

**Two-Year Progress Report of Nashoba Regional High School
October 1, 2006**

Section I- Detailed Responses to Highlighted Recommendations

- 1. Provide examples of the school's use of the mission and expectations to drive policy and decision making.**

Classification: In Progress

Response: Over the past two years Nashoba Regional High School has used our mission and expectations, specifically the phrase "discovering the gifts and talents of all," to expand the programs and course offerings. Since the NEASC visit conducted on March 7-10 of 2004, programming options have been expanded in wood and metals courses through the hiring of another full time teacher, reinstated in a modern family and consumer science program, instituted in the hiring of a health teacher to provide opportunities for students in the area of wellness and enhanced in fine arts via the addition of a second full time art teacher to allow more students to access art courses, photography as well as ceramics. The business department has seen the addition of a full time teacher to allow students to take a full range of business courses including introduction to business, marketing, economics, banking and accounting. A school store program has been added as a component to the business program at the outset of the 2006-2007 school year. Furthermore, a new part time career counselor has been added to the guidance department to enhance the connections to the workforce and technical programs for many of our students.

This past school year the high school organized a student robotics team through a secured grant from NASA. This enabled students to learn hands on applications of engineering by designing and building a robot that was entered for participation in a state competition. Through this experience the leadership team is discussing possibilities of adding new programming to our current program of studies that will include additional courses in engineering and computer science. This process has involved parents, school committee members, teachers and administrators in addition to a formal student interest survey. The results of the survey have helped to inform our curriculum review process.

The school improvement plan has utilized the mission of our high school to plan and incorporate new initiatives to encourage student involvement in community service and civic responsibility projects. Some examples include participation in Habitat for Humanity, the completion of a senior project, the Recycling Team, etc.

- 2. Report progress in providing leadership at the department level to direct curriculum efforts and to ensure collaboration among teachers around teaching and learning.**

Classification: Completed

Response: As of this September, Nashoba Regional High School will be entering into its third school year with a department head structure that includes teacher leadership in the following departments: Math, English, Social Studies, Science, World Languages, Fine and Performing Arts (Music and Art), Applied Technology and Business, Wellness (Health, Physical Education, and Family and Consumer Science), Guidance, Special Education, and Library Media Services. These department heads meet on a regular basis with members of their department as well as bi-monthly meetings with the Principal, Assistant Principals, and the Director of the Academic Support Center. In their department meetings they discuss curriculum as it relates to instruction and assessment and they review curriculum materials for future use. The department heads also serve as facilitators for District “job alike” district groups for grades 5-12. Many of the department chairs serve on District task forces that look at curriculum adoption as well as scope and sequence and 8-9th grade transition issues. All department heads are responsible for working with any new staff in their building on issues ranging from instructional strategies, common assessments, classroom management and the use of technology in teaching. The department heads at Nashoba are a key link to the success of teaching and learning because of their supervisory role in assessing the quality of teaching in their academic disciplines. As the experts of content and instruction in their academic discipline, they are able to support the administrative team in assessing teacher performance.

3. Report progress on the efforts made to articulate curriculum both within and between instructional areas and with sending schools.

Classification: Completed

Response: During the 2005-2006 school year, the Nashoba Regional School District decided to begin the 8-9th grade transition program in the early fall of 2005 instead of the spring of 2006. This change came as a result of feedback culled from students and parents in an interest survey and also from faculty and administrators of our three middle schools. This modification allowed students and middle school teachers to gain a better understanding of the expectations and curriculum of Nashoba Regional High School. The transition process began with an early release meeting at the high school that involved all eighth grade teachers, guidance counselors, special education staff and middle school administrators along with the high school administration, department chairs and guidance counselors. The program of studies was reviewed thoroughly as were the descriptions and expectations of the three academic levels that currently function in the high school. From that meeting three separate, town specific site visits to our high school were planned and implemented so each middle school 8th grader would have an opportunity to meet high school teachers, guidance counselors, administrators as well as students from our current high school. One of the Assistant Principals facilitates and coordinates the visits that include tours of the building as well as break out advisory groups with high school student panels. In March of 2006 a formal meeting was held for all eighth grade parents from the three middle schools. In this meeting an overview of the curriculum and expectations of our high school program was provided. After a one hour overview conducted by the administration and guidance, subject specific break out groups were coordinated by department chairs. The department heads answered questions related to course expectations and academic levels.

Curriculum has been enhanced through a collaborative effort combining high school and middle school teachers. For example, a freshmen research writing component has been added for all ninth grade students as a result of the Job Alike professional development committee work. Furthermore, a science offering for college prep freshmen entitled Engineering to the Future seeks to combine hands on learning strategies in the subject areas of physics and technology education. A Summer Academy professional development workshop involving members of the social studies and English departments produced an interdisciplinary connection between literature and history. Units and lessons have been developed for implementation during the 2006-2007 school year. Tim O'Brien's novel *The Things They Carried* will be discussed, reviewed, and analyzed in both United States History and junior English courses.

4. Explain efforts made to create a professional culture based on teamwork, collaboration and discourse based on the craft of teaching.

Classification: In Progress

Response: Our district professional development initiatives have focused on differentiated instruction and assessment which has allowed our teachers to work with experts from the University of Connecticut's Gifted and Talented program. The purpose is to improve instruction by varying the methods and techniques so the learning style of each individual student can be assessed and teachers can help improve students' abilities to learn. During the past three years, the Nashoba School District has established a Professional Development Committee that is managed by the Director of Teaching and Learning. This committee is voluntary and is open to all teachers in the district. Teachers are able to give input and feedback to the course of the professional development opportunities offered throughout a given school year. In addition, teachers participate in subject specific task forces or job-alike groups that are working to align curriculum, procure materials, and develop benchmark assessments District wide. During the past two years, the District has had an average of fifteen early release professional development days. As determined by members of the committee, some of the days were designated for District professional development with differentiated instruction and technology while other days were building based and focused on MCAS analysis, subject specific professional development topics, PowerSchool (SIS) and Sharepoint training or other initiatives determined by the Principal and members of the Principal's Council. A differentiated product celebration day involving teachers and administrators throughout the entire District has been conducted in May of the previous two school years. The celebration fosters a sense of collegiality and collaboration as teachers demonstrate their lessons, units, and activities with one another.

5. Submit class sizes in all courses.

Classification: Completed

Please see attached

6. Provide an update on the adequacy of funding to ensure the print and audiovisual collection in the library media center meets the needs of students.

Classification: Completed

Response: The Media Center continues to restore its place in the curriculum and life of Nashoba Regional High School. This progress is a direct result of three positive budget allocations which has enabled Nashoba to hire a certified Library Media Specialist and another full time library aide who is primarily responsible for the audio-visual collections at Nashoba. There are currently six faculty/staff who work in the Library/Media Center. At the time of the visit in March 2004, there were three faculty/staff assigned to the Media Center. Nashoba Regional High School now has a full time Network Administrator, a Technical Support Advisor, a certified Library Media Specialist, and two Library Aides. One Library Aide is responsible for maintaining and supporting the print collection while the other employee is responsible for the audiovisual collection. Since July 1, 2005 the Media Center has added 179 new nonfiction circulating titles, 38 reference titles (approximately 100 volumes), 198 fiction titles, a periodicals collection for a wide range of interests and academic disciplines, three online reference databases for student research that are accessible both at home and at school, and instituted two special collections- a Career Information Center for students and a professional collection for building staff. In addition the Media Center has begun the upgrade of the audio-visual collection by replacing instructional LP recordings with CD recordings. The cataloging of the video collection is in process and will allow all videos to be included in the searchable electronic catalog. In order to maintain security for these materials, the Library Media Specialist applied for and secured a grant through the 3M Company and the American Association of School Librarians. This allowed the school to install a security system that keeps track of all loaned print and audio-visual materials.

7. Provide a copy of the plan and timeline for the coordination, articulation, review, revision, and evaluation of curriculum and include the template that the school will use to ensure all curriculum guides suggest instructional and assessment strategies as well as course specific learning goals and relevant school-wide academic expectations from the mission.

Classification: In Progress

See attached document.

8. Report on the progress made to increase the flexibility of the master schedule to allow students to access selected courses and to be supervised at all times.

Classification: In Progress

Response: During the 2005-2006 school year, a committee was formed to examine our current schedule and to find ways to increase student access to more courses. The makeup of this committee consisted of five teachers (three whom are voting members) and three

administrators. This committee first met to discuss the use of time in our current schedule. From these discussions the committee discussed reasons to look at other schedules based upon the master schedule's current constraints. A survey was developed for the entire faculty for the purpose of gathering widespread feedback on areas of interest with respect to the use of time. The data was then analyzed for common threads in producing a schedule that would benefit all stakeholders. The purpose of the schedule search is to enhance time on learning for all subjects and increase offerings in all academic areas. Discussions of rotating class meeting times also came about so that students and teachers would have the opportunity to meet classes at different times of the day to maximize learning potential. From this survey, Nashoba is looking to run and model one or two preliminary schedules during the 2006-2007 school year. The committee will then survey students and teachers to obtain feedback on the positives and negatives of the two schedules. A plan will then be formulated to choose the schedule that best fits the students and programming here at Nashoba. The goal is to implement a new schedule for the fall of 2007.

The issue of supervision has been completed due to contract negotiations between the administration and the Unit A Teachers' Association. Teachers supervise the cafeteria and provide additional support in the Library/Media Center as needed. Teachers sign up for this duty through the main office and are also responsible for the movement of students in and out of the cafeteria. This supervision now encompasses all aspects of the building. Every period of the day students are supervised either in a class, study hall, academic support center, library or cafeteria.

9. Report how the addition of department chairs has impacted the development of curriculum as well as efforts to include more teachers in this process.

Classification: Completed

Response: The addition of department head has allowed for clear objectives to be developed from each specific department. High School curriculum can be very specialized and with department head direction and supervision each of the departments has been able to improve the scope and sequence of courses offered in each department as well as develop new programming. For example, the science department head has encouraged and supported the development of new courses while simultaneously establishing common assessments for courses taught across all academic levels (biology and chemistry). In English, department leadership has allowed for expanded course electives for seniors and the implementation of common standards for teaching grammar in all English courses and at all academic levels. In foreign language, a culture of collaboration is evident in regular lunch time meetings concerning best practices, assessment strategies, and curriculum expansion. These discussions have led to a broadening of the Advanced Placement program offerings, an enhancement of the current Spanish and French five programs, and the introduction of new courses for first year foreign language students.

Overall, department heads have had a huge impact in resource allocation. Department heads have improved teaching and supported the curriculum in a number of ways. First, there is better organization within the specific departments. Department heads have focused their

subject expertise and organizational skills on enhancing site based budgets for the purpose of procuring materials and supplies that fully support the curriculum and instructional needs of the teachers and students.

10. Develop, implement, and adequately fund a plan and timeline for the coordination, articulation, review, revision and evaluation of curriculum that includes components for instruction and assessment practices as well as relevant school-wide learning expectations and ensures broad participation of teachers.

Classification: In progress

Response: In tandem with the Nashoba Regional District initiatives around Differentiated Instruction and a five year curriculum review process to include all subject areas, members of the Nashoba Regional High School Principal's Council have developed a curriculum template that is designed to ensure coordination of Nashoba's unique curriculum with the school-wide learning expectations of the mission. All teachers will have the curriculum template and department heads will serve as the coordinators and leaders at their various levels to ensure broad participation of all faculty. In addition, all teachers participate in subject specific task forces or job-alike groups that are working to align curriculum, procure materials, and develop benchmark assessments District wide.

11. Report the school's progress in aligning the curriculum with the academic expectations articulated in the mission.

Classification: In progress

Response: Members of Nashoba's leadership team (Principal's Council) comprised of administrators, department heads, and representatives from Special Education and Guidance worked together to develop a curriculum template that will be utilized in all department and subject areas. The template will allow teachers to align curriculum to department, District, and State requirements but will enable direct connections to our mission for student learning. Furthermore, members of the English and social studies departments worked in a Summer Academy to align their curriculum by grade and topic. All teachers participate in District level meetings centered on a five-year intensive curriculum review K-12. One of the main goals of the curriculum review process is to maintain alignment with current local, state and national requirements while maintaining a distinct district and school identity. Teachers participate in either (or both) Job Alike groups whose charge is to provide job-specific learning communities for district staff or District Task Forces which are content and grade span specific and are responsible for discussing and reviewing curriculum related issues.

12. Provide increased, sufficient and dependable resources that ensure the provision of adequate instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, and textbooks.

Classification: Completed

Response: Over the past three budget cycles, Nashoba Regional School District has passed positive budget increases of 5.99% (04-05), 6.68% (05-06) and 7.51% (06-07) respectively. As

such Nashoba's site based budget; which provides for the purchasing of textbooks, instructional materials, supplies, etc.; has increased from \$157,401 in 2003-2004 to \$226,008 in 2004-2005 to approximately \$395,000 for the 2006-2007 school year.

13. Describe steps taken to provide the principal with sufficient autonomy and decision-making authority to lead the school in achieving the mission and expectations for student learning and assess their effectiveness.

Classification: Completed

Response: With the addition of 10 department heads (2004-2005), a full time Athletic Director (2006-2007), and a second full time Assistant Principal (2006-2007), the Principal will have greater flexibility to address issues pertinent to school leadership central to the mission and expectations for student learning. In addition, the Principal will now have greater authority to make decisions with respect to master schedule as the negotiated contract (2005-2008) has provided more flexibility therein. Teachers have become more active in District and school initiatives around curriculum development and alignment and instructional practices. The Principal is now able to focus more energies to issues of curriculum, instruction and assessment as they relate to the mission and expectations for student learning.

14. Resolve concerns related to the inflexibility of the school's master schedule to ensure that it enables students to access selected courses and are not assigned to unsupervised areas of the building.

Classification: Completed

Response: A collaborative Scheduling Committee comprised of members of administration, Special Education, and the teaching faculty worked throughout the 2005-2006 school year to examine issues pertinent to the master schedule and the use of time as it applies to our school community. The NRHS Scheduling Committee established norms and reviewed the purpose of studying varied master schedules to make specific needs central to NRHS. The committee then developed and analyzed survey data and is currently in the process of conducting site visitations as well as a model schedule during the 2006-2007 school year. In addition, students at Nashoba have been given greater opportunities to access a wider range of courses. Virtual High School was instituted during the 2005-2006 school year for juniors and seniors, and sophomores will also be allowed to take VHS courses in 2006-2007. Through the budget process, programming has been added to include a full time Business teacher, a full time Health teacher, and additional full time Technology Education teacher, a full time Family and Consumer Science teacher, a part time School to Career counselor, and various additional teachers in the core academic departments. As a result, class load averages have significantly declined since the 2002-2003 school year. Furthermore, teachers continue to volunteer their planning periods to ensure coverage of the cafeteria and Media Center; thus, during the 2005-2006 school year there were no issues of lack of supervision in student assigned areas of the building.

15. Develop a formal process to ensure the professional staff collaborates within and across departments or instructional areas in support of learning for all students.

Classification: Completed

Response: District Job Alike meetings as well as District Curriculum Task Forces have been in effect for two school years. Every teacher is required to participate in one or both of these curriculum committees who strive to make recommendations around curriculum alignment, resource allocation, and instruction/assessment strategies. The Principal's Council has also developed a curriculum template that seeks to align the curriculum to the standards of the mission. Summer Academy professional development workshops have teamed social studies and English teachers in the development of curriculum. The second annual Differentiated Instruction Fair held in May 2006 highlighted the work of teachers across the District.

16. Report the school's plans to ensure appropriate class sizes for all students, not just those that are academically capable.

Classification: Completed

Response: Class sizes have been reducing steadily for the past three years due to an increase in staffing and the implementation of new or restored programming. The original NEASC report indicates a teaching faculty of 56.2. Nashoba currently employs 63.9 teaching faculty for the 2006-2007 school year. All core academic departments now have average class sizes under twenty students per class. With respect to students who are not as academically capable, there were 50 courses in the entire school during the 2004-2005 school year that had 25 or more students. Of those 50 courses, only 15 were from the College Preparatory academic level (the lowest academic level). In 2005-2006, there were only 41 courses in the entire school (despite a greater number of courses from which to choose the previous school year) that had 25 or more students yet only 9 of those courses were from the College Preparatory level. Furthermore, with the addition of teachers in the elective areas and Virtual High School courses, students have greater opportunities to partake of courses that are of interest which then reduces numbers of students in assigned and/or unassigned study areas.

17. Report steps taken to ensure the library is fully staffed, including a full-time, certified library media specialist, and ensure the library is open to students and staff throughout the day as well as before and after school.

Classification: Completed

Response: As of January 5, 2004 a certified Library Media Specialist and a certified Network director were hired to replace one faculty member who was serving both roles. The Library Media Specialist focuses only in areas that are part of the Media Center and Library. In June 2005 an additional full-time Library Media Aide was hired and began working in September. The additional staff will enable Nashoba to further serve students. A direct result will be increased hours of operation. The Media Center now opens at 7:00 a.m. (40 minutes before school starts) and closes at 3:30 p.m. (one hour and fifteen minutes after school has been dismissed).

18. Report and assess the adequacy of the budget allocation for next year to fund the rebuilding and maintenance of a viable library collection.

Classification: Completed

Response: The Media Center has benefited from larger budgets which have resulted in increased staffing and restoration of the library collection. The Media Center now has a full time Library/Media Center Director and two full time paraprofessionals. The print collection has been restored via the addition of 179 new nonfiction titles, 38 reference titles, and 198 fiction titles. A collection of periodicals has been added to promote student interests in a variety of topics. Three online reference databases have been added to promote student research both in school and from home. In addition, a system to maintain the security of the collection has been implemented.

19. Take steps to ensure that student records are maintained in a confidential and secure manner consistent with federal and state law.

Classification: Completed

Response: Additional locking file cabinets have been purchased for a safe and confidential record keeping system. A reallocation of space in the guidance suite has also enabled greater storage capacity and security.