



**On Team**  
**August/September 2011**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Welcome back ~ not only from a restful summer, but also to school year 2011-12.

As parents and guardians, you have awesome responsibilities in raising your children, who have unique talents, skills, and challenges. As educators, we share that responsibility by creating safe learning environments and teaching those invaluable skills that will carry our students (your children) through a lifetime of learning beyond high school.

Every year, Pupil Services writes and implements an annual Action Plan that not only encourages us to move forward in achievement, but holds us accountable in reaching our goals. In this first 2011-12 issue of OnTeam you will find that our Pupil Services Plan is complementary to our Superintendent's Long Range Strategic Planning Committee, and reflective of the overall mission of the School Committee.

The District-wide mission - *To prepare all students to achieve their full potential as life-long learners, critical thinkers, and productive contributors to our diverse community and global society* – is accomplished by continuing to foster an environment in inclusive settings that lead to the maximum development of social, emotional and physical needs of students. To this end, we will support, train and mentor staff in curriculum areas of social thinking, language and social pragmatics that lead to the well being of students. We will examine any pockets of potential bullying, teasing, or harassment on our bus routes and identify and implement remedies. We will consider re-utilization of space that may grant us better opportunities for social development among age groups while examining ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990) compliance issues.

We added a more specific goal to develop creative programming that will study current services and identify creative alternatives so that all students, irrespective of their unique challenges, learn to their potential. MCAS results will be analyzed, as one litmus test for success of the design, supplemented by parent and teacher input. Moreover, we will be investigating and evaluating shifts or trends that offer more integrative services to our students, which will give them an on-going opportunity to “model up” to the demands of a regular education program in our schools. This school year, Pupil Services will design a revised chart that will outline all our services and programs and propose a 3-year plan for enhancing that blueprint.

Our third Pupil Services goal encourages efforts in our curriculum, culture and environment that respect differences in both regular and special education across all educational settings. In addition to continuing to implement the policies and procedures of safe schools, including wellness, stress, bullying prevention and demographic study, we plan to provide targeted and focused district-wide annual training for bullying prevention, child abuse and neglect and other regulatory requirements, as well as the use of on-line first aid modules.

Moreover, the fourth goal will encourage social and language experiences, extra-curricular in nature that will foster learning through a new set of social skills in informal settings within the schools and broader community, specifically the extended school year programs (ESY). Since it involves so many of our partners, this is a monumental task and will require a year of planning before the summer 2012. These partners (parents, guardians, school committee, superintendent, pupil services, Community Education, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [DESE], etc.) have a stake in how the program is structured both educationally and socially. The anticipated outcome will offer clear criteria for eligibility for summer programming and innovative summer placement programs with DESE's approval.

In reaching for the stars, we want our students to maximally develop literacy and communication skills for life-long learning and to increase the use of assistive technology for eligible students as one of many tools that are necessary to succeed in our society today. The outcome will be an extended plan for assistive technology for particular disabilities and equal access to our programs. Ensuring that all students have the right to equal access of programs is our commitment to you; assistive technology is one part of many parts in helping students succeed.

Our sixth and final goal will build a practical and operational framework for a data driven Pupil Services department through data quality, data capacity, and a culture of collaboration, cooperation and accountability. Some of the targets that we are considering are: transition points of our out-of-district programs (have we been successful?); referral rate (have we reduced them by providing regular education initiatives?); reduction in discipline and bullying (have we been successful in our analysis of the data to implement appropriate and immediate remedies?), CASE programs and CASE transportation (have we considered the pros and cons of confirming these programs vs. our incorporating them into our system of programs and transportation?) Essentially, we want to broaden the quality of multiple measures that we use in helping us to make decisions, use data that is easily understood by all our audiences, and encourage a belief system that these multiple measures will improve teaching and instruction.

So, in helping us to create a plan of how to get from here to there, all of us participate in the mission statement and the Pupil Service's long range plan that will assist us to move forward from year to year on that journey.

I constantly ask myself several reflective questions. Are we excelling as a school system in giving our children the best we have and know so that they are equipped to succeed as adults? Are we listening to and caring for them and you? Are we developing and fine-tuning our policies and procedures so that we create an environment that is safe and conducive to learning? Are we growing as a department, asking hard questions of ourselves, so that we give every child a program that is challenging but success driven?

How do we get there and how will we evaluate our steps in helping your children learn and achieve? Your input is thoughtfully considered and respected. Schools' input, from the School Committee to a staff member, is also weighed. This informal data will now be incorporated with our formal data, which will guide us as part of our tool kit in making decisions around curriculum, programs, and school environment.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts with you.

Sincerely,

Liza Huber