



Architectural rendering of proposed 3-5 school

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

**Strategic Planning Report (Year 2)**

**2002-03**

**Presented to  
the  
East Haddam Board of Education  
May 27, 2003**

# East Haddam Board of Education

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**To:** East Haddam Board of Education  
**From:** Steven M. Durham, Ed.D.  
**Re:** Strategic Planning Progress Report for Year 2  
**Date:** May 27, 2003

On behalf of the entire staff, I am pleased to present you with this progress report on the second year of the strategic plan. As you may recall, the strategic planning process began during the summer of 2000 when the Planning Team created 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, five action teams were formed and developed sixty-two action plans. The plans were presented to the Superintendent on March 1, 2001, thus completing the action plan development phase of the process. A subcommittee of the Planning Team met in early April of that year to analyze the action plans and to determine each plan's relationship to the stated mission, objectives and strategies.

A preliminary draft of the plan was presented to the Board of Education on May 8, 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 a five-year Strategic Plan for the East Haddam Public Schools.

The accomplishments of the district with respect to the initiatives identified in the first year of the plan were presented to the Board in May of 2002. In addition, a detailed report was disseminated to the entire school staff at our initial meeting on August 26. It was evident then, as it is evident now, that the district has made tremendous strides towards achieving its objectives contained in the plan.

As you read this years report, I am confident that you will recognize the substantial progress that the district has made in the second year of our strategic planning efforts. I know that you join me in extending our sincere gratitude to the entire school community for their efforts and contributions to improving the quality of our educational programs. While we all acknowledge that a great deal remains to be done, the extent to which we have attained the identified initiatives in year's one and two of the plan is gratifying.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Section</u>	<u>Page No.</u>
Mission Statement.....	1
Critical Issues.....	1
Objectives & Strategies.....	2
Action Plan 1: Student Achievement.....	4
Action Plan 2: Professional Development.....	12
Action Plan 3: Technology.....	15
Action Plan 4: Relationships.....	19
Action Plan 5: Facilities.....	28

## **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.

# 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.

## **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.

- Strategy 1.1) We will investigate community needs in regard to the use of school facilities.
- Strategy 1.2) We will use available and relevant data to project needs of the school district with regard to facilities.
- Strategy 1.3) We will support the PreK-2 building committee to complete a new school facility.
- Strategy 1.4) We will develop a long range facilities needs plan for the district.

## **Action Plan 1: Student Achievement**

**Strategy 1: We will align our curriculum to reflect Connecticut State Department of Education standards.**

- **Action Step: All curriculum committees will review the State Department of Education's Curriculum Frameworks.**
- **Action Step: Analyze existing curricular documents.**
- **Action Step: Revise existing curricular documents to align with State Frameworks.**

The district continued its review of the curriculum in accordance with the process outlined in "A Plan to Develop Curriculum in the East Haddam Public Schools." The major concentration this year was on K-12 Social Studies. Other curriculums that were reviewed and subsequently revised were 6-12 Family and Consumer Science, and high school courses in Agri-science, Physical Education and a Social Service Course. The World languages Committee made tremendous progress towards revising the middle and high school curriculum. They expect to complete their work next year and anticipate implementing a number of curriculum changes in 2004-05. In all cases, the subject area committee's work began with a review of the State Curricular Frameworks.

Although the Board previously adopted the Language Arts Committee and Math Committee's curriculums, both committees continued to work throughout the year to address various components of their respective documents that needed strengthening. Several groups, including Language Arts and Math, are scheduled for curriculum writing during the summer of 2003.

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

Each strand within the subtests of the CMT and CAPT were analyzed. The administration reviewed the data to determine the level of proficiency for each student and the overall performance of each grade in reaching Level 3 (proficient range) or Level 4/5 (mastery range) or above. A remedial plan was developed for students who scored at Level 1 or 2. The relevant data was shared with the respective teachers in grades 4,6,8 and 10 as well as with the teachers in each of the preceding grades. Curricular changes and adjustments were made based on the data and analysis. In addition, each building administrator developed a plan of improvement that delineated specific actions that would address improvements to the instructional program. The plan will be monitored to determine its effectiveness and revised as necessary.

**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 March of 2003, Mary Hastings, Program Director for the Coalition of Essential School, presented a workshop at Nathan Hale Ray-High School entitled Coalition of Essential Schools 101. Every high school teacher, the high school principal, and the superintendent of schools attended the workshop. The coalition guidelines were reviewed. Additionally, a team of two teachers and four students attended the Spring 2003 Coalition of Essential Schools Conference in New Hampshire. There is a plan to send several teachers and students to the Annual Coalition of Essential School Convention in Columbus, Ohio in November 2003. The membership guidelines along with the “Principles” of the Coalition are included in this section. As of April 2003, membership criteria listed as steps 1a, 1d, and 3 have been completed. We are presently affiliated with the Boston Center – Center for Collaborative Education. The process, however, will take time to complete, as each of the ten principles will need to be addressed individually. The Coalition’s rating scale will be used to review our work on each principle.

**The Common Principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools**

1. The school should focus on helping adolescents learn to use their minds well.
2. The school’s goals should be simple: that each student master a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge.
3. The school’s goals should apply to all students, while the means to these goals will vary as those students themselves vary.
4. Teaching and learning should be personalized to the maximum feasible extent.
5. The governing practical metaphor of the school should be student-as-worker, rather than the more familiar metaphor of teacher-as-deliverer-of-instructional-services.
6. The diploma should be awarded upon a successful final demonstration of mastery for graduation – an “Exhibition.”
7. The tone of the school should explicitly and self-consciously stress values of unanxious expectation of trust and of decency.
8. The principal and teachers should perceive themselves as generalists first (teachers and scholars in general education) and specialists second (experts in but one particular discipline).
9. Ultimate administrative and budget targets should include, in addition to total student loads per teacher of 80 or fewer pupils, substantial time for collective planning by teachers, competitive salaries for staff, and an ultimate per pupil cost not to exceed that at traditional schools by more than 10 percent.
10. The school should demonstrate non-discriminatory and inclusive policies, practices, and pedagogies.

### **Coalition of Essential Schools: Membership Guidelines & Criteria**

1. Show evidence of a whole school commitment to each of the Ten Common Principles and the Eight Organizational Principles in their practice. Specifically, they will commit to:
    - a. Share practice lessons learned with other schools as part of a system of accountability to their students, to each other and to the broader public. This includes a commitment to collection and use of evidence to guide the change effort and to support learning, planning and adjustments actions in the schools. The evidence gathered must be authentically valuable to both the school and the center, and centered on student achievement;
    - b. Address explicitly the challenges of equity beginning with race, class and gender;
    - c. Create multiple opportunities for leadership in the school; and
    - d. Involve their district and/or board in the work of whole school change.
  2. Engage in an ongoing process of self-assessment that specifically addresses progress toward implementation on a whole school basis of the Ten Common Principles and the Eight Organizational Principles.
  3. Affiliate and participate in a Center.
  4. Be willing to share in the governance and work of the center, including commitment of money and/or in-kind contributions.
  5. Engage, both within the school and in collaboration with other schools, in a cycle of review and affirmation of membership in CES.
- **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:

## Action Plan 1: Student Achievement (Cont'd)

*A.P. Art History* – A pre-requisite is a combination of 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.

Starting in the 2002-03 school year, students also have the opportunity to take A.P. courses on-line from accredited colleges and universities. Nathan Hale Ray-High School will become a member of the Virtual High School during the 2003-04 school year, which will offer additional A.P. courses to the students.

The following information is published in the 2003-2004 Nathan Hale Ray-High School Course of Studies booklet (several sections refer to college credit).

### **Alternate Credit Programs**

**Project Wise:** An alternate senior experience program will be offered to seniors. This is a school based experiential learning program designed to motivate seniors of all ability levels. Seniors, under the mentorship of a teacher, design projects based upon individual interest that include internships with local community agency members or business people, intensive research, or cultural, artistic, performance-based projects. Academic credit will be awarded for enrollment in this program.

**Tech-Prep Program:** Certain students in grades 11-12 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 11-12 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.

**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.

## Action Plan 1: Student Achievement (Cont'd)

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 these opportunities 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.

**Work-Study Program:** A work-study program is available to students in grades 11 & 12 who are enrolled in the required academic courses to graduate from Nathan Hale-Ray High School. This learning opportunity allows you to gain experience in a place of employment. Up to one academic credit will be allowed toward meeting the graduation requirements. During the school day, the work site must be within the district schools and the work-study experience will be only for academic credit.

Additional work-study opportunities after 2:00 p.m. for pay and/or credit are available through the work-study coordinator.

**On-line 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.

According to the American Council on Education National Task Force on Distance Education in, "Guiding Principles for Distance Learning in a Learning Society," Distance Learning is defined as "a system and a process that connects learners with distributed learning resources...the learner is an individual or group that seeks a learning experience offered by a provider. The provider is the organization that creates and facilitates the learning opportunity. The provider approves and monitors the quality of the learning experience. Providers include schools, colleges, and universities, businesses, professional organizations, labor unions, Government agencies, libraries, and other public organizations."

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.

## Action Plan 1: Student Achievement (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 for the Performing 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: Implement the requirements at the appropriate levels starting in the 2002-2003 school year.**

A portfolio handbook was developed for grades 9, 10, and 11. The handbook requires teachers in each class to assign academic artifacts to their students. The students are required to attend an academic seminar class, complete the academic artifacts, and write reflective papers for each assignment, complete personal artifacts and write reflection papers for each one and be actively involved in required lessons that are specifically designed for this class. The academic advisors are asked to help the students with their artifacts and reflective papers and also teach the assigned lessons. In general, the development of the academic and personal artifacts went well. The assigned portfolio lessons became a problem for the students. Since study halls were eliminated, the students felt over extended and the teachers were not confident in these new assigned lessons. To help evaluate this process, meetings were held with the academic advisors and with student representatives from each grade level. The number of required lessons taught during portfolio class was reduced and the students and academic advisors were given more time to work on their artifacts and classwork. A teacher committee has been organized to redesign the handbook for next year and add a grade 12 section. A student survey was completed to help further evaluate the program.

Next year's students (grades 9-12) will all be required to take the academic seminar. Seniors will be required to give a final presentation before graduation either through the portfolio class or the W.I.S.E. Program. The academic and personal artifact procedure will still be required, but a new section of lessons will be developed for each grade level. This section will include the original themes of life skills, careers, and technology, but will be reduced in scope from the original plan.

- **Action Step: Form an Advisory Committee to establish the criteria to be used in creating a multi-faceted performance based process that requires students at the exit grade of each school to demonstrate mastery of the East Haddam curriculum.**

## Action Plan 1: Student Achievement (Cont'd)

### **Middle School**

At the beginning of the 2002-03 school year, the Strategic Plan goals for student achievement were reviewed with the entire faculty and staff of the middle school. During that meeting, the opportunity to join our advisory committee to define the criteria for this project was presented. After discussion at a team leader meeting, it was agreed that the instructional support team would take on the responsibility for identifying these requirements. The instructional support team consists of Library/Media Specialist, School-wide Enrichment Coordinator, Math and Language Arts Consultants, and school administration. This group met on a weekly basis reviewing current literature, samples from other middle schools and Nathan Hale-Ray High School's portfolio requirements.

It was the recommendation from this committee that an "8<sup>th</sup> Grade Integrated Portfolio" be developed. This recommendation was reviewed by the eighth grade team and, after revisions, was presented to the entire faculty. It was agreed that this portfolio would be piloted during the spring (2003) eighth grade advisory program and expanded to all grades for the 2003-2004 school year.

The eighth grade advisory meets weekly. Each advisor, who works with approximately ten students, reviews student work with each advisee. Each student will identify nine different portfolio pieces that represent several writing styles, technology, an oral presentation and a "free choice." These nine pieces represent work from language arts, math, science, social studies, world languages, and unified arts. The culminating work for each student will be an "End of the Year Portfolio Reflective Essay." This essay will ask all students to describe their learning this year, why they selected items for their portfolio, and any future goals.

At the completion of this pilot, eighth grade advisors will provide feedback to the instructional support team and revisions will be made as needed.

### **Elementary School**

The East Haddam Elementary staff has worked over the past few years to establish a structure of communication and evaluation for students moving from one grade to the next. The goal is to provide vital information and current assessment data that will assist the next teacher to be able to design appropriate learning experiences at the beginning of each school year. As children progress from kindergarten through the grades, accurate, current information is critical.

Each portion of this document has been tailor made for the age of the child. The kindergarten portion deals with developmental skills and is very focused on the discreet skills of the early learner. The document for grades 1-3 focuses on student progress, individual issues, and specific academic achievement. The grade-four report is an effort to document the students' ability to move to the Middle School program and be successful. Each academic area in the grade-four program has specific criteria which is used to determine student success, and students have many ways to demonstrate their competence. Children are assessed regularly and the final outcome is clear.

## Action Plan 1: Student Achievement (Cont'd)

The process of this review has been very interesting to the staff. A subcommittee of the staff worked through several versions, which were shared with the staff as a whole, and multiple modifications were made. Our Title 1 staff created assessments to meet some of the new criteria so that there is now a menu of options should a child have difficulty or the teacher determine some other form of assessment would be more appropriate.

Managing this process over time will include a folder for each child to collect the supporting documents that validate the information presented. These included documents will give the next teacher student samples that show progress as recorded on the grade cover sheet. This “portfolio” of student work should become more valuable as year-by-year progress is shown. The documentation items have been carefully selected so that a continuity of student learning can be seen.

This process has strengthened our review of student success. The assessment modifications being made allow students to further demonstrate their ability to use skills learned in a variety of ways. The Strategic Plan has assisted our process by focusing our efforts on what it is our children should learn and how they must demonstrate the application of their new knowledge.

## Action Plan 2: Professional Development

**Strategy 1: We will develop a professional growth plan that assists teachers in the implementation of the district technology plan in their daily instructional practice.**

- **Action Step: Hold a system-wide technology fair to showcase how technology is used in the classroom to support curriculum and how it is integrated into daily instruction.**

The technology coordinator canvassed schools both in and out of state to determine the various formats for technology fairs. She shared that information with key staff members at each building. It is expected that a district-wide fair will be held in the fall of 2003. The public will be invited. The purpose of the technology fair is to demonstrate the faculty's ability to utilize technology to promote student learning.

- **Action Step: Offer advanced computer opportunities in each department at the high school (e.g. computer languages, web design, graphic design, network administration, and Microsoft certifications).**

At the high school, computer use in the labs and library by the various classes has increased. Teachers are using the computers for research and report writing. New math software has become an integral part of the geometry curriculum. In Art, Advertising Design classes used *Adobe Photoshop* on a daily basis and other art courses used digital photography to manipulate images and document work for portfolios. Many students have benefited from the laptop programs introduced through Ray grants, including two English classes and those taking biology.

The first computer technology class was proposed to the HS program leaders. The title of the course is PC Troubleshooting and Repair. It is scheduled to be offered for one semester during the 2003-2004 school year pending board approval. A description of the course is included in the appendix. The technology coordinator also received a grant from the East Haddam Educational Foundation with matching funds from Ballek's Garden Center to fund a program to train student workers over the summer. These students will become the first members of the school's S.W.A.T. team, Students Working to Advance Technology. Students will learn to perform basic network functions to assist in the daily operations of the district's computer network. These students will continue providing services through the following school year.

**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.**

New teacher orientation has become a standard practice for the district. One full day of planned activities is scheduled for all new staff prior to the actual start of the new school year. Based on feedback from our newest staff members, efforts are being made to enhance our orientation program.

## Action Plan 2: Professional Development (Cont'd)

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

Middle School teachers participated in a workshop on collaboration and differentiation strategies during the district's October 25 professional development program. The theme was continued throughout the year. Middle school teachers received monthly in-service and support on the Collaborative/Consult Model for service delivery in Special Education. Teachers received training in early intervention and early identification for students who experience academic and/or behavioral difficulties. Instructional aides reviewed strategies on differentiated instruction and instructional modification as well. The model adopted for reviewing student concerns and is now implemented district-wide is based on the Early Intervention Process developed by the State Department of Education. The professional development department of the Capitol Regional Education Center (CREC) provided the monthly in-service and will continue into the fall of next year.

In-service on Collaboration and Differentiation was provided to elementary school special education teachers and Title I teachers on March 24<sup>th</sup>. On May 14<sup>th</sup>, middle school special education staff including aides participated in a two-hour overview of their specific roles and responsibilities in the Collaborative Model. Special education aides in all three buildings received three opportunities for in-service in the district and two days of in-service out of district on instructional strategies and behavior modifications. In addition, two teams of high school teachers consisting of a Special Ed. Teacher and Regular Ed. Teacher attended a workshop on team teaching, which is an aspect of the Collaborative Model.

The keynote address at the opening staff meeting for the 2003-4 school year will focus on differentiated instruction with follow up sessions scheduled throughout the year.

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

Opportunities for teachers to participate in Responsive Classroom Training have been arranged for the summer of 2003. Technology training is also being planned for at least two full days of workshops immediately following the close of school on June 18.

- **Action Step: Develop a district statement for Diversity**

In order to develop a Diversity statement, research was undertaken to ascertain what other educational institutions had developed. Bill Howe, a consultant from the State Department of Education who provides workshops on Multicultural Education was enlisted to provide advice. In addition, research articles from the National Association for Multicultural Education were reviewed to develop the statement. A draft was developed and was e-mailed to the entire staff for review and feedback. Based on the feedback from staff the original draft was revised and again sent out to the entire staff for feedback. The following statement reflects the thoughts and general consensus from both staff and administration:

## Action Plan 2: Professional Development (Cont'd)

*Diversity refers to the variety of experiences, perspectives, and potentialities which arise from differences among people that include but are not limited to race, culture, religion, mental or physical abilities, heritage, age, gender, sexual orientation, learning style, and physical maturity. The East Haddam Public School System is a learning community committed to creating a culture that accepts and values each individual.*

**Strategy 3: We will establish a professional development program for all teachers on exemplary instructional practices.**

- **Action Step: Create a Request for Proposal (RFP) process for in-district professional development on exemplary practices.**

The process for developing a professional activity proposal was reviewed. This process currently is outlined in the "Continuing Education Unit" process for the East Haddam School District. As a result of this review a revised request form was developed. An "Invitation Brochure" was created and will be disseminated to all staff at the start of the 2003-4 academic year. A sample is included in the appendix.

- **Action Step: Hold a system-wide technology fair to showcase how technology is used in the classroom to support curriculum and how it is integrated into daily instruction.**

The technology coordinator canvassed schools both in and out of state to determine the various formats for technology fairs. She shared that information with key staff members at each building. It is expected that a district-wide fair will be held in the fall of 2003. The public will be invited.

## Action Plan 3: Technology

**Strategy 1: We will incorporate technology into all curricular areas.**

- **Action Step: Revise the current technology curriculum to be reflective of the needs of the current learners and of current technology.**
- **Action Step: Offer advanced computer opportunities in each department at the high school (e.g. computer languages, web design, graphic design, network administration, and Microsoft certifications).**

Computer use of the labs and library by the various classes at the high school has increased. Teachers are using the computers for research and report writing. New math software has become an integral part of the geometry curriculum. In Art, Advertising Design classes used Adobe Photoshop on a daily basis and other art courses used digital photography to manipulate images and document work for portfolios. Many students have benefited from the laptop programs introduced through Ray grants, including two English classes and those taking biology.

- **Action Step: Develop a junior computer tech program where students assist staff in the maintenance of computer hardware and software.**

The first computer technology class was proposed to the high school program leaders. The title of the course is PC Troubleshooting and Repair. This course will cover the basic hardware and software of a computer system, including motherboard, video cards, and operating systems. Time will be spent setting up a basic system installing software, resolving conflicts, and basic troubleshooting. The troubleshooting course is scheduled to be offered for one semester during the 2003-2004 school year pending board approval. A description of potential courses are listed in the appendix.

The technology coordinator also received a grant from the East Haddam Educational Foundation with matching funds from Ballek's Garden Center to fund a program to train students over the summer. These students will become the first members of the school's S.W.A.T. team, Students Working to Advance Technology. Students will learn to perform basic network functions to assist in the daily operations of the district's computer network. These students will continue providing services through the following school year.

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

This year the elementary school's technology committee created a series of lesson plans to be used to by teachers when using the computer lab with their classes. These lesson plans address the technology standards and competencies identified during the 1<sup>st</sup> year of this plan's implementation. At the middle school, the computer skills and standards were defined and each team identified skills they introduce and/or reinforce. This information will be analyzed to create a scope and sequence similar to the one created for the elementary school. It should be

### Action Plan 3: Technology (Cont'd)

noted that the state technology standards for students was the basis for both schools' student objectives. A new State initiative requires that each district submit a technology plan with a state designated format by September 5, 2003. A committee will be formed to write that plan for board approval. To plan for network changes during the next summer, a representative group of administrators and teachers met with the network administrator and the technology coordinator to discuss needs and concerns for each building. The technology coordinator as a member of key teams in each building attempts to keep abreast of the problems and needs of each school.

➤ **Action Step: Provide training for Building Technology Specialists.**

Three Building Technology Specialist were selected and began their jobs in September 2003. Each specialist attended an orientation session where expectations and procedures were outlined. An email reporting procedure was established to inform each member of the tech team of jobs requiring attention.

➤ **Action Step: Implement more computer-related options at the middle school.**

At the middle school the upgrading of one computer lab has alleviated some of the wait for computer class time. This lab allowed the fifth grade classes a scheduled time slot for computer activities. Flex opportunities included Online Brain Teasers plus time for completing computer work that was generated through other academic classes. An after school activity, *GlobalEd*, connected students from various schools and UCONN in an online learning project.

<b>Strategy 2: We will provide teacher training in the area of educational technology.</b>
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➤ **Action Step: Establish a mandatory network introduction session for all new staff**

This is an ongoing initiative. This year's session took place on August 23<sup>rd</sup> during new staff orientation.

➤ **Action Step: Develop workshops to reflect the needs identified at each school through the Professional Development Committee**

Professional development activities have been offered to address the results of the self-assessment and to address current needs. One need surfaced with the introduction of the administrative programs *Admin Plus* and *Grade Quick*. *Grade Quick* enables the teachers to take attendance and electronically calculate grades and then send that information directly through to the record keeping program, *Admin Plus*. To assist teachers and secretarial staff with these new programs, many formal and informal help sessions were offered. Formal PD opportunities using technology were:

### Action Plan 3: Technology (Cont'd)

- New Teacher Orientation;
- **Grade Quick** – 5 sessions;
- **PowerPoint** – including one session in summer of 2002;
- **MS Word**;
- **Eudora** – Email;
- File Management;
- Creating a WebPage with **MS Word**; and
- **MarcoPolo** Curriculum Connections – 7 sessions covering a variety of curricula.

- **Action Step: Create an assessment tool to assess staff expertise in using technology. Staff takes yearly assessment.**

The technology assessment covered the same areas as the one used in 2001-2002 so that replies could be compared to look for growth. The format of the assessment did change to accommodate electronic submission. One hundred percent of the teachers completed the assessment. Results were compared and analyzed. The information was shared with both the superintendent and the building principals. Overall there was growth in most areas, indicating that the staff is becoming more comfortable with using the technology especially as a personal productivity tool. Some staff members expressed the desire to have more training on connecting technology to the curriculum and professional development opportunities are planned to address those needs. An area where effort is needed revolves around using technology to collaborate with other classrooms and connecting students to other students beyond the boundaries of East Haddam.

<b>Strategy 3: We will provide financial support to maintain up-to-date technological resources.</b>
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- **Action Step: Review minimum computer hardware and software standards yearly.**

Each year the District's Network Manager reviews and updates the district's technology plan to reflect current hardware and technology standards. This year with the introduction of a new operating system, **Windows XP**, care has been taken to transition organizational groups simultaneously. The first wave of refresh and upgrade will encompass all of the 'office' staff at each building.

- **Action Step: Replace one-fifth of the district's computers every year.**

The hardware needs were analyzed and a priority of replacement with care taken to create level playing fields for organizational groups. Through the use of infrastructure and e-rate money, the elementary school classrooms all received new computers this year. This was a great help in the transition to a single platform. The office group will be the focus of this year's refreshment cycle along with a computer lab at the middle school and identified Ray areas at the high school.

### Action Plan 3: Technology (Cont'd)

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

Hardware that does not meet the district's minimum standards are taken off line and stored in the basement at the middle school. Each spring, under the direction of the Business Manager, the retired hardware is removed by a private contractor.

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

As of last summer the elementary school was the only building relying heavily on Macintosh computers. During this school year, thirty-seven Windows XP computers have been placed in classrooms at the elementary enabling the teachers there to enjoy benefits of a Windows based email program, electronically transmit attendance and lunch counts to the office and open inter-office attachments that in the past were incompatible with the Macintosh format. At this time, every staff member in the district has immediate access to a Windows computer in his or her primary area of work.

- **Action Step: Coordinate full utilization of Ray Board funds.**

Ray funds contributed to a 2<sup>nd</sup> class set of wireless laptops used by 9<sup>th</sup> grade students, a smart board for a math class and the replacement of 20 computers in a computer lab.

## 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: Train selected students in Peer Advocacy skills including communication skills, values clarification, decision making, as well as, specific topics including substance abuse, relationships, etc.**

Fifteen students (grades 9-10) were selected to participate in Youth Helping Youth this school year. Toni McCabe, Director of the East Haddam Youth and Family Services, and Michele Sitro, a high school counselor, made the commitment to provide the training sessions over the summer. The students participated in three four-hour training sessions during the summer of 2002. Using “The Peer Helping Training Course” (Sturkie & Phillips, 1994), the following areas were included in the training portion of the program:

- Active Listening
- Sending Effective Messages
- Helping Skills
- Values Clarification
- Decision Making
- Starting and Ending a Helping Relationship

In addition to the presentation of the specific skills, team-building exercises were also included.

Offering the training during the summer was most productive. The students showed their commitment to the program by volunteering their time during summer vacation. We had ample time to present the skills as well as have opportunities for discussion and role-playing. A veteran member of Youth Helping Youth (Amy-Michelle Scrivens) volunteered her time to assist us with the training program. She was able to coach the new students during the role-plays as well as offer her insight and experiences.

- **Action Step: Recruit staff members from each building to participate on a “Character Education” task force.**

The Character Education task force continued their work this year with expanded membership. Keeping in mind the essential characteristics identified last year necessary to successfully build and sustain healthy relationships (see 01-02 Strategic Planning Report for this list), essential representative task force members met several times formally to plan and assess progress. The numerous members of the task force also continued to meet their charge of identifying and evaluating age appropriate programs to promote healthy relationships through ongoing investigation and implementation of pilot versions of identified programs. Many members also pursued this important research and fact finding by attending professional development workshops and conferences.

## Action Plan 4: Relationships (Cont'd)

Because of the necessity to continually improve and refine social and emotional intelligence, which are essential to academic achievement and the development of happy, productive citizens, this task force will always have an ongoing mission.

The core members of this task force include: Carol Rusch, Joann Parady, Toni McCabe, Starr Champion, Howard Sheldon, Craig Edmondson, David Scata, Deb Thibodeau, Kris Mantzaris, Stacie Markoski, and Bonnie Butsch. Contributing members that have been involved in one or more of so many initiatives include: Anne Johnson, Sue Merrow, Linda Bristol, Cindy Mello, Michelle Sitro, Tiffany Quinn, Chuck Harpin, Ava Biffer and Pam Gourlie.

- **Action Step: Define how components of Rite of Passage, Responsive Classroom, Don't Laugh at Me, and other appropriate programs relate developmentally at various grade levels.**
- **Action Step: Identify and set up professional development opportunities to train staff including workshops, site visits, and acquisition of materials and resources.**
- **Action Step: Select staff members, grade levels, and/or curriculum theme units to pilot some of the key concepts.**

The following summary represents progress made this year involving all three of the above mentioned action steps. The pursuit of research, knowledge, and implementation was more aggressive with some programs than others and the resulting progress more significant as a result. The decision on which programs to pursue more vigorously was based on the preliminary research and fact finding from the previous two years since the inception of the strategic plan.

1. **Rites of Passage Experience (ROPE)** – ROPE is described as a process that in its complete implementation is a whole community intervention. The model for the contemporary rite of passage is a three phase, six year process (see more detailed description in Strategic Planning Report 2001-2002). Phase I begins with a curricular component in grade 6 that incorporates the involvement of community, and home focusing on the transition of childhood through adolescence to young adulthood. Phase II focuses on developing and offering positive leisure time activities for adolescents strengthening the connection between student, home and community. Phase III evolves as the process takes hold and focuses more on the giving aspect of community service as high school students become mentors for younger adolescents. ROPE provides a vehicle to integrate a number of important youth and community development approaches including the 40 Developmental Assets as outlined by The Search Institute of Minneapolis, MN. The forty assets are further divided: twenty external assets reside in the categories of support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time; twenty internal assets reside in the categories of commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. ROPE successfully addresses all forty.

#### Action Plan 4: Relationships (Cont'd)

Through networking with several state agencies and the collaborative efforts of many members of the task force, grant funding in the amount of \$9500.00 was secured to begin professional development training and pilot implementation of the Rites of Passage Experience. The Connecticut Assets Network provided \$7500.00 of that funding, and the State Department of Education in partnership with EASTCONN of Willimantic provided \$2000.00. The following is a list of ROPE related activities and professional development opportunities that have occurred or are still occurring in 2002-2003:

- **Connecticut's Assets-Based Character Education Conference** – May 2002  
Several task force members attended this conference
- **T.E.A.M.(Together Educating About Movement)** – August 2002  
Several task force members attended this conference sponsored by the CT State Department of Education and EASTCONN.
- **Nathan Hale-Ray Middle School Trust, Cooperation & Team Building Day – August 2002**  
Daylong professional development workshop at Waterford Country School designed to promote teamwork and more thorough understanding of the ROPE concepts.
- **Grade 6 Rite of Passage Experience** - Pilot implemented as the sixth grade component of the new Developmental Guidance program. Co-facilitated by Bonnie Butsch, Assistant Principal, and Kris Mantzaris, Guidance Counselor. The class is offered as one of six thirty-day rotations of Unified Arts. Other components of ROPE include a culminating “Final Challenge” daylong field trip to Waterford Country School and a parent introduction and “graduation” evening to recognize and celebrate the remarkable accomplishments that are achieved during ROPE. Waterford trips scheduled for November 17, 2002, April 9 (snowed out) rescheduled to May 9, 2003, and June 3, 2003. Parent evenings scheduled for January 8, 2003, May 21, 2003, and June 11, 2003.
- **Professional Consultations with David Blumenkrantz**, founder of The Center for the Advancement of Youth, Family & Community Services, Inc. who developed ROPE in 1981. Consultations held in June 2002, October 2002, November 2002, February 2003.
- **November 4, 2002 – Rite of Passage Experience Community Introduction and Overview**  
Dr. David Blumenkrantz, Mr. Joe Groves, and Mr. Brian Evarts representing “The Center” presented history, philosophy, implementation, and potential of ROPE to an audience of parents, community members, students, and educators from East Haddam as well as two neighboring school districts, as part of an informative “kick off” for the pilot. Mr. Gregory Ryan of the CT Assets Network also attended in support of the initiation of ROPE in East Haddam, which the Assets Network helped fund.
- **May 9 “Final Challenge” – Mr. Joe Groves**, consultant to “The Center” and ROPE trainer accompanied sixth graders and their facilitators to the Waterford Country School.

#### Action Plan 4: Relationships (Cont'd)

- **Connecticut's Assets Based Character Education Conference – May 2003**  
Several members of the task force attended.
- **After School Activities Program** – Expanded to include not only MPAC sponsored music lessons, the Art Club, Parks and Recreation activities including a Baby-sitting course, and select student council activities, but also now a new pilot program sponsored in partnership with and funded by Youth and Family Services. The pilot provides a six-week program of several activities that involves approximately 45 middle school students. Transportation home by bus is also included. The pilot is well received and the plan is to expand in the fall provided funds to sustain and expand the program are secured. This program is the start of fulfilling Phase II of ROPE.
- **Rope Community Training** – Training for 15 members of the school and community adult membership is currently being organized. The purpose of the training is to simulate the student experience and to create collaboration and understanding of the community aspects of the Rite of Passage concepts. The training will involve members of the task force, other school personnel, and community representation hopefully from town government, the Board of Education, Local Prevention Council, Law enforcement, Clergy, Youth helping Youth, a high school mentor/support organization, and the Middle School Parent Advisory Council. This training is scheduled for early October of 2003. Specific dates have not yet been determined.

Approximate cost to complete training and implementation of ROPE is \$12,000.00. Maintaining the sixth grade curricular component would be approximately \$5,500.00 per year. Supply and transportation costs would be associated with expansion and maintenance of the after school program, Phases II and III.

ROPE has been extremely well received by students, staff, and parents this year. The tolerance, respect, trust, and team building aspects are invaluable to developing adolescents.

More information is available on the website, [www.rope.org](http://www.rope.org)

2. **Responsive Classroom** – Sponsored and promoted by the Northeast Foundation for Children, founded in 1982, a 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. Academics and social responsibility are integrated in this approach which has been characterized as more of a gradual shift to create a more positive and synergistic culture for students, staff, parents, and community. Northeast Foundation for Children is a comprehensive, progressive, and child centered organization that has the knowledge and resources to provide necessary materials and professional development for teachers and school communities. Please see Strategic Planning Report 2001-2002 and the website, [www.responsiveclassroom.org](http://www.responsiveclassroom.org), for further detail and information. The following is a list of activities and professional development opportunities that have been and are continuing to occur in 2002-2003:

#### Action Plan 4: Relationships (Cont'd)

- **Connecticut's Assets – Based Character Education Conference** – May 2002 and May 2003. Several members of the task force attended these conferences. One of NEFC's founders, Mr. Chip Wood, is a featured speaker at this conference. Additional sessions include: Responsive Classroom abbreviated introductory workshops, expansion programs including Adult facilitation based on Responsive Classroom principals are offered at the conference.
  - **Introductory Workshops** - These days are designed for participants to learn about the key components and benefits of the Responsive Classroom approach and hear from colleagues currently using the strategies in their classrooms. Two components of the Responsive Classroom approach are emphasized this day. Morning Meeting is a technique that assists in building the atmosphere of trust and respect, promotes the continual improvement of academic skills, and provides daily practice in respectful communication. Rules and Logical Consequences promotes a positive approach to discipline encouraging taking responsibility for one's own actions. By participating in helping to create the rules, students take more ownership for their own interactions and behaviors. Several staff members participation in these workshops, which were held throughout the year.
  - **March 2003 – Site Visit to Flanders School in East Lyme, CT** - The original five teachers who attended the first introductory workshop expanded their experience by attending a day at Flanders, which is a Responsive Classroom Model School. They spent the day observing Responsive Classroom practices and interacting with the staff and children there.
  - **Responsive Classroom One Week Institute - July 7-11, 2003**  
Four elementary teachers will attend the one week institute to further increase their knowledge and develop their understanding and refinement of Responsive Classroom techniques. They are extremely excited to be attending. They had wanted to attend last summer, but due to the high demand for this training, workshops were filled.
- 3. Developmental Guidance** – The guidance department has been expanded to include two counselors who each teach two classes in addition to their counseling duties. The curriculum is in alignment with state and national standards for developmental guidance. The primary objectives are to increase the opportunities to build and improve relationships, increase self-awareness, and further develop a foundation for examining future personal and career goals.
- **Grade 6** – Rite of Passage Experience as previously described.
  - **Grade 7** – Components include developing self awareness, increasing feelings of self esteem through exploration and identification of interests and talents, emphasis on concepts of social responsibility, effective communication skills, conflict resolution, problem solving, decision making, and handling peer pressure effectively as tools for building and maintaining healthy relationships.

#### Action Plan 4: Relationships (Cont'd)

- **Grade 8** – Building on the foundation in place from grades 6 & 7, students expand skills to encompass career exploration. Students examine how their own interests and talents could lead to different career options. The vital role of healthy relationships is again emphasized in terms of the relevance to school and workplace environment and consistent, productive interactions. Students gain a more thorough knowledge of leadership concepts, the negative effects of harassment, particularly sexual harassment, handling difficult situations and people, balance and happiness within different facets of life, and career satisfaction.

#### 4. Other Guidance Programs

- **“Don’t Laugh At Me”** – A comprehensive Tolerance and Bullying Prevention Program is being developed to integrate “Don’t Laugh at Me.”
- **Peer Tutoring** – Middle school counselors have expanded the program to include ten to fifteen tutors working with peers in need of assistance on three days a week during the flex activity period. They work carefully to match students to maximize the effectiveness of the relationship.
- **Rotating Lunch Groups** – Numerous lunch groups are formed and participate in facilitated conversations with peers to discuss contemporary issues that may be affecting relationships and school climate.

#### 5. Other Varied Initiatives

- **Bug Award Recognition Program** – BUG, which stands for “Being unusually good” continues to be a well received program at the middle school designed to offer a more formal method of continually recognizing students for good deeds and jobs well done. The community has strengthened their connections to adolescents supporting this program generously by providing gift certificates for the random drawings as additional recognition and observation of positive behaviors.
- **“Kid’s Club Elementary After School Program”**  
One hundred and seventy one elementary students in grades one through four benefited from the continuation of the eight week after school program that was piloted last year through the efforts of Chuck Harpin and numerous willing teachers and other adults. The funding that came through a Safe Learning Grant sponsored by the State Dept. of Education fortunately was continued a second year. After a snack, students rotate through a series of workshops that consist of homework help, project adventure based activities, and interactive discussions that emphasized communication skills and building self esteem. The program has been well received and plans for next year are to form a collaborative partnership between the PTO and Youth and Family Services under the guidance of Jeanette Taylor to continue to offer this opportunity to our elementary school students. It may be necessary for parents to supplement the operational costs of the program if grant or other funding is not continued or identified.

## 5. Other Varied Initiatives (Cont'd)

- **Laws of Life Essay Contest** – The essay contest was sponsored through SEE, the School for Ethical Education, in Milford, CT. Each grade level created different prompts so as to assure the contest will take on a different flavor each year. We were again fortunate to have many layers of readers who generously donated their time to score the essays. This tradition will continue with the two top essays selected submitted for consideration at the state level. As mentioned last year, this writing exercise is more of a springboard for meaningful dialog between and among students and staff than a competitive event. The prompts were very creative and the essays reflective and insightful.

The English department at the High School is also coordinating this effort successfully; in fact, a student from Nathan Hale-Ray High School was selected as having written one of the top essays in the state last year.

- **Community Conversation** – A community event held on May 1, 2003 and sponsored through competitive grant funding awarded to the community of East Haddam through the League of Women Voters. The topic selected by the event's planning committee was "The Purpose of Education." A diverse cross section of people who live, work, or attend school in East Haddam were invited to come together to discuss an identified topic in several small groups of approximately 15 to 20 people. Moderators and recorders were trained to facilitate and record the conversation. The purpose of the evening is to express and listen to the various perceptions about this specific aspect of education in a safe forum thereby promoting better communication, understanding, and community cohesion that will serve to maximize the energy, resources, and positive working relationships of the community.
- **Curriculum Integration** – As the curriculum writing and revision process takes place teachers have demonstrated mindfulness in expanding the integration of concepts of character education into the curriculum, particularly as new programs and materials are selected. A good example of this is the "Junior Great Books" literacy initiative at the middle school level in the language arts curriculum. The themes of stories that students read and respond to in oral discussions and written reflections are based on dilemmas that test character and ethical decision making.

As we continue to work together to achieve a higher level of success in the realm of building and maintaining healthy relationships, it is important to recognize that not only will this success contribute to higher student achievement academically, socially, and emotionally, it will also ultimately add and enhance habits and traditions that will improve the quality of life in East Haddam for all citizens.

## 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.**

An Ad Hoc School Space Research Committee was formed by the Board of Education on November 12, 2002 following the 3rd failed referendum for a new PK-2 School. The committee was formed to assist the Board of Education in bringing forth information that will result in a school proposal that will solve the space and overcrowding conditions and at the same time is supported by the voters in East Haddam. The committee was given a deadline of March 1 2003. The charge to the committee was:

- To report and recommend to The Long Range Planning Committee on the needs, options, public opinion and proposals to address school space needs by March 1, 2003.
- To collect and put in order information and data regarding school space needs.
- To collect and decipher public perception, expectations and opinion regarding future school space needs.

The Board ultimately decided to revise the educational specifications from a PK-2 early childhood facility to a grades 3-5 school. This decision was based on several factors: state funding for the school project expires on June 30, 2003; the current State reimbursement rate of 47.5% will not be available after June 30 adding significantly to the financial burden of the taxpayers; a new elementary school under the current grant application can be built and ready for occupancy during the 2005-06 school year; a middle school project would require a new application and therefore would not open until 2008 or beyond; and, an elementary school will provide immediate relief to the overcrowded conditions that exist at both the elementary and middle schools. The Board clearly recognizes the physical deficiencies of the middle school building and will revise its Long Range School Facilities Plan to address those deficiencies.

The significant findings of the Ad Hoc Committee that are particularly relevant to the Board's strategic plan are: School configuration and school size are very important to the citizens of East Haddam, a campus environment for schools and community facilities are important features for meeting the needs of the Town and taxpayers are about value as they are about cost.

The district obtained a grant through the Connecticut League of Women Voters to conduct a Community Conversation. The community conversation was held on May 1. Although the feedback on the school system was very positive, it did not address specifically how the community feels about the current state of our school facilities.