



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

Strategic Planning Report (Year 3)

2003-04

East Haddam Board of Education

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TO: Board of Education Employees and Citizens of East Haddam
FROM: Steve Durham
SUBJECT: Strategic Planning Progress Report for Year 3

I am pleased to present you with the annual Strategic Planning Progress Report for the third year of the Board of Education's five-year plan. The Strategic Plan has gained momentum each year since the Board's approval of the plan in August of 2001. The accomplishments of the district with respect to the initiatives identified in the first two years of the Plan were, by all accounts, significant. As you read this year's report, I am confident that you will recognize once again the tremendous progress that the district has made in the third year of our Strategic Plan.

The district's efforts to address the goals and objectives reflected in the "Critical Issues" continue to drive all of our major decisions. While the Board of Education acknowledges that a great deal remains to be done, the extent to which the district has attained the identified initiatives in years one, two and three of the plan is gratifying.

I, along with the Board of Education members, wish to thank you for your support of the Strategic Plan and the school district's efforts to attain our mission.

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.....	10
Action Plan 3: Technology.....	13
Action Plan 4: Relationships.....	16
Action Plan 5: Facilities.....	24

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

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

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

Desired Outcome 1.1: A highly effective instructional program that leads to improved student performance.

- **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 Science and 6-12 World Languages. Other curriculums that were reviewed and subsequently revised were 9-12 Business Education and high school courses in Public Speaking and PC Troubleshooting & Repair. The Science Committee made tremendous progress towards revising the K-12 curriculum. Frequent changes in the Science Frameworks by the State Department of Education hampered the Committee's progress. The Committee expects to complete its work next fall and anticipates 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. Of particular interest is the Language Arts Committee's recommendation to adopt the Sitton Spelling Program in grades K-8. Several groups, including Science, are scheduled for curriculum writing during the summer of 2004.

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

The administration reviewed the available 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

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

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. A breakdown of the CMT & CAPT data is contained in the appendix.

Objective 2: Every student will demonstrate mastery of the East Haddam curriculum.

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

Desired Outcome 2.5: Students will be highly educated and be able to apply their education throughout their life.

➤ **Action Step:** All students will demonstrate mastery of the identified criteria as a condition for graduation.

HIGH SCHOOL

The members of the Class of 2004 will be the first students required to demonstrate mastery of identified criteria as a condition for graduation. The New England Association of Schools and Colleges requires every high school to create a mission statement and a list of student expectations. Thus the student expectations listed in this Mission Statement were selected as the identified criteria that every senior must demonstrate. The following is the list of required student expectations:

- ◆ Acquire and apply knowledge and skills within and across the curriculum
- ◆ Analyze and evaluate information
- ◆ Apply technology as a learning tool across all disciplines
- ◆ Work cooperatively and/or independently
- ◆ Apply problem-solving strategies
- ◆ Utilize resources and time effectively
- ◆ Access, compile, interpret, and present data and information
- ◆ Make informed life and career decisions
- ◆ Recognize and respect the diversity and individuality of others
- ◆ Understand and accept the benefits and consequences for his/her behavior
- ◆ Participate in community service, leadership roles and/or school activities
- ◆ Promote personal lifelong health
- ◆ Sustain the environment
- ◆ Read widely and critically
- ◆ Speak, listen, and interpret effectively
- ◆ Master technology as a means of communication

Every senior had a choice in how they were going to accomplish this action step. During the first quarter, every grade 12 student was assigned to an Academic Advisor Class. During the

Action Plan 1: Student Achievement (Cont'd)
Objective 2 (Cont'd)

first quarter, seniors were given help, guidance, and instruction in the areas of careers, résumé writing, and the college application process. Every student also continued to collect both academic and personal artifacts for their individual portfolio. At the end of the quarter, the seniors had a choice to either continue in the Academic Advisor Class or join the WISE Program. For those seniors who remained in the Academic Advisor Class, they were required to continue working on their portfolio project for the remainder of the year. During the month of May, every senior in these classes were required to complete a Senior Portfolio presentation.

This oral presentation took place in the Academic Advisor Classes, and the students were asked to summarize their learning using their actual portfolio. Each student was required to select at least ten of the learning expectations that they were required to demonstrate during their presentation.

For those students who selected to complete a WISE project, their portfolio requirement ended at the close of quarter 1. During the last three quarters, they worked on their individual project that concluded with a final forty-five minute presentation. These presentations also took place in May and were scheduled during school, right after school, or in the evening. The students in the WISE Program are required to write a journal, and this year they had to indicate in their writing entries how they demonstrated mastery of at least ten of the student expectations.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Eighth grade students at Hale-Ray Middle School demonstrate their mastery of the East Haddam curriculum by developing a portfolio that includes representative samples of their best work. This portfolio serves as the school's primary performance-based assessment and provides teachers, parents, and the students themselves, with substantial evidence of the student's academic achievement.

During the 2003-2004 school year, Nathan Hale-Ray Middle School fully implemented the Integrated Portfolio piloted by the eighth grade last year. This portfolio is now required of all students in grades 5-8. In addition to showing student progress over time, the portfolio is intended to serve as an on-going assessment of student achievement, as well as an indicator that students, upon finishing the eighth grade, have satisfactorily met the district's academic standards. Portfolio items, or artifacts, represent the entire breadth of various curricula. To foster student growth as independent learners, it is the students themselves, with support and guidance from the faculty, who select their items for inclusion in their portfolios. Elements of the portfolio include narrative, expository, and persuasive writing; an open-ended response; a response to literature; problem solving; using technology; a presentation; and a free choice based upon student interest. Students are also required to submit at least one piece from language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, world languages, and the unified arts.

Student portfolios constitute an important element of the instructional program at the middle school. Portfolios afford a number of benefits for our students. These include authentic assessment by reflecting actual student classroom work, assessment of a broader range of cognitive skills than can be evaluated through traditional tests, and involves students in their own assessment by enabling self-selection of work samples to submit for evaluation.

Action Plan 1: Student Achievement (Cont'd)
Objective 2 (Cont'd)

During the next school year, we will review the effectiveness of our first year of portfolio implementation. Activities will include developing benchmarks and rubrics for each artifact at each grade level to provide students with additional guidance and direction in preparing their portfolios.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Kindergarten Student Progress Sheets provide documentation of developmental skills at the end of a child's first year in school. These sheets and their accompanying documents provide accurate, current, and critical information regarding the discrete skills of early learners. Student Progress Sheets for grades 1-3 focus on student progress, individual issues that impact educational performance, and academic achievement in specific areas as children move from grade to grade.

The Student Progress Sheet for exiting grade 4 students documents mastery of the East Haddam Elementary School curriculum. Students show mastery by meeting criteria in the areas of reading, spelling, writing, mathematics, social studies, science, and technology. Options within the areas are provided to enable students to demonstrate their mastery in a variety of ways. These sheets and their accompanying documents support the students' abilities to move on to the middle school and be successful. Students are provided with many ways and opportunities to demonstrate competence and their abilities to apply skills learned.

The progress sheets were piloted during the 2002-03 and will be fully implemented during the current 2003-04 school year. The fourth grade team and administrators will review the process and criteria following its use this year. Based on that review, modifications and revisions may be made during the 2004-05 school year.

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

Desired Outcome 2.3: A high school environment that embodies the basic tenets of the Coalition of Essential Schools and promotes success for all students.

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

Nathan Hale-Ray High School continues to be affiliated with the Coalition of Essential Schools. The membership guidelines, along with the "Principles" of the Coalition, are included in this section. The high school works directly with the Coalition's Boston Center – Center for Collaborative Education. As of April 2004, membership criteria listed as steps 1a, 1c, 1d, and 3 have been completed. This process, as mentioned last year, will continue to take more 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.

Action Plan 1: Student Achievement (Cont'd)
Objective 2 (Cont'd)

This year a delegation of students and staff from the high school attended the Coalition of Essential Schools' Annual Conference in Columbus, Ohio from November 13 to November 16. The theme for the conference was "Making Schools a Place of Meaning." The title of the Hale-Ray presentation was "Beyond the Classroom: Defining Authentic Achievement with Community Service." Students prepared a video and a PowerPoint presentation to explain the service-centered program that has been developed by Mr. Flaherty and Mr. Ryczek for the students in our high school. Mrs. Dadona made welcoming remarks and introduced the group to more than twenty-five participants. Mr. Ryczek led the discussion with an explanation of the history of the "Little Noises Spirit Club" and how it has evolved since 1989. Mr. Flaherty spoke about the "Straight From the Heart Club" and talked about how the program connects to the sociology curriculum. Cory Nelan ran a PowerPoint program to outline the activities and accomplishments of our students and displayed a video that he and Neil Jacobsen put together showing interviews that were recorded at the St. Vincent DePaul shelter in Middletown. Colin Ogilvie, Jon Ficara, Chris Anderson, Angie Atkins, Hallie Robinson, Brook Sassi, Meghan Ryczek, and Laura Baker led a roundtable discussion on their impressions of the program and how participation has affected their education. Participation at the CES Annual Conference was made possible through the generous support of the Ray School Corporation.

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
Membership 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;
 - 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 Plan 2: Professional Development

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

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.

Desired Outcome 1.2: Demonstrate to the public how technology is used to support curriculum.

- **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.

In September representatives from each school met to discuss how to conduct the technology fair. It was decided to have the fair during the normal school day with teachers planning lessons that showcase technology's use in teaching and learning. In total, over 100 activities were planned. Brochures announcing the fair were sent to all East Haddam residents and notices of the fair were placed in local papers. The fair was held on November 18th. Attendance was light. Those who did attend had very positive comments. A feature on the fair appeared in the November 22, 2003 *Regional Standard*. A listing of all of the technology lessons and activities are contained in the appendix.

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

Desired Outcome 2.1: Provide opportunities for ongoing professional development related to district goals.

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

Over twenty after school workshops were offered to teachers. Topics ranged from using the features of MS Word for specific classroom needs, completing grading & attendance online and orientation to the new email package. During the school day, assistance was offered formally through a series of small presentations covering topics and tools for technology integration. Administrators and support staff were offered after-school training in the basics of using *AdminPlus* for attendance, scheduling, report cards and discipline.

Professional Development opportunities during the 2003-04 school year have been directly related to district goals.

Action Plan 2: Professional Development (Cont'd)
Objective 1 (Cont'd)

The elementary school workshops on August 25 and 26 focused on Differentiated Instruction and the Inclusion Model of collaboration between special and regular educators. Both focus on creating learning environments that enable each child to maximize his/her potential (Action Plan 1: Student Achievement).

The October 24 workshop enabled staff members to further enhance their understanding and skills using the *Responsive Classroom Approach* that is directly related to the district goal to embrace character education as a vehicle to promote healthy relationships (Action Plan 4: Relationships).

Designing Mathematics Assessments was the focus of the March 22 Professional Development Day. Teachers had the opportunity to discuss assessment design and worked in grade level teams to develop an end of the year assessment tool in mathematics. This assessment piece is required as evidence of mastery at the end of each grade and becomes part of student portfolios (Action Plan 1: Student Achievement).

The middle school teachers participated in two full day professional development days during the 2003-2004 school year focused on exemplary instructional practices. In October, the faculty participated in a workshop entitled, "Differentiated Instruction in the Classroom," presented by Margaret Beecher, principal of Charter Oak Academy in West Hartford, CT. Continuing the initiatives begun by the district, faculty had the opportunity to develop and refine instructional activities aligned with the principles of differentiation. In this model, teachers consider the various "intelligences," or learning styles of students. These include logical/mathematical, visual/spatial, body/kinesthetic, musical/rhythmic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and verbal/linguistic.

Underlying the instructional philosophy of this approach is that student success is dependent upon adapting teaching to the individual differences of students. Differentiated instruction requires that students be assessed frequently and in varied ways to determine their understanding of the material, that instruction provide multiple approaches to curriculum content, instructional process, and student products, and that a blend of whole-class, group, and individual instruction be used.

In March, several middle school faculty along with Mr. Scata from the central office, continued the work begun earlier in the year. The goal of this session was to design a CAPT/CMT lesson or activity that would improve student achievement as measured by CAPT/CMT. Included in the day's activities were a general overview of the CAPT, how the CAPT/CMT are related to teachers' professional growth plans, and a presentation of models of good lesson design. Scoring the writing portion of the CAPT using holistic scoring software was also included as part of the day's activities.

Teachers had the opportunity to work on their projects independently and in groups during the day and came together at the conclusion of the day's activities to share ideas and evaluate the program.

Action Plan 2: Professional Development (Cont'd)
Objective 1 (Cont'd)

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

The annual new staff orientation was held on August 22, 2004. The afternoon session was devoted to instructing the new staff on the use of the district's computer network and email.

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

Diversity Statement: Diversity refers to the variety of experiences, perspectives, and potentialities which arise from differences among people that includes, 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.

A district-wide committee was formed with representation from all three buildings to review the statement and to make determinations on two specific areas: where are we as a district and what do we need to accomplish? The committee met three times this past school year. The first two meetings focused on understanding the statement and its impact on both staff and students, as well as assessing the activities and programs that presently each building undertakes to address diversity. A number of activities do occur that provide exposure for our students to various cultural, religious and ethnic groups. The social studies classes at both the Middle School and High School provide more opportunities for exposure through readings and research papers but still only touch on cultural and ethnic differences. The High School has developed three different groups that address different aspects of Diversity: Multi-Cultural Club, Straight from the Heart, and Youth Helping Youth. The committee determined that though the district is addressing aspects of diversity, more is needed to embrace and fully implement the district's diversity statement. At its last meeting, the committee detailed a number of suggestions for both programs and activities that will address the components of the statement. In order to fully embrace diversity in the district, we need to make it an integral part of the school community. Staff need to have a better understanding of multi-cultural education through training and in-service. Students, especially at the upper grades of the middle school and high school, will benefit from the Anti-Defamation League two tier program that includes peer training. An anti-bullying program that is offered to middle school students will help bring a greater understanding of individual differences.

Action Plan 3: Technology

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

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

Desired Outcome 1.1: Increased technology opportunities for all students in order to demonstrate proficiency throughout their school experience and beyond.

- **Action Step:** Implement appropriate enhanced computer opportunities to students at the elementary school.

Fall professional development activities centered on using technology tools in the classroom. All activities were held after school to allow all interested teachers the opportunity to attend. The Technology Coordinator met with each grade level to learn where technology might be integrated into the curriculum. With that information, the coordinator researched websites, created *PowerPoints*, and developed lessons for the computer lab. The coordinator shared these ideas and products with each team. The teachers implemented these lessons into classroom/lab activities.

- **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).

A new course, *PC Troubleshooting and Repair* was offered to high school students second semester. Due to insufficient enrollment, the course was cancelled. As an alternative, the students were offered the possibility of taking a technology course online through Virtual High School. Two students enrolled in the Virtual High School course *Visual Basic*. PC Troubleshooting and Repair will be offered yearly to all students.

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

The technology coordinator wrote and received a grant from the East Haddam Education Foundation to establish a student service organization. The purpose of the organization is to utilize the students' talents and interests in technology to help with day-to-day computer issues at the high school. Two students were chosen, along with a work-study student, to spend the summer helping to prepare the network for the opening of school in September. At the start of the school year more interested students joined the group. The high school staff was told of the students' willingness to help and the staff was encouraged to utilize the students' services. One senior's, W.I.S.E. project involved time shadowing the network administrator and performing many network/computer tasks both during and after school.

Action Plan 3: Technology (Cont'd)
Objective 1 (Cont'd)

- **Action Step:** Provide e-mail access for students for curriculum related assignments.

An email package was developed that would allow high school students the ability to communicate with the staff and their Hale-Ray peers, while protecting them from sending and receiving emails from those beyond the school community. Because the product developed is web-based, the students can check their email from home and use the email to easily transfer files between school and home, a feature that allows for seamless continuation of assignments.

- **Action Step:** Provide update training for Building Technology Specialists.

The Technology Support Staff and the three Technology Specialists communicate on a daily basis through email. In addition the specialists receive advanced training on new procedures that might affect staff, such as, new email program, login procedure changes, etc. The specialists also meet with the Technology Support Staff monthly to brainstorm ideas, report problems and voice concerns.

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

In September, the district technology coordinator met with each building principal to determine the professional development needs of each building. As a result of those meeting, over twenty workshops were planned and offered throughout the school year.

- **Action Step:** Create follow-up sessions which focus on the application of technology skills to specific curricula areas.

The technology coordinator met with teams of teachers from both the middle and elementary schools. As a result of those meetings, curricula areas needing technology infusion were identified. The technology coordinator researched those areas and return to the teams with suggested activities. From this collaboration new and varied lessons were created.

Strategy 2: We will provide teacher training in the area of educational technology.

Desired Outcome 2.2: Improve technological skills of all professional staff so students can be offered similar opportunities.

- **Action Step:** Staff takes yearly assessment.

The yearly self-assessment was completed in February. This year, the assessment used was "Taking a Good Look at Instructional Technology" (TAGLIT), an online tool developed by the Gates Foundation for use by schools and school districts. The building administrator completes some sections of the assessment while each teacher completes a personal section adjusted for teaching subject and grade level. Once completed the principals received a summative report by school. The principals and the Technology Coordinator met to review the results and to plan strategies for professional assistance and development for the next school year. Identified staff

Action Plan 3: Technology (Cont'd)
Objective 1 (Cont'd)

strengths include personal use of word processing, email and Internet. A major area for continued support is lesson integration planning and modeling. At the high school this will be accomplished by creating a partnership with the learning specialists. At the middle school, teachers will be required to identify areas in their curriculum that they feel would benefit from technology integration. The technology staff will meet with each teacher to plan a strategy for this goal. At the elementary school, the technology coordinator will attend team meetings on a monthly basis and will continue with the integration plan developed this year.

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

Desired Outcome 3.1: Creative uses of technology in education by providing access to current and cutting-edge technology.

➤ **Action Step:** Replace one fifth of the district's hardware every year.

During the last summer of 2003, computers were refreshed in all school offices, a computer lab at the middle school and the CADD lab at the high school. The rationale for replacement took into account age of computers and the need to have cohesive groups of staff running similar equipment and operating systems. Next year's computer refreshment will focus on the high school classrooms and library. The replacement plan is predicated on reducing the district's Total Cost of Ownership.

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

With the exception of the elementary school computer lab, all computers are now running Windows 98 or above.

Action Plan 4: Relationships

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

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

Desired Outcome 1.2: East Haddam Public Schools will embrace character education as a vehicle to promote healthy relationships.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- **Action Step:** Define how components of Rite of Passage, Responsive Classroom, Don't Laugh at Me, and other appropriate programs that 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.

In the summer of 2003, eight members of the elementary school staff, representing grades 1, 2, and administration, attended the *Responsive Classroom I* Summer Institute training sponsored by the Northeast Foundation for Children. These staff members served as leaders and models for implementing this approach during the 2003-2004 school year. In order to ensure consistency, the elementary staff worked together to develop school wide expectations for hallway, cafeteria, recess, lavatory, and assembly behavior.

The entire elementary school staff followed up on their Spring 2003 Introduction to the *Responsive Classroom* workshop with continued training in the Rules and Logical Consequences component on October 24. This inservice was conducted by The Northeast Foundation for Children.

A monthly meeting schedule was established to continue discussions on the *Responsive Classroom* components and the implementation of the pilot program. A number of interested staff members joined the *Responsive Classroom* pilot group, and each grade level had at least one representative.

The *Responsive Classroom* group implemented many components of this approach during the school year including morning announcements, guided recess activities, displaying CARES (Cooperation, Assertion, Respect and Responsibility, Empathy and Encouragement, and Self-control) posters to focus on the character expectations, implementing a Plan of Action and an Apology of Action which includes a reflection component to the rules and logical consequences expectation, and Academic Choice which closely aligns with differentiated instruction as it allows teachers to tier activities and meet individual students' needs. Piloting teachers have been collecting materials to develop a resource center to be used by other teachers.

Action Plan 4: Relationships (Cont'd)

Objective 1 (Cont'd)

Over the course of the year, 10 teachers visited Flanders's School in East Lyme which serves as a model school for the *Responsive Classroom* approach. As a culminating project to maximize exposure to the entire school community, the piloting teachers organized Cooperation Day. This all school activity provided an opportunity for the committee members to be more visible and take on a leadership role within the school community as it focused on an important character trait of the approach.

Five staff members will be attending the *Responsive Classroom* Summer Institute II training and seven teachers will be attending *Responsive Classroom* Summer Institute I to further enhance their knowledge and skills in this model.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

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

The task force continued their work this year with some change in membership. Bringing new members onto the task force is a goal of the committee. The essential characteristics that were identified and discussed in the 01-02 and 02-03 Strategic Planning Reports are an ever present drive in our continued and newer endeavors. These expanded efforts are more specifically explained in the narratives of other action steps reviewed this year. The task force is a multi-faceted resource with members working on one or more initiatives. As mentioned in previous reports, the mission of this group is ongoing. New faces were welcomed this year and contributed a great deal to the positive dynamic of the task force.

- **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.

With a great deal of research and professional development accomplished in the last couple years, we were able to move forward with the initiatives that have been highlighted in the reports of 01-02 and 02-03. Significant progress was made in the implementation of Responsive Classroom which is reported in more detail from the Elementary School Administrators. Also noteworthy is the progress in the growth of the Rite of Passage Experience as expanded from the pilot stage to become a community initiative. The counselors and other staff members have expanded and refined program offerings in both classroom instruction and student services as outlined in the previous reports. More specific detail will follow under other action steps.

- **Action Step:** Identify and set up professional development opportunities to train staff including workshops, site visits, and materials and resources.

Action Plan 4: Relationships (Cont'd)
Objective 1 (Cont'd)

The following summary will explain the initiatives that were and will continue to be pursued:

- 1. Rite of Passage Experience (ROPE)** – ROPE is a three phase six year community intervention process. (See more detailed description outlined in Strategic Planning Reports of 01-02 and 02-03). Phase I that focuses on the curricular component and expands to include the involvement of community and home continued successfully this year. The class was offered as Grade 6 Developmental Guidance in the Unified Arts rotation. Mrs. Mantzaris has become very familiar with the curriculum and is a skillful facilitator. Ms. Butsch continues to co-facilitate key sessions that require two facilitators. The class completed a “Final Challenge Day” at the Experiential Education Complex of Waterford Country School under the capable direction of Mr. Rick McPhearson. Students go in three different groups that are determined by the completion dates of their Unified Arts rotations. The Grade 6 team has embraced and promoted the concepts and process of Rite of Passage in a most enthusiastic way. Their increased understanding and involvement affords the opportunity to make ongoing connections with students throughout the year as related to literary selections and the topic of adolescence and other periods of transition presented to us throughout life.

East Haddam Youth and Family Services under the direction of Mrs. McCabe has continued to make efforts to expand the After School Program, a step towards establishing a comprehensive Phase II of ROPE which emphasizes creating opportunities for positive leisure time activities for young people. Mrs. McCabe’s involvement in the Youth Advocacy program, Youth Helping Youth, at the high school will also contribute to the development of Phase III of ROPE which is a community service component that connects high school mentors with adult mentors to work with middle school students.

A Rite of Passage Community Training Seminar was held March 24, 25, and 26 as the next step in expanding the focus of ROPE to include home and community. On April 27, the seminar group also assembled to finalize next steps of an action plan for more fully implementing ROPE into our school and community to more actively involve parents and community members. One of those goals will be to incorporate the same concepts more fully into Grades 7 & 8. We will be seeking to introduce the “Initiation of Scholars” into our 7th grade through the concepts in Developmental Guidance integrating common language and themes with the Grade 7 team. The seminar was outstanding and served to reaffirm the commitment of this core group of task force members to build and sustain healthy relationships between and among staff, students, parents, and other community members, and to promote continued growth to involve others in this effort. The seminar was facilitated by Dr. David Blumenkrantz, Mr. Joe Groves, and Mr. Brian Evarts of the Center for the Advancement of Youth and Family. They did a wonderful job making this period of learning and reflection very meaningful. Special appreciation goes to Mr. David Champion and Mr. Alan Hanks of Consumers’ Union for graciously agreeing to host the seminar. Appreciation is also extended to Dr. Durham and the Board of Education who have endorsed and supported this initiative. The task force members that attended the seminar include: Kris Mantzaris, Lauren Perisino, Carol Rusch, Paula Lieberman, Dave Telep, Rick Gannon, Joann Parady, Starr Champion, Toni McCabe, Pete Govert, Mike Hassett, and Bonnie Butsch.

Action Plan 4: Relationships (Cont'd)
Objective 1 (Cont'd)

An evening celebration is planned for Monday, June 14th, 7:00pm at the middle school to recognize the completion of the seminar, and most importantly the accomplishments of our sixth grade students. The evening will also serve to encourage increased involvement of parents and community members in the future expansion of ROPE's three phase process.

- 2. Developmental Guidance** – The middle school developmental guidance curriculum consists of: the ROPE component in Grade 6; a self study in grade 7 that includes communication skills, organization and time management, interest and talent identification, problem solving and decision making, peer relationships, study skills, and social responsibility; and in Grade 8, the focus is on aspects of personal growth that include leadership skills, achieving balance, and career exploration. (See 02-03 report for more detail).

The middle school counselors attended a professional development workshop that focused on positive peer relationship, violence and bullying prevention. They were able to incorporate these strategies into their counseling and classroom instruction.

- 3. Student Leadership Service Council** – The SLSC advisors attended a conference on student leadership strategies and initiatives that focus on community service opportunities. They found the information they gained helpful in generating new ideas and directions for the student led initiatives.
- 4. Connecticut's Assets Based Character Education Conference** – Sponsored by the School for Ethical Education, May 2003 and May 2004. Several staff members attended last year and several also plan on attending this year. The emphasis of many of the sessions enhance our efforts in the areas of building healthy relationships, diversity, social responsibility, community service opportunities for students, and increased community and parent involvement.
- 5. CT NAME (National Association for Multicultural Education) Annual Conference** – September, 2003. Social studies teachers and some members of the task force were able to attend this annual conference. The conference always features nationally recognized leaders in the area of diversity, equity, and character education. Attendees always come away with useful ideas and strategies that can be incorporated for improving classroom instruction and school climate as well as making community connections.
- 6. Workshops on Differentiation** – A variety of professional development opportunities were offered to staff members this year. Although the primary focus of these sessions were designed to increase the effectiveness of classroom instruction and student achievement, the strategies also included building better relationships with students through understanding and connecting to individual learning styles within mixed ability classrooms.

Action Plan 4: Relationships (Cont'd)
Objective 1 (Cont'd)

7. **New England League of Middle Schools** – November 2003 Unified Arts Conference, and March 2004 Annual Conference. Representatives of the Unified Arts Team attended the November conference in Sturbridge, MA. Several staff members attended the March conference in Providence, RI. Peggy Neal, Ava Biffer, Anne Johnson, and Steve Shifnadel presented workshops at the conference. Michael Bellows, one of our 8th grade students, was selected to introduce Kathy Hunt, the key note speaker. This conference features the most up to date information and strategies on exemplary educational practices for middle level education. The conference was particularly helpful in gaining specific ideas that will assist us in restructuring our flex/advisory programs to maximize instructional time and provide a quality advisory program. In addition, attendance at a day long seminar facilitated by Kathy Hunt, a nationally recognized middle level expert, provided some valuable information on a variety of areas that enhance relationships.
8. **Site Visits** – Visits are planned to other middle schools that have exemplary advisory programs. The visits are scheduled to occur in spring of 2004. Future professional development in the area of developing and implementing quality advisory programs to enhance healthy mentoring relationships is planned for the beginning of 2004-2005 school year.
 - **Action Step:** Select staff members, grade levels, and/or curriculum theme units to pilot some of the key concepts.
 - **Action Step:** Charge each Subject Area Curriculum Committees to incorporate character education into its respective curriculum.

Progress has been made in this area through the specific efforts outlined in other areas of the report. More detail will also be included in the next section on initiatives. However, it is important to note that the integration of character education concepts continues to be integrated through the mindfulness of teachers as different phases of curriculum writing, revising and implementation is occurring, as well as through the literature themes that are being chosen particularly in language arts. Often the integration of specific concepts of character education doesn't so much involve drastic changes to the curriculum document as it does in the choice of presentation of the curriculum concepts by framing the prompts that promote discussion and designing assessments to create a more acute awareness of these aspects as related to the overall topic.

- **Action Step:** Design initiatives that would highlight character development at all three building levels including the acquisition of materials as needed.

The initiatives previously outlined in reports from the last two years are continuing. Examples would include: after school programming at the elementary and middle schools, summer school opportunities, various student leadership organizations at the middle and high schools, incorporating "Don't Laugh at Me" into advisory at the middle school, the BUG (Being Unusually Good) recognition at the middle school, student of the month awards, peer tutoring, lunch discussion groups, community service activities like "Stuff the Bus" at Christmas, and holiday food drives.

Action Plan 4: Relationships (Cont'd)
Objective 1 (Cont'd)

New initiatives and increased efforts that are particularly noteworthy this year include:

1. **Responsive Classroom** - The implementation of Responsive Classroom as reported by Elementary Administration.
2. **High School Advisory Program** - The in-depth work at the high school on the advisory program including staff development in the areas of advising/mentoring.
3. **First Day Celebration** – Sponsored by MPAC, this event celebrates the start of a new year and is designed to welcome students as well as their families. In addition a strong message is communicated to students that the entire community of East Haddam values education. Several community organizations were on hand to participate in the welcome endorsing the “Hopes and Dreams” theme that kicked off the new year. A motivational speaker delivered a lively and upbeat message to students, and teachers joined in emphasizing the theme with follow up activities during the first few days of school. Students created dream catchers that hang in the foyer that reflect the individual hope and dreams of each student, as well as the hopes and dreams teachers have for their students.
4. **Community Service** – There was more emphasis placed on community service at the middle school in the form of a more aggressive effort to have successful food drives, and contribute to the food bank with donations of food and money.

A student driven initiative led by Tom Thibodeau, who was joined by student leadership representatives, included soliciting materials to create a memorial garden in honor of the victims and families of September 11th. A weeping cherry tree was planted and spring bulbs were also planted to surround the tree, all of which are currently blooming. A decorative stone circle was designed around the tree and bulbs.

5. **Alternative Grade 8 Transition Program** – A pilot program has been designed and implemented to engage students who have not been successful in the traditional setting. Students and their parents have entered into an agreement that will include their active effort, cooperation, and participation in educational programs that will raise their level of achievement and provide a successful transition to Grade 9. The development of a positive rapport with participating staff in a mentoring relationship is also a goal of the program.
6. **Middle School Schedule Changes** – A committee under Dr. Gannon’s direction has been working to examine the current schedule, gather information from students, parents, and staff regarding the effectiveness of some aspects of the schedule, including the flex and advisory programs, and make recommendations on changes to maximize and enhance instructional time and appropriate middle level programs, such as advisory. The committee plans to finalize recommendations by mid May. Creating a more comprehensive advisory program and allowing time in the daily schedule for each grade level team to have short class meetings with small groups of students will positively contribute to the efforts we are making to create more meaningful mentoring opportunities. In addition a schedule that staggers passing time for different grade levels will reduce the congestion in the halls creating a safer environment and the opportunity for student to pass more quickly.

Action Plan 4: Relationships (Cont'd)
Objective 1 (Cont'd)

7. **Student Support Center** – Efforts have been made this year to examine the possibility of creating a program that will provide support to students who may need some extra attention. Possible components of the program being considered include:
- Tutorial support for non-special education students who may be in need on a short term or ongoing basis as deemed appropriate.
 - A temporary alternative setting for students who may be having difficulty functioning effectively in a traditional classroom setting due to behavioral issues.
 - A setting in which an in-school suspension component could be implemented so that there would be a step between detention and suspension that would be appropriate for a more serious offense that would not qualify for out of school suspension, and during which students would be isolated from peers and expected to spend the day on their academics. This approach would send a strong message concerning expectations for appropriate behavior, keep students engaged in their academic progress, and provide an opportunity for the student to interact with a caring adult to address the issues pertinent for them to return to their regular school environment successfully. This is not designed to be a substitute for an instance for which out of school suspension is the appropriate action.

HIGH SCHOOL

- **Action Step:** Design a secondary school advisory program (mentor/mentee).
- **Action Step:** Provide in-service training on advising/mentoring for high school staff.

In the summer of 2003 a consultant worked with the Principal and Assistant Principal to establish a plan for an advisory program at the high school. The plan included two days of professional development and the formation of a Mentoring Committee.

The first professional development day was held on August 26, 2003 and was entitled “The Changing Role of High School Teachers: Generalists, Academic Advisors, Mentors.” The day focused on establishing the need for mentoring relationships between students and teachers and the many forms in which mentoring takes place. Teachers were reminded “Everyone is already a mentor by the very fact that you are a teacher.” Through understanding these roles, teachers can better create a positive climate in their classroom and school.

The second professional development day, entitled “Mentoring Students” was held on October 24, 2003. The goal was to lay the foundation for staff to become mentors by understanding themselves and their students through the use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. The MBTI is a tool that helps us to understand our personality type and to reflect on our differences. It is important that educators have a high degree of self-awareness and knowledge of the needs of others and of themselves. The insight gained will result in the ability to more effectively teach and develop children. Both professional development days were very successful. Teacher feedback indicated clearly that they had found the days valuable and that they had gained knowledge and skills that would help them in their roles as advisors/mentors.

Action Plan 4: Relationships (Cont'd)
Objective 1 (Cont'd)

A Mentor (Academic Advisory) Committee was formed at the beginning of the year. It is comprised of the consultant, assistant principal, and teachers. This committee met throughout the year to discuss the framework for implementation of the Academic Advisory program. In addition, the consultant met with teachers and staff to discuss issues related to the establishment of a mentoring (Academic Advisory) program. Teachers were provided with articles and information related to mentoring and given the opportunity to provide feedback to the committee. Members of the committee visited a high school that has had a mentoring program in place for several years. Their mentoring handbook and several from other sources were obtained and reviewed. A resource library was established, books were reviewed, and information was extracted to be included in our Advisor/Advisee handbook.

The Academic Advisory program will be implemented in the fall of 2004. A handbook will be completed over the summer and additional professional development activities will be planned to help in the implementation and evaluation of the program. Students will be assigned to an Academic Advisory class, which will meet one block period, for the purpose of mentoring, every other week. Each Academic Advisor will be assigned approximately 15 students. Academic Advisors will see their advisees on a regular basis during the Academic Advisory class. Advisors will be provided with a handbook to use as a guide and as a reference for activities and procedures. The expectation is that the Academic Advisor will meet with each individual student regularly so that they have an awareness of the advisee's academic and social status. The goal is to ensure that the Academic Advisor knows his/her advisees well.

Action Plan 5: Facilities

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

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

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 would result in a school proposal that would solve the space and overcrowding conditions and at the same time be supported by the voters in East Haddam.

The Board ultimately decided to revise the educational specifications from a PK-2 early childhood facility to a grade 3-5 school. A fourth referendum was held in June 2003 and was defeated. Subsequently, the Superintendent notified the Commissioner of Education that the district would not be able to meet the funding requirement deadline and therefore the grant application was withdrawn.

The Board's Long Range Planning Committee held a series of evening meetings between June 2003 and January 2004 to further elicit input from the public. Based on public comment, coupled with their own research of existing documents, the Committee recommended that the Board of Education request a change in current charge to the Elementary School Building Committee to include the middle grades. In January 2004 the Board approved a grade 4-8 school building project and directed the Superintendent to develop educational specifications for the new configuration. The decision was based on the following rationale:

- keeps the district at three schools;
- project includes the middle school grades;
- alleviates overcrowding at both the elementary and middle school;
- discontinues the use of NHRMS as an educational facility;
- eliminates the need for an addition at EHES;
- no interruptions to school programs for renovations;
- addresses all district needs with one project; and
- serves the Town's educational needs well into the future.

The project is currently under the direction of a new building committee that is planning for a mid June 2004 referendum date.