 2002

Confratute

BEST

Technology Workshops

Web Page Design, Marco Polo, Web Quest, PowerPoint, MySchoolOnLine, Hyper Studio

A brief description of each summer technology workshop is contained in Appendix F.

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## **Action Plan 3: Technology**

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| <b>Strategy 1: We will incorporate technology into all curricular areas.</b> |
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➤ **Action Step: Revise the current technology curriculum to be reflective of the needs of the current learners and of current technology.**

The technology plan is reviewed yearly in order to ensure that the district's technology is adequately and appropriately supporting the learning process. This year the district received a technology grant from LEARN to assist with the evaluation of its current technology plan. At LEARN's request, the present technology plan was submitted to the State for critical review. Under new State guidelines each plan must contain a more defined professional development component. The committee, with LEARN's assistance, will include the

required professional development strand.

The committee reviewed the district's hardware and software standards and updated them accordingly. The updated standards will be reflected in the revised plan. The committee also decided to adopt the new state *Standards on Technology* for both students and teachers. Currently a subcommittee is using the State's Student Standards to create a list of technology exit criteria/skills for each building. Identifying the exit criteria will assure that each student has the opportunity to master the necessary technical skills to effectively use technology in both the learning environment and in everyday life. A draft of the technology skills for grades K-4 is included in Appendix G. Work has already begun on the criteria for grades 5 through 8 and will continue into the next school year. It is anticipated that the criteria for 9-12 will be determined at some future date and included in the demonstration portfolio.

**➤ Action Step: Re-establish a district-wide technology committee to review the district's hardware and software needs.**

In November, the district's Technology Committee held its first meeting of the year to review those components of the strategic plan that had direct implications for the committee. The district's technology committee keeps abreast of the technology needs of the district through its representatives on the committee. Teacher representatives advise the committee on the needs at the building level. Library-media specialists bring their expertise and understanding of the various curricula at each school. The district's technology coordinator attends building-level, grade-level and curriculum committee meetings to ensure that the technology can support the curricular needs. The district's LAN manager reviews the infrastructure to ensure that the network supports the necessary services. The committee, whose composition includes several concerned citizens who have work experience in technology, blends the input from the various factions and devises a plan to deliver technology and related services. This action step will be on-going and will likely never be complete given the nature of the charge.

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**➤ Action Step: Create a position description document for Building Technology Specialists.**

A job description for the Building Technology Specialist was created with input from the district technology coordinator and the principals of the middle school and elementary school. Money for this stipend position was placed in the 2002-2003 budget. The job description is included in the Appendix H.

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| <p><b>Strategy 2: We will provide teacher training in the area of educational technology.</b></p> |
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**➤ Action Step: Create an assessment tool to assess staff expertise in using technology & administer assessment to all staff.**

In order to assess the district's staff development needs, a staff self-assessment was developed. This assessment was based on skills identified by the State in its State Technology Standards for Teachers. Each teacher took the assessment. The results were recorded and analyzed for common needs and trends. Each building principal received the results of the assessment as it pertained to her/his building. Individual teacher results were also included to help the teacher and administrator plan an optional, individualized growth plan in technology.

With the results of the yearly self-assessment, the district looked for trends and weaknesses to address with

professional development activities. Using the assessment results, the district technology coordinator identified several areas where professional development would be beneficial. Some of those areas were addressed during the two professional development days during the school year. Additional workshops have been planned for June after the close of school. The assessment results will drive professional development for the first half of the next school year until the assessment is repeated and the needs of the staff change.

A copy of the assessment tool and a narrative summary of the results are contained in the appendices (Appendix I and J).

**Strategy 3: We will provide financial support to maintain up-to-date technological resources.**

➤ **Action Step: Review minimum computer hardware and software standards yearly.**

At its November meeting, the district technology committee reviewed the existing standards for hardware and software as they were written in the Technology Plan. In addition to this annual review, the district took the advice of State recommendations and used State funding to update the infrastructure, adding wiring at the HS and replacing hubs with switches over the district's WAN. This effort brought the district into alignment with the State Standards that were set to allow the district the ability to connect to the State's information network whenever the opportunity arises.

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➤ **Action Step: Determine the disposal process/Evaluate technology against minimum standards and collect assets to be retired.**

Last summer, while dismantling the 1960's elementary school portables, a large collection of outdated and/or broken equipment was included in the disposal. Throughout the school year, equipment that did not meet minimum standards and no longer had an identifiable use was categorized as retired. The retired equipment was collected in two storage locations and tagged for disposal. As long as computers are identified as containing hazardous waste, the disposal process will be costly. There is currently a movement at the State level to reclassify computers as containing universal waste as opposed to hazardous waste. The State hopes to enact new legislation as of July 1, which will allow for easier and less costly disposal of substances labeled as universal waste. This action step will continue to be developed.

➤ **Action Step: Develop and implement a strategy to transition to a single hardware/software platform.**

The transition to a single platform progressed substantially by placing approximately 20 Windows computers at the elementary school during the first part of this past academic year. These computers are in classrooms, the library and a mini-lab. The district also received a gift of 50 Windows 9.x computers. These computers will be placed in classrooms at the ES. The Windows computers will be connected to the network while the classroom Apple computer will become a stand-alone unit. Connecting the Windows computers to the network will achieve our goal of a single platform for the district. Network services, programs and features will be available from all locations in a common format. Keeping the Apple computers as stand-alone stations offers the students and teacher the benefits of still using our current Macintosh software licenses. When these Apple computers outlive their usefulness and cease to work efficiently, they will be retired. The district will build a collection of similar Windows titles that will run on the single platform. Given the financial implications of this action step, it is anticipated that it will be several years before all of the Apples are purged from the network.

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## Action Plan 4: Relationships

**Strategy 1: We will provide a formal program focused on building healthy relationships between and among staff and students.**

➤ **Action Step: Recruit staff to work on a Peer Advocacy Project.**

Several high school staff members, including a representative from East Haddam Youth and Family Services, worked on this project during the spring of 2001. The Youth Helping Youth Program actually started during the summer of 2001 and has evolved extremely well during the current academic year.

➤ **Action Step: Recruit, interview, and screen twenty-five high school students, 20 of them will be considered *at risk*.**

Toni McCabe, YFS Social Worker and Michele Sitro, co-advise the Youth Helping Youth Program. In the spring of 2001, approximately 40 students completed a written application for the program. With the help of Eileen Lader (Parent Aide Program Coordinator at Middlesex Hospital) the students were interviewed and 28 of them were selected to participate in the program. A percentage of the selected students may be considered as “at-risk” academically and/or emotionally. In the summer of 2001, students were selected to attend a luncheon at Youth & Family Services. The purpose of the luncheon was to give the students an opportunity to engage in team building exercises.

The students’ first goal when they returned to school was to decide on a name for their group. They agreed upon “**Youth Helping Youth**”. Their second goal was to design a t-shirt. With financial assistance from a United Way grant, their design was screened and t-shirts were produced. The students have been encouraged to wear their t-shirts on the days Youth Helping Youth meets.

The Youth Helping Youth group meets weekly during X Block. The majority of the training sessions have occurred during X Block but because of time constraints the students agreed to meet with them for 2 hour

sessions during our November, December and March half days. All of the students completed a pre-test so that they could analyze their current level of skill and decide which areas required more in-depth training. Using “The Peer Helping Training Course” (Sturkie & Phillips, 1994), the following areas were included in the training portion of the program:

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**Active Listening**

Characteristics of active listening  
Role-playing  
Listing and using feeling words  
Learning to reflect content & feelings  
Identifying and observing nonverbal behaviors

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➤ **Action Step: Recruit, interview, and screen twenty-five high school students, 20 of them will be considered at risk. (Cont'd)**

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**Sending Effective Messages**

Using I-Statements  
Role-playing

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**Helping Skills**

Learning how to give positive feedback as a helper  
Learning how to ask questions effectively

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**Values Clarification**

Learning how values differ from interests  
Identifying personal values  
Learning how values affect decisions  
Learning how to help others clarify values

-  
**Decision Making**

Learning major steps in decision making  
Brainstorming alternatives and predicting outcomes  
Learning how to help others make decisions

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**Starting and Ending a Helping Relationship**

Learning to handle special issues of confidentiality  
Learning to make initial contact, explain role, terminate relationship

In addition to the training portion of the program, guest speakers were scheduled to present on specific topics.

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Ashely Esposito, Sexual Assault Crisis Center – Sexual Harassment, Date Rape/Sexual Assault  
Joanne Martin, Rushford Center - Substance use and abuse  
Jane Goodell, DCF supervisor – Childhood abuse and neglect  
Chris Simeone, LCSW, Middlesex Hospital – Depression/Suicide, Origins of depression  
Rochelle Ripley – Native American presentation

-  
The members of Youth Helping Youth seemed more comfortable with participating in group projects and attending seminars. The following is a list of Youth Helping Youth activities:

- Led building tours at Open House in October 2001;

- Red Ribbon Week;
- Two students attended Middlesex County Substance Abuse Action Council Board Meeting;
- Two students attended Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce Luncheon Meeting;

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➤ **Action Step: Recruit, interview, and screen twenty-five high school students, 20 of them will be considered at risk. (Cont'd)**

- Five students attended the Connecticut Coalition to stop underage drinking annual youth summit at the State Capitol;
- Students attended the Children of the Shadows IX LGBT Youth & Family Issues Conference on March 22, 2002;
- Students attended the Respect Me! Program in April;
- One student gave a presentation about Youth Helping Youth at February's Local Prevention Council Meeting;
- Students led building tours and small group discussions for our annual 8<sup>th</sup> grade orientation on April 2, 2002;
- Five students attended the Rushford Center's Jamboree on April 12, 2002. The Jamboree featured presentations on relevant teen issues, aids and substance abuse prevention;
- In May 2002, YHY is sponsoring MADD's Fake ID multi-media presentation;
- We are considering a mentoring program with selected 8<sup>th</sup> graders; and
- On March 13, 2002, 14 members of Youth Helping Youth participated in a final training session. The students continued practicing the skills through role-plays.

Recruiting students for next year's group has already begun.

➤ **Action Step: Recruit staff members from each building to participate on a "Character Education" task force.**

The first step in implementing this action step was to inform members of our staff district wide that such a task force was being formed. A formal schedule of 7 meetings was formalized and published. In addition to these meetings, task force members attended several different workshops on topics related to the committee's charge. Responses of interest were received from 19 people. Involvement varied within that group of 19. Although many indicated a very sincere interest, some were challenged with attending all scheduled meetings. The district staff was kept informed via email and many of the 19 were able to provide valuable input as the group progressed. Ten members of the task force were very involved with the initiatives that were undertaken.

The initial charge of our task force was to **identify the essential characteristics that are necessary to successfully build and sustain healthy relationships.** The group brainstormed, reflected, and condensed the list to the following:

1. Effective communication skills with a formal emphasis on the opportunities to learn and practice effective communication skills.
2. Consistency in the approach to interactions between and among students, teachers, administrators, parents,

and other community members.

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➤ **Action Step: Recruit staff members from each building to participate on a “Character Education” task force. (Cont’d)**

3. Consistent demonstration of the following qualities in interactions with others:
  - Respect
  - Open-mindedness
  - A non-judgmental approach
  - Tolerance
  - Honesty
  - Sincerity
  - Responsibility
  - Genuine caring for others
  - Patience
  - Fairness
  - Trustworthiness
  - Ability and willingness to forgive
  - Ability and willingness to be reflective
  - Ability and willingness to offer corrections or criticism in a constructive, positive manner
  - Ability and willingness to offer praise and highlight positive points
4. Establishing and clearly communicating expectations and boundaries.
5. Creating and recognizing opportunities to instill a sense of accomplishment and pride in others.
6. Recognizing, appreciating, and continuing to cultivate the strengths and talents of others.
7. Recognizing the value and power of collaboration and teamwork.
8. Recognizing and appreciating the efforts of others and communicating that appreciation.
9. Recognizing the powerful importance of PLAY - creating and promoting opportunities for play to be an integral part of effective teaching and learning.
10. Vital importance of the adults in any community: parents, educators, other community members, to be ever mindful of the strong influence of modeling the desired behaviors and work ethic that we want to see our young people develop.
11. Recognizing that the most consistent feature of resiliency is that the resilient child has at least one significant adult in their life that communicates a faith and belief in that child’s abilities and goodness. (Of course, more significant adults are better. It is important to note that these principals also apply to all people. We all need advocates in our lives regardless of our age).

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➤ **Action Step: Recruit staff members from each building to participate on a “Character Education” task force. (Cont’d)**

The remainder of this section addresses the progress that was made as the task force went forward with exploring some of the initiatives outlined in the action step. In some cases developments occurred that were not necessarily planned but ultimately could have a positive impact on the committee’s work. In this endeavor, the committee ventured forth into territory that represents activities which are described later in this section. Efforts in the area of relationship building will always be a work in progress.

➤ **Action Step: Define how components of ROPE (Rite of Passage Experience), Responsive Classroom, Don’t Laugh At Me, etc. relate developmentally at various grade levels.**

- Identify and set up professional development opportunities to train staff including workshops, site visits, and materials and resources
- Select staff members, grade levels, and/or curriculum theme units to pilot some of the key concepts
- Design initiatives that would highlight character development at all three building levels including the acquisition of materials as needed.

The task force began investigating in more detail some of the approaches that had been suggested as a result of the research of our Strategic Planning Relationships team last year. It was good fortune that the Connecticut Assets Network was sponsoring a series of workshops this year at no cost and which addressed some of the approaches to working with young people that was of interest to the committee. Additional opportunities were made available to Task Force members through the Connecticut Assets Network, SEE (School for Ethical Education), and the Northeast Foundation for Children.

The following approaches were investigated:

1. **ADVENTURE CLUB** – An approach that utilizes a “new games” competitive and non-competitive collection of activities that can be implemented in a variety of settings from individual classrooms to staff meetings. Some of the activities could be incorporated into lessons within the school day or as an after school club.
2. **RITE OF PASSAGE EXPERIENCE (ROPE)** – described as a process. The model for the contemporary rite of passage is a 3-phase 6-year process. **Phase I**, involving community, parent, student, and school, is focused on the early stages of a transition experience from the elementary years to middle school/adolescent years. **Phase II** is the actual transitional phase that focuses on connecting youth to community resources and typically takes place in an early middle school year. There is a curriculum that presents a series of fun challenge activities to students through trained facilitators that address many transitional concerns.

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➤ **Action Step: Define how components of ROPE (Rite of Passage Experience), Responsive Classroom, Don’t Laugh At Me, etc. relate developmentally at various grade levels. (Cont’d)**

2. **RITE OF PASSAGE EXPERIENCE (Cont’d)**

Team building, problem solving, coming to consensus as a group, identifying the issues that challenge our young people, developing strategies to deal with those issues, decision making, appreciating the differences in others, and recognizing that more can be accomplished working together are among some of the vital issues that are covered. An important part of Phase II is the development of a contract between students and their parents and community agencies to pursue some positive recreational activities. **Phase III** is focused on the giving aspect of community service. The collaborative efforts between school, home, and community make these opportunities available. One of the more positive opportunities involves high school students serving as mentors for younger students as they go through the rite of passage process. This three-phase approach is effective in developing a sense of competency and connection to self, family, peers, and community. The rite of passage process is an invaluable opportunity to develop a collaborative network of support for parents and youth as they transition through the adolescent years and often simultaneously the mid life years.

Dr. David Blumenkrantz, the founder of The Center for the Advancement of Youth, Family & Community Services, Inc. developed ROPE in 1981. In January, a subcommittee of the task force, which represents a cross section of our community, attended a workshop overview of Rites of Passage presented by Dr. Blumendrantz and sponsored by the CT Assets Network. Those members are Sue Mellow, our First Selectman, Toni McCabe, Director of Youth and Family Services, Tiffany Quinn, Director of Parks and Recreation, Betty Lomme, sixth grade team leader, and Bonnie Butsch, Assistant Principal of Nathan Hale Ray Middle School. The subcommittee has met to process the information offered that day and has maintained communication concerning how this process would suit the needs outlined in our strategic plan. ROPE was very favorably received.

**Professional Development** – A community training would be required to implement Rites Of Passage. The training typically involves representatives from various community agencies such as those listed above, clergy, parent population, Superintendent and other school administrators as well as other appropriate school personnel. The training generally occurs in a 4-day session. The cost runs between 8 and 10 thousand dollars. The cost to maintain the program is approximately 5 to 7 thousand per year outside of the cost of the facilitators. This is eligible to receive DFSC grant funding. There is also ongoing support through the different stages of development.

3. **RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM** – Sponsored and promoted by the Northeast Foundation for Children, founded in 1981, private, non-profit, educational foundation working to improve elementary and middle schools by helping educators integrate the teaching of social and academic skills. NEFC's mission is to foster safe, challenging, and joyful classrooms and schools. Responsive Classroom is an approach to classroom management and instructional

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- **Action Step: Define how components of ROPE (Rite of Passage Experience), Responsive Classroom, Don't Laugh At Me, etc. relate developmentally at various grade levels. (Cont'd)**

### **3. RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM (Cont'd)**

delivery that integrates the teaching of academic skills and the teaching of social skills as an on-going part of every day school life. This approach is utilized in public, charter, and independent schools at the elementary and middle school level. Over 100,000 teachers in 27 states and The District of Columbia have received services from the Northeast Foundation for Children since it's founding in 1981. The strategies of The Responsive Classroom teach proactive discipline through modeling, role playing, and the practicing of expected behaviors in order to foster the creation of a stimulating and caring intellectual community of

learners. Significant research studies support the effectiveness of these strategies. The basic components of this approach are: Morning Meeting, Rules and Logical Consequences, Classroom Organization, Guided Discovery, Academic Choice. Detailed information about more specific aspects of the Responsive Classroom such as frequently asked questions, sample research, implementing and getting started, Professional Development, select visitation schools, their teacher resource store and more can be viewed online at [www.responsiveclassroom.org](http://www.responsiveclassroom.org).

On March 8, again through the workshop series sponsored by CT Assets Network, three elementary teachers attended the Responsive Classroom workshop. They were most impressed and very eager to pursue this to implement in East Haddam. The three are planning to attend the week long training this summer. We are hopeful to send two members of the Grades 5 and 6 teams for training this summer as well. This approach is beginning to generate some great enthusiasm. Extensive cost analysis is available on the website.

**4. OTHER VARIED INITIATIVES** - There is a varied array of other exciting initiatives going on in the district that are a direct or indirect result of the awareness generated by the Strategic Planning process and by the character Education Task Force:

TRANSITION MENTORS - Progress has been made to develop a mentoring program in which high school students will be matched with incoming freshmen who have been identified as students who may benefit from some transition assistance.

YOUTH HELPING YOUTH – A high school peer advocacy project addressed earlier in the report.

BUG AWARD PROGRAM – BUG, which stands for Being Exceptionally Good, is a program used at the middle school that is designed to offer a more formal method of continually recognizing students for good deeds and jobs well done.

ELEMENTARY EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITY PROGRAM – A more formal name may evolve for this program, which through the joint efforts of Chuck Harpin, David Scata, and the elementary administration was created to offer additional enrichment activities to students. They received a grant of \$10,000 to undertake this worthy initiative.

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➤ **Action Step: Define how components of ROPE (Rite of Passage Experience), Responsive Classroom, Don't Laugh At Me, etc. relate developmentally at various grade levels. (Cont'd)**

LAWS OF LIFE ESSAY CONTEST – This contest is sponsored through SEE, School for Ethical Education in Milford, CT. Through the leadership of the middle school language arts consultant, and in collaboration with all language arts teachers at the middle school, students were able to participate in this writing activity, which serves more as a springboard for reflection and class discussions than an actual competitive event. Several layers of judges read the essays. The names were removed and the essays were scored using a pre-assigned number to identify the student. Two essays from all grades were selected to submit for consideration at the state level. A number of other students were also selected for honorable mention.

HEALTH AWARENESS DAYS – Last year at the middle school and this year at the high school through the collaborative efforts of Youth and Family Service, school administration, and hard working planning committees wonderful full immersion days were offered to students and faculty that addressed a variety of health related topics dealing with positive lifestyles and decision making.

CONNECTICUT ASSETS BASED CHARACTER EDUCATION CONFERENCE – A few of our teachers

will be attending this conference which is designed to assist organizations initiate and sustain efforts of advancing comprehensive character education. State and national leaders will be there to present and work with teachers and others in the helping professions to share ideas about successful practices. This year Chip Wood, Co-Founder of Northeast Foundation for Children in Greenfield, MA, Phillip Fitch Vincent, Director of the Character Development Group from Chapel Hill, NC, Larry Dieringer, Executive Director of Educators for Social Responsibility from Cambridge, MA, and Eric Schaps, President of Developmental Studies Center from Oakland, CA will be featured speakers. Of special interest is East Haddam middle school teacher Anne Johnson's presentation on Laws of Life essay contest.

Members of the Task Force are: Sue Merrow, Toni McCabe, Tiffany Quinn, Betty Lomme, Anne Johnson, Joann Parady, Linda Bristol, Anne Johnson, Ava Biffer, Michelle Sitro, Carol Rusch, Chuck Harpin, and Bonnie Butsch.

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## **Action Plan 5: Facilities**

**Strategy 1: We will investigate community needs in regard to the use of school facilities.**

**➤ Action Step: A focus group comprised of different community organizations will be organized to discuss the use of school facilities for community use.**

A great deal of energy has been devoted to the critical issue of facilities and, in particular, the new elementary school building project. Large amounts of time have been committed by Board of Education members, by Building Committee members and by many other citizens of East Haddam on school facilities. While no formal focus group has been organized for the express purpose of determining the community's views on community use of the schools, a substantial amount of information has come forth on this and other related topics. Public Hearings, post referenda survey data, and citizens' comments through a variety of venues have come forth. The Board should remain focused on the Elementary School Building Project at this point in time. Once the project passes at the next referendum and the Board begins to revisit its Long Range School Facilities Plan, this action plan should be addressed. The information that is gleaned from a focus group of this nature could be invaluable to the Board as it revises the Long Range Plan.

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