

DR. JULIE HACKETT



**TAUNTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SUPERINTENDENT'S GOALS**

**2012 - 2013**



Dear Taunton School Committee:

It is easy to get distracted today by an onslaught of new State and Federal educational initiatives, and if we are not careful we run the risk of losing our focus and inadvertently creating learning environments that feel inconsistent and disjointed. In Taunton, we have managed to stay focused on what matters most to our school community by working together to help our students and staff see the connectedness and interrelationships of what we hope to accomplish in all aspects of teaching and learning. In 2009, we created the Taunton Public Schools Strategic Plan, which was a good first step in achieving the kind of coherence and unification that will move us ahead. The elements of the plan symbolize an ambitious agenda that reflects our community's collective vision, mission, core values, and district goals – all of which may seem beyond our reach today, but are certain to become a reality given the hard work and commitment by all.

We are headed in the right direction. In 2011, we explored achievement gaps and “equity with excellence” or an inclusive approach aimed at engaging all members of our school community in the effort to help our students attain high levels of achievement. We linked a body of research to our strategic goals, and the end result is the TPS Strategic Plan that aligns with ten strategies, and five circles of influence that emphasize the importance of the relationships that must exist for the Taunton Public School system to be excellent in every way. In 2012, we enhanced our previous efforts and engaged *all* Taunton Public School administrators in the development of goals that link to the TPS Strategic Plan and the five circles of influence. Our collective goals are extremely important in this work, and our recent efforts put us one step closer to our vision.

During the two-day Leadership Retreat this past summer, we focused on creating goals that are aligned to the TPS Strategic Plan, and which also align with the recommended goal-setting process for the new Educator Evaluation System. I shared our district priorities, and a goal setting process (see attached guidelines), sample goals, and provided time for administrators to work on their related goals. All administrators submitted four goals based upon district priorities: one professional practice goal, one student learning goal, two school/district goals. I have used the same approach in constructing my goals for 2012 – 2013, a process that should position us well for the new Educator Evaluation System. More importantly, this will link the TPS Strategic Plan with specific district, school-based, and team strategies that will help us to engage our school community, refine our practices, and achieve our mission of “academic excellence for every student, in every classroom, in every school.”

Sincerely,

Julie Hackett, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools



## GETTING STARTED

### 1. Educator Evaluation in Brief

- Consider the 5 Step Cycle of Continuous Improvement
  - ✚ Self-Assessment
  - ✚ Analysis, Goal Setting, Plan Development
  - ✚ Plan Implementation and Collection of Evidence
  - ✚ Mid-Cycle Goals Review
  - ✚ End-of-Cycle Summative Evaluation
  
- Step #1: Self Assessment
  - ✚ Rubric
  - ✚ Goal Development
    - ✓ (1) goal to improve student learning
    - ✓ (1) goal to improve professional practice
    - ✓ (2 – 4) goals related to school improvement/district priorities
  
- Step #2: Analysis, Goal Setting, Plan Development
  - ✚ Administrator presents proposed goals/plan
  - ✚ Principal and Superintendent review the rubric
  - ✚ Superintendent decides on the plan
  
- Step #3: Plan Implementation and Collection of Evidence
  - ✚ Administrator implements
  - ✚ Administrator and Superintendent collect evidence
  
- Step #4: Mid-Cycle Goals Review
  - ✚ Administrator prepares progress report
  - ✚ Administrator and Superintendent review progress; Superintendent prepares formative assessment report
  
- Step #5: End-of-Cycle Summative Evaluation
  - ✚ Administrator submits report
  - ✚ Administrator and Superintendent review report

### 2. Consider Taunton's Strategic Priorities

- TPS Strategic Plan
- Mission – “Academic excellence for every student, every classroom, every school.”
- 4 Goals: (1) Post-Secondary Pursuits; (2) Personalization; (3) Communication; (4) Maximizing Resources
- 10 Strategies in Common/5 Circles of Influence
- Superintendent's Goal Areas, 2012 – 2013



### 3. Taunton's Goal Development Process

- Reflect/Self Assess
- Brainstorm
- Review goal areas
- Identify action steps
- Identify goal type
- Consider helpful resources before writing

### 4. Helpful Resources for Goal Development

- Developing SMART Goals

**S – Specific:** The first term stresses the need for a specific goal over and against a more general one. This means the goal is clear and unambiguous; without vagaries and platitudes. To make goals specific, they must tell a team exactly what is expected, why is it important, who's involved, where is it going to happen and which attributes are important.

A specific goal will usually answer the five "W" questions:

- ✚ What: What do I want to accomplish?
- ✚ Why: Specific reasons, purpose or benefits of accomplishing the goal.
- ✚ Who: Who is involved?
- ✚ Where: Identify a location.
- ✚ Which: Identify requirements and constraints.

**Measurable:** The second term stresses the need for concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of the goal. The thought behind this is that if a goal is not measurable, it is not possible to know whether a team is making progress toward successful completion. Measuring progress is supposed to help a team stay on track, reach its target dates, and experience the exhilaration of achievement that spurs it on to continued effort required to reach the ultimate goal.

A measurable goal will usually answer questions such as:

- ✚ How much?
- ✚ How many?
- ✚ How will I know when it is accomplished?

**A – Attainable:** The third term stresses the importance of goals that are realistic and attainable. While an attainable goal may stretch a team in order to achieve it, the goal is not extreme. That is, the goals are neither out of reach nor below standard performance, as these may be considered meaningless. When you identify goals that are most important to you, you begin to figure out ways you can make them come true. You develop the attitudes, abilities, skills, and financial capacity to reach them. The theory states that an



attainable goal may cause goal-setters to identify previously overlooked opportunities to bring themselves closer to the achievement of their goals.

An attainable goal will usually answer the question:

- ✚ How: How can the goal be accomplished?

**R – Relevant:** The fourth term stresses the importance of making goals relevant. A relevant goal must represent an objective that the goal-setter is willing and able to work towards. This does not mean the goal cannot be high. A goal is probably relevant if the goal-setter believes that it can be accomplished. If the goal-setter has accomplished anything similar in the past they may have identified a relevant goal.

A relevant goal will usually answer the question:

- ✚ Does this seem worthwhile?

**T – Timely:** The fifth term stresses the importance of grounding goals within a time frame; giving them a target date. A commitment to a deadline helps a team focus their efforts on completion of the goal on or before the due date. Timeliness is intended to prevent goals from being overtaken by the day-to-day crises that invariably arise in an organization. A timely goal is intended to establish a sense of urgency.

A timely goal will usually answer the question:

- ✚ When?
- ✚ What can I do 6 months from now?
- ✚ What can I do 6 weeks from now?
- ✚ What can I do today?

- **8 Considerations for Creating Goals that Matter**

1. Movement

- ✚ Who is your audience, and how are you going to mobilize the community?
- ✚ How are you going to spread the word?
- ✚ What communication tools will you use?

2. Goals

- ✚ What are the specific/overarching goals that your team wants to accomplish?
- ✚ How do they align with system/school-based goals?
- ✚ Are they S-M-A-R-T (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely)?

3. Strategies

- ✚ For each specific goal, what are the strategies that you will use to achieve them?
- ✚ Be specific about the measurements for success!



4. Policies
  - ✚ In what ways can you use policy to leverage your goals?
  - ✚ Review school policies relevant to your goals. Consider authorizing a smaller working group to address policy.
  
5. Programs
  - ✚ Are there new or existing programs that can be leveraged to help you achieve your goals?
  - ✚ If so, what are they and in what ways can you tie into existing efforts/initiatives?
  
6. Projects
  - ✚ What specific projects will you undertake to help you achieve your goals?
  - ✚ Who can you enlist to help you achieve your goals?
  
7. Principles
  - ✚ What is your philosophy on the topic?
  - ✚ Develop a list of guiding principles for the work you will do together.
  
8. Practices
  - ✚ What are the practices that your group will undertake to achieve your goals?
  - ✚ How will you hold others accountable for the work?
  - ✚ How will you make this manageable for others?

#### **References**

1. Doran, G.T. (1981). There's a S.M.A.R.T. way to write management's goals and objectives. *Management Review*, Volume 70, Issue 11 (AMA FORUM), pp. 35-36.
2. Meyer, Paul J. What would you do if you knew you couldn't fail? *Creating S.M.A.R.T. Goals*, "Attitude is Everything."



**GOAL #1: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES**

**NAME(S):** Julie Hackett

**DATE:** August 2, 2012 (Revisions - October, 2012)

**REFLECTION:** Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) were implemented in the Taunton Public School system in 2011 to improve teaching and learning and to pave the way for the new Educator Evaluation System. The development of team-based goals through PLCs will be a way to answer the call of the State to implement a new evaluation system in a practical way that respects educators and students. The theory of action is simple: teachers know best what improvements students need to make, and if they have time to work with their colleagues on improving their practice and student understanding, the results will follow. This differs from a top-down, centralized “test-packet” approach that can effect positive, short term gains, but may limit teacher ownership, critical thinking, and an enduring understanding by our students. As reported in the TELLS MA Survey (2012), over 95% of Taunton teachers participated in a PLC designed to improve instruction and student achievement.

While it appears that we are on the right track and favorable results in student performance have already been noted, it has been a challenge for me to effectively communicate the purpose and importance of PLCs to all teachers and administrators. This strategy for improving is different than other approaches and challenging for educators in that there is no easily identifiable specific assignment or task. The approach we are taking with PLCs is analogous to a teacher asking students an essential question about a topic they are learning, rather than assigning a worksheet on the subject. In many instances, the worksheet would be a preferred, but we know that the best and most productive learning occurs when we are engaged in critical thinking and the answers don’t necessarily come easily. If we want students to think deeply and critically, it makes sense that we do the same, and we make a commitment to improving by tackling that which is most challenging.

The work of the PLCs is challenging and requires the full participation of all educators. In order for PLCs to be effective, there must be a balance between flexibility and structure, and administrators must recognize that their role is to coach, guide, and support teachers in their process of discovery with their colleagues. The over-participation of administration will run at cross-purposes with the goal of teachers taking the initiative to explore problems of practice together. At the same time, efforts must be geared toward improving student achievement, so parameters must be set. The development of a set of tools and frameworks that teachers can use to enhance collaboration and focus on student achievement may help both teachers and administrators in their endeavors. Continued communication at all levels is needed, as is the documentation of the topics explored in the PLCs and the links to student achievement.

**GOAL #1:** By June 2013, 95% of teachers and administrators will share the work of their PLCs, and demonstrate how their efforts have improved teaching and learning in their school.

**TYPE:** Professional Practice Goal



**ALIGNMENT:** The Taunton Public Schools Strategic Plan emphasizes “innovative educational practices” and “educators who are outstanding role models and collaborate to create inclusive and engaging learning environments.” PLCs are linked to Goals #1: Post-Secondary Pursuits, and the “Teacher” Circle.

**KEY ACTIONS/TIMELINES:**

- 1.1 Develop a working definition of PLCs (Leadership Retreat, August, 2012)
- 1.2 Work with all Administrators to develop a goal for Professional Learning Communities (Leadership Retreat, August, 2012).
- 1.3 Develop a “Calendar in Common” to ensure that there is sufficient time in the year for teachers to work together in PLCs (August, 2012).
- 1.4 Attend a Taunton Education Association (TEA) meeting to further clarify the purpose of PLCs (September, 2012).
- 1.5 Review PLC materials and develop new resources/guides to reinforce the following concepts: (1) PLCs are fluid; (2) PLCs are focused on student achievement; (3) PLCs are the structure that we can use to develop team goals for Educator Evaluation system (November, 2012 – meeting with all administrators)
- 1.6 Work with administrators to enhance coaching strategies to support PLC efforts (individual and Thursday meetings throughout the year).
- 1.7 Organize a PLC “Dine and Discuss” to showcase teachers’ PLC work and increase collaboration throughout the district (January, 2013).
- 1.8 Update Moodle data base, survey teachers, and communicate results (June, 2013).

**BENCHMARKS:**

- 1.1 Definition completed.
- 1.2 A PLC goal for every administrator.
- 1.3 2012-2013 Calendar in Common distributed to all administrators.
- 1.4 Talking Points for TEA meeting.
- 1.5 PLC Guides developed.
- 1.6 Notes from individual and weekly meetings with principals.
- 1.7 PLC Dine and Discuss Agenda.
- 1.8 Moodle data base document, a copy of teacher survey, and PLC publications (newsletters, updates, etc.).

**Funding:**

Action 1.7 “Dine and Discuss” – estimated cost is \$1,000.



**GOAL #2: REDUCE THE DROP-OUT RATE**  
 NAME(S): Julie Hackett  
 DATE: September 6, 2012 (Revisions - October, 2012)

**REFLECTION:** The average drop-out rate for the Taunton Public Schools between 2006 and 2010 was 4.4% until a recent uptick in the number of students dropping out of school. Although a 5.3% drop-out rate is significantly lower than what it has been in the past, it goes without saying that even one student who drops out of school is too many, and further analysis of the problem is warranted. It appears that drop-out rates in Taunton are higher for tenth graders, for males, and for Hispanic students, which aligns with trends seen in other urban communities and in the research. Interesting facts and figures that we can draw upon to address this goal include:

1. Only about 58% of Hispanic students and 53% of black students will graduate on time with a regular diploma compared to 80% of Asian students and 76% of white students (Educational Projects in Education, 2007).
2. Graduation rates are significantly lower in districts with higher percentages of students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches – a measure of poverty (Swanson, 2004).
3. In 2006, the U.S. Bureau of the Census noted average income by educational attainment: High School Dropout – \$17,299; High School Diploma – \$26,933; Associate’s Degree – \$36,645; Bachelor’s Degree – \$52,671.
4. The lowest achieving 25% of students are twenty times more likely to drop out of high school than the highest achievement quartile (Carnevale, 2001).
5. Each dropout over the course of his/her lifetime costs the nation approximately \$260,000 (Rouse, 2005).

Two years ago, we established a Virtual Learning program to help keep our students in school, and the Taunton High School administrators and I worked together on an initial drop-out prevention plan. This goal is a continuation of our work on this issue, and we believe that the establishment of an Alternative High School will be a major factor in helping us keep our students in school. We know that the traditional day-school does not meet the needs of every student, and it is our hope that a better understanding of the students at risk of dropping out of school, as well as an increase in opportunities for learning in alternative settings will reduce, if not prevent, the likelihood that a student in Taunton will drop out of school.

Taunton Public Schools Drop Out Statistics

| <u>2004 - 2005</u> | <u>2005-2006</u> | <u>2006-2007</u> | <u>2007-2008</u> | <u>2008-2009</u> | <u>2009-2010</u> | <u>2010-2011</u> |
|--------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 6.8%               | 5.9%             | 4.7%             | 4.2%             | 4.3%             | 4.7%             | 5.3%             |



**GOAL #2:** By June 2014, to increase the potential of all students to be happy, healthy, and productive citizens by reducing the number of students dropping out of school by 50% (from 5.3% to a rate of no higher than 2.65%).

**TYPE:** Student Learning Goal

**ALIGNMENT:** The mission of the Taunton Public Schools is “academic excellence for every student, in every classroom, in every school.” We have a district goal of “Personalization,” and we state in our vision that students will flourish within an environment that includes “personalized instruction that is tailored to meet the educational needs of every student.” A reduction in the drop-out rate is linked to Goals #2: Personalization, and the “Peers/Students” circle.

#### KEY ACTIONS/TIMELINES:

- 2.1 Continue to create awareness of the problem; share data with the public and with administrators, particular to those populations at risk (e.g. males, Hispanic, Grade 10) - (October, 2012).
- 2.2 Include in individual meetings with the THS Headmaster, a periodic review of the Taunton High School Drop-Out Prevention Plan (October, December, February, May).
- 2.3 Broaden the scope of responsibility to better address the needs of students at risk of dropping out of school, and establish a system for tracking preventative measures taken; for example, Guidance Counselors, Associate Headmasters, and Curriculum Supervisors may submit rosters of students whom they deem to be at risk of dropping out and any actions taken (phone logs, home visits, referrals, etc.) - (October, 2012).
- 2.4 Pursue grant funds to maximize resources and create unique learning opportunities for our students at risk of dropping out (2012 – 2013).
- 2.5 Work with the Alternative High School Task Force to create an optimal alternative educational setting in Taunton (January, 2012 – May, 2013).
- 2.6 Develop a job description and hire a talented director/leader to run the Alternative High School; in addition, hire talented, dedicated staff, including the necessary support staff to address the social and emotional needs of our students to ensure success (August – December, 2012).
- 2.7 Develop innovative educational practices and curricula that provide creative, experienced and career-based opportunities to learn (November – January, 2012).
- 2.8 Invite Taunton High School administration to discuss progress on this goal at a School Committee meeting (February, 2013).

#### BENCHMARKS:

- 2.1 Dropout prevention goal shared with all high school administrators, who write their own dropout prevention goal (September, 2012). Memos, newsletters, and School Committee reports/presentations to highlight the drop-out problem and the actions we intend to take to address it.
- 2.2 Individual meeting notes with the Headmaster to support and monitor THS progress.



- 2.3 An analysis of the lowest achieving 25% of students and a tracking system that enables us to know who is most at risk and the actions that we are taking or will take to better address their needs.
- 2.4 Acquire additional funding to support the Alternative High School.
- 2.5 Grand opening of the Alternative High School in January, 2013.
- 2.6 Alternative High School job descriptions and the staffing reports with official appointments.
- 2.7 A creative and innovative Alternative High School curriculum that emphasizes personalization, self-exploration and awareness, collaboration, and post-secondary pursuits (college, careers, etc.).
- 2.8 School Committee presentation and minutes.

Funding:

- Action 2.5 Alternative High School start-up costs estimated at \$500,000.
- Action 2.6 Alternative High School Director/Principal estimated at \$90,000.
- Action 2.7 Development of the Alternative High School curricula estimated at \$20,000.



**GOAL #3: IMPROVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN MATH**

NAME(S): Julie Hackett

DATE: October 11, 2012

REFLECTION: During the past three years, we have focused on improvements in teaching and learning in reading and writing, and it is now time to focus on Mathematics. In 2010, we implemented the District Writing Initiative and identified district writing rubrics to be used at each grade span. Galligan Elementary School also became the first school in the system to participate in the Bay State Reading Initiative (BSRI) – a professional development partnership designed to improve literacy achievement in schools. In 2011, we adopted a new PK-6 Reading series called *Reading Street*, and Elizabeth Pole and Mulcahey Elementary Schools became BSRI partners. It appears that these efforts may have contributed to some positive increases in student achievement with Taunton’s English Language Arts MCAS scores in the district at their highest and in some cases outpacing the State.

In addition to continuing our efforts to improve reading and writing in the district, we now need to focus on making similar district-wide improvements in Mathematics. As a district, improvements have been made over the years, but progress has been relatively slow, and the percent of students attaining levels of proficient and advanced is not at the level we want to see. Furthermore, we are outpaced by the State in terms of the average percent proficient and advanced. While it is true that affluent districts are included in the State percentage, there is no reason why students in the Taunton Public School system should not be among the top performing students in the Commonwealth.

| Grade 3 MCAS Percent Proficient/Advanced in ELA and Mathematics |                  |                  |                  |                   |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| <u>Content</u>  | <u>2009/2010</u> | <u>2010/2011</u> | <u>2011/2012</u> | <u>State/2012</u> |
| ELA   | 64%              | 53%              | 59%              | 61%               |
| <b>MATH</b>   | 66%              | 61%              | 62%              | <b>61%</b>        |
| Grade 4 MCAS Percent Proficient/Advanced in ELA and Mathematics |                  |                  |                  |                   |
| <u>Content</u>  | <u>2009/2010</u> | <u>2010/2011</u> | <u>2011/2012</u> | <u>State/2012</u> |
| ELA   | 52%              | 51%              | 52%              | 57%               |
| <b>MATH</b>   | 48%              | 47%              | 49%              | <b>51%</b>        |
| Grade 5 MCAS Percent Proficient/Advanced in ELA and Mathematics |                  |                  |                  |                   |
| <u>Content</u>  | <u>2009/2010</u> | <u>2010/2011</u> | <u>2011/2012</u> | <u>State/2012</u> |
| ELA   | 59%              | 59%              | 54%              | 61%               |
| <b>MATH</b>   | 47%              | 49%              | 50%              | <b>57%</b>        |
| Grade 6 MCAS Percent Proficient/Advanced in ELA and Mathematics |                  |                  |                  |                   |
| <u>Content</u>  | <u>2009/2010</u> | <u>2010/2011</u> | <u>2011/2012</u> | <u>State/2012</u> |
| ELA   | 67%              | 65%              | 64%              | 66%               |



|   |                  |                  |                  |                   |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| <b>MATH</b>   | 54%              | 57%              | 59%              | <b>60%</b>        |
| <b>Grade 7 MCAS Percent Proficient/Advanced in ELA and Mathematics</b>  |                  |                  |                  |                   |
| <u>Content</u>  | <u>2009/2010</u> | <u>2010/2011</u> | <u>2011/2012</u> | <u>State/2012</u> |
| ELA   | 72%              | 71%              | 72%              | 71%               |
| <b>MATH</b>   | 44%              | 43%              | 44%              | <b>51%</b>        |
| <b>Grade 8 MCAS Percent Proficient/Advanced in ELA and Mathematics</b>  |                  |                  |                  |                   |
| <u>Content</u>  | <u>2009/2010</u> | <u>2010/2011</u> | <u>2011/2012</u> | <u>State/2012</u> |
| ELA   | 72%              | 78%              | 73%              | 81%               |
| <b>MATH</b>   | 37%              | 39%              | 44%              | <b>52%</b>        |
| <b>Grade 10 MCAS Percent Proficient/Advanced in ELA and Mathematics</b> |                  |                  |                  |                   |
| <u>Content</u>  | <u>2009/2010</u> | <u>2010/2011</u> | <u>2011/2012</u> | <u>State/2012</u> |
| ELA   | 71%              | 75%              | 81%              | 88%               |
| <b>MATH</b>   | 64%              | 64%              | 64%              | <b>78%</b>        |

**GOAL #3:** By 2014, we will improve teaching and learning in Mathematics by meeting or exceeding the State’s average percent proficient and advanced on the MCAS in every grade level.

**TYPE:** Student Learning Goal.

**ALIGNMENT:** The mission of the Taunton Public Schools is “academic excellence for every student, in every classroom, in every school.” We have a district goal in which, we state that “we will work to continuously improve student achievement and to prepare all learners for successful post-secondary pursuits.” An improvement to teaching and learning is linked to Goal #1: Post-Secondary Pursuits and the “Teacher” circle.

**KEY ACTIONS:**

- 3.1 Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, school principals, and Curriculum Supervisor for Mathematics to include in their goals a focus on instructional improvements in mathematics where appropriate (October, 2012).
- 3.2 Hire a Director of Elementary Education to oversee improvements in Mathematics (November, 2012).
- 3.3 Incorporate into the Professional Development Plan, an ongoing professional development series in mathematics to address areas of weakness (November, 2012).
- 3.4 Work with DSAC (State support) and explore standards-based mathematics elements for possible inclusion in the elementary schools, similar to the BSRI structure or approach used to improve teaching and learning in reading and writing.



- 3.5 Convene a Mathematics Task Force to: (1) conduct a “mini-curriculum review” for Mathematics, including the analysis of textbooks and curricula; and (2) to make recommendations for the pilot of new Math programs (January - May, 2013).
- 3.6 Develop common units and mathematics assessments at each grade span that align with the Common Core (June – August, 2013).

**BENCHMARKS:**

- 3.1 Copies of administrators’ goals and plans.
- 3.2 Appointment letter of Director of Elementary Education.
- 3.3 Professional Development Plan to include content-based professional development in Mathematics.
- 3.4 Task Force membership, agendas, minutes, and recommendations.
- 3.5 Mathematics Task Force Report and identify possible pilots to be implemented in September, 2013.
- 3.6 Copies of district-adopted common assessments in mathematics for each grade span.

**Funding:**

- Action 3.2 Director of Elementary Education estimated at \$90,000.
- Action 3.6 Special projects/summer work development of common units and mathematics assessments at each grade span estimated at \$20,000.



**GOAL #4:** **ELEMENTARY FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

**NAME(S):** Julie Hackett

**DATE:** October 11, 2012

**REFLECTION:** In 2009, after seeking input from students, staff, parents, and caregivers, we created the Taunton Public Schools Strategic Plan. A Synthesis Team was established to create a written document that reflects our school community's desires for the schools in our system. Some elements of the plan were easily agreed upon, and others sparked a good deal of debate on the Synthesis Team. One such idea was the inclusion of elementary foreign languages, and while most agreed that it was a nice vision, the idea that an urban school system could offer something like this seemed unlikely, especially given the current economic conditions.

Where there is a will, there is a way, and after much discussion and debate, we determined that a vision is a vision by virtue of it being challenging. Those ideas that may not feel easy or may seem out of reach, are precisely the types of ideas that constitute a vision that is worthy of our time and attention. This realization resulted in the inclusion of a direct reference to foreign languages in the strategic plan, which states, "early exposure to foreign languages, health and wellness, music and the arts." Not only do we continue to make Arts a priority in our system, but we have also made strides in foreign languages by offering clubs and activities at the elementary and middle schools, and by creating a Foreign Language Lab at Taunton High School, but there is still more to be done, particularly at the elementary levels. Driven by higher education requirements, foreign languages are also typically implemented at the secondary level, despite research to the contrary about the early grades being an optimal time for acquiring the skills to learn a new language.

Elementary foreign language has seemed the privilege of the few – some might even see it as a benefit reserved for the suburban elite, but it should not be. Now, more than ever, our students need the skills to develop cultural proficiency, to think critically, to improve communication skills, and to increase opportunities for employment, and possibly even land a job abroad should that be of interest or necessity.

**GOAL #4:** To begin implementation of elementary foreign languages in the Taunton Public Schools by 2014.

**TYPE:** District Goal

**ALIGNMENT:** The mission of the Taunton Public Schools is "academic excellence for every student, in every classroom, in every school." We have a district goal in which, we state that "we will work to continuously improve student achievement and to prepare all learners for successful post-secondary pursuits." In addition, The TPS vision states that "our students will benefit from a comprehensive, world-class education marked by innovative educational practices that prepare each one for a productive life

in a global society.” An improvement to teaching and learning is linked to Goal #1: Post-Secondary Pursuits and the “Teacher” circle.



#### KEY ACTIONS:

- 4.1 Work with the Curriculum Supervisor of Foreign Languages and the Assistant Headmaster (former Curriculum Supervisor of Foreign Languages) and study various models of foreign language instruction and identify preferred instructional models (June – August, 2013).
- 4.2 Develop a parent and student survey to gauge interest in the types of foreign languages at the elementary levels (August, 2013).
- 4.3 Convene a Foreign Language Task Force to further study instructional models that are geared toward fluency, and conduct site visits (September – November, 2013).
- 4.4 Develop a short term and long-term plan for implementation of foreign languages in the Taunton Public Schools (November – January, 2014).
- 4.5 Implement a foreign language pilot program and study the effects (September, 2014).

#### BENCHMARKS:

- 4.1 Written report on types of foreign language instruction, and recommendations for Taunton.
- 4.2 Parent and student survey results.
- 4.3 Task Force membership, minutes, and reflections from site visits to schools with preferred instructional models.
- 4.4 A short term and long-term plan for the implementation of foreign languages in the Taunton Public Schools.
- 4.5 Programmatic Review of the Elementary Foreign Languages Pilot.

#### Funding:

- Action 4.5 Foreign Language Pilot estimated at \$100,000.



**GOAL #5: CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT**

NAME(S): Julie Hackett

DATE: November 15, 2012

**REFLECTION:** We are grateful to the taxpayers in the City of Taunton for their generous support of the Taunton Public Schools, and we are fortunate to have state-of-the-art school facilities that were funded in large part by the Commonwealth. In 2011, we concluded a \$112 million renovation/construction project for Taunton High School and Parker School, and close to 3,000 students benefit each day from the many new upgrades, including new Science labs, a foreign language lab, a media lab, the commercial kitchen, and the newly renovated locker rooms and field house. This is the type of learning environment that the children in the City of Taunton so rightfully deserve, and they are thriving as a result.

When I became Superintendent of Schools in 2009, it quickly became clear that a significant School community concern was facilities management and oversight. It was at least the perception of many that the schools had been neglected, and there was a failure to protect the taxpayer's investment. As is the case in other cities throughout the Commonwealth, capital management falls under the auspices of the City of Taunton, not the school department. The Taunton Public School system works through the City and its officials to accomplish many of the routine tasks associated with care and maintenance, which is not always understood by the public.

At times this system can be challenging, and it has been more so these past few years due to the unprecedented economic hardships that have plagued cities and towns. Given today's financial hardships, it would not be unheard of to put all capital management discussions on hold for better times, but fortunately, we have not taken that approach in Taunton. On the contrary, with the support of the School Committee, the school department has used revolving and enterprise accounts to offset costs that are the responsibility of the City. In total, the schools have funded over \$990,000 for an upgrade (i.e. field house floor) and those items that were cut out of the renovation/construction project (e.g. food service equipment, foreign language lab, and technology). Roughly half of the nearly one million dollars was for necessary purchases, such as food service equipment, without which our programs could not function.

We have taken a comprehensive approach to addressing issues of capital management, and in addition to funding various capital projects for the City, we consolidated and closed three aging schools (the former Elizabeth Pole, Maxham, and Walker Schools); we tightened up the use of facilities policy, we attended to minor details, such as calling the arborist immediately to care for a felled tree or quickly fixing a broken door or fence; and we have done more to beautify our grounds. We continue to improve the oversight of custodians and groundskeepers; we added another full time groundskeeper; and we recently developed a capital management plan. Most importantly, we did not quibble over the origin of funding for school improvements, we simply looked at the outstanding needs and found ways to address them.

These efforts have made a difference, and over time, it seems that many of the negative perceptions about the care of our facilities has slowly started to change. The



weekly public complaints about the condition of the school facilities have trickled to only a few per year, which is a credit to our hardworking staff. There is still much more to do in the area of capital management, and it is important for us to keep the positive momentum going to ensure that all our schools are “safe and aesthetically pleasing” facilities in which our school community can take pride.

Although this may be too ambitious for one year, ideally, I would like to address four capital projects that will have a high impact on our schools: (1) permanent structure for Tiger Tent Café; (2) tennis courts; (3) theatre seats; (4) the Taunton High School Stadium (November – December, 2012). These projects will require fundraising and/or the use of funds from revolving accounts. In December, students from the Taunton High School CAD class will be on hand to share design plans for a possible permanent structure for the Tiger Tent Café with costs being estimated at \$50,000. The outdoor structure was a wonderful way to get the café up and running last year, and a permanent structure would ensure that the community can take advantage of the culinary arts students excellent work year round. The THS tennis courts are completely unacceptable and need to be renovated as soon as possible; the estimated cost is \$100,000. Grass and weeds grow through the cracked playing surfaces, the fence is collapsing, and the courts are unfit for practice or competition. The THS Theater looks beautiful after the renovation with the exception of the seats, which can be refurbished at an estimated cost of \$75,000. Finally, the THS Stadium is under a Temporary Occupancy Permit, and no funds exist for a renovation. We need to secure a waiver and refurbish the THS Stadium as soon as possible. There has been great variability in estimates for a replacement or refurbishment, so the final costs still remain to be seen.

**GOAL #5:** To establish a fundraising campaign and find sponsors to support various projects needed to complete the Taunton High School/Parker School renovation and utilize revolving/enterprise accounts only if necessary.

**TYPE:** District Goal

**ALIGNMENT:** The Taunton Public Schools will have schools that are “safe and aesthetically pleasing.”

**KEY ACTIONS:**

- 5.1 Review Taunton School Committee fundraising policy to ensure compliance (November, 2012).
- 5.2 Determine a scope of work and costs associated with four projects: (1) permanent structure for Tiger Tent Café; (2) tennis courts; (3) theatre seats; (4) the Taunton High School Stadium (November – December, 2012).
- 5.3 Meet with the Mayor to discuss the status of the waiver for the THS Stadium (November, 2012).
- 5.4 Develop a “Capital Fundraising Campaign” and create a professional packet of persuasive materials with built-in incentives for businesses (December, 2012).
- 5.5 Meet with the Mayor to discuss the Capital Fundraising Campaign and joint presentation to businesses (January, 2013).



- 5.6 Develop a list of potential donors, send letters, and make personal contacts to request a meeting with each one (January, 2013).
- 5.7 Schedule meetings with those donors who express an interest (January – February, 2013).
- 5.8 Refurbish Taunton High School theater seats during vacation. Plan recognition ceremony if donor has been identified; if not, cover estimated \$75,000 costs with revolving account (February, 2013).
- 5.9 Redo tennis courts as soon as possible in the spring. Plan recognition ceremony if donor has been identified; if not, cover estimated \$100,000 in costs with athletic revolving account (April – May, 2013).
- 5.10 Add a permanent structure for the Tiger Tent Café. Plan recognition ceremony if donor has been identified; if not, cover estimated \$50,000 in costs with Chapter 74 funds (June – August, 2013).
- 5.11 If donor has been secured, begin work on the THS Stadium, and plan a recognition ceremony; if not, continue looking for donors or expand fundraising campaign (June, 2013).

#### BENCHMARKS:

- 5.1 Revisions to policy if necessary.
- 5.2 Scope of work with costs for four projects (1) permanent structure for Tiger Tent Café; (2) tennis courts; (3) theatre seats; (4) the Taunton High School Stadium.
- 5.3 Update to the Taunton School Committee on status of the waiver for the THS Stadium.
- 5.4 Capital Fundraising Campaign Packet.
- 5.5 Minutes from meeting with Mayor.
- 5.6 List of potential donors, introductory letter, and phone logs requesting a meeting.
- 5.7 Schedule of meetings with potential donors, and summary of outcomes.
- 5.8 Theater seats refurbished.
- 5.9 Tennis courts redone.
- 5.10 Permanent structure created for the Tiger Tent Café.
- 5.11 THS Stadium complete or revised and enhanced “Capital Fundraising Plan.”

#### Funding:

- Action 5.8 Refurbish Taunton High School theater seats estimated at \$75,000.
- Action 5.9 Redo tennis courts estimated at \$100,000.
- Action 5.10 Permanent structure for the Tiger Tent Café estimated at \$50,000.
- Action 5.11 THS Stadium estimated at \$1,000,000.