

TO: School Committee

FROM: John R. Brackett

RE: Superintendent Goals & Intentions 2015-16

Date: June 20, 2016

I have been fortunate to serve as transitional superintendent for the 2015-16 school. While this is not the document to express my thanks to so many who have made this “the year” and who have made my experience so rewarding, invigorating, at times challenging, one of professional growth, all with a high dose of fun; I just did.

Often in a transitional or interim period, progress is limited and accomplishments are few. The goals listed below were clearly ambitious and would be better served over a multiple-year period. Nevertheless, progress has been made. Reflecting on the year, there is some disappointment that we were not able to make greater progress or even address several of the goals. I’m reporting on the goals listed below in darker font color.

Although not stated as a goal, I sincerely hope the district has been positioned to be a world class school district in every way, due in part to what we did together this year.

*John R. Brackett*

- I. Student Learning Goal: Provide consistent, strong student support, academic rigor and achievement in all classrooms.**
  - i. Reinforce and support, by action and professional development opportunities, a district-wide, student-centered, collaborative teaching and learning culture.
  - ii. Support and encourage teachers and administrators to reflect upon and “Just Start” to adapt and stretch existing pedagogy, practice and programs to help students learn differently and creatively.
  - iii. Inquire and challenge all staff to examine existing individual, departmental and school practices to ensure we are providing rigorous, consistent, transparent and student-focused opportunities for all students.
  - iv. **Continue to enhance the student services department; including creating an effective departmental structure; assuring a continuum of services for students with disabilities; supporting new programs (e.g. LBC and ACCESS); reinforcing the goal to serve students in-district as appropriate; addressing achievement gaps; and demonstrating effective communication with all stakeholders.**
    - *As was presented in the EDCO review, and highlighted in Dr. Connolly’s end-of-year report, great progress has been made in programming, staffing, communications and parental relations.*
    - *The leadership of Dr. Connolly and Mr. Kupperschmidt was instrumental in providing a clear vision for the program, identifying and addressing the needs within the program and with the parent community.*

- *New programming, a more systemic staffing model, parent education, enhancing the parent-PAC-staff relationship, achievement gap recognition and intervention, stronger knowledge of special education laws and regulations, and a consistent and clear vision of our need to serve and support all students were highlights of this year's progress.*
  - *More work is necessary, especially at the high school, with bringing regular and special education staff together in supporting all students.*
- v. Continue the program review process with self-study (year 2) of ELA and action planning for World Language; initiate a targeted external review of new special education programming and Instructional Technology operations and staffing.
- *The ELA self-study was completed and presented. It was well-researched and presented a balanced, non-defensive identification of areas for future study that will become the basis for the external review.*
  - *The external IT review lacked the quality that we had expected at the outset of the process. It provided very limited guidance for future action. Nevertheless, the internal review and data collection were helpful and spotlighted issues that led to Dr. McCanne presenting a more comprehensive, long-term capital plan and 3-year technology plan.*
- vi. Promote and support teachers working collaboratively to use student work, outcomes and other data sources to inform their instruction and service to students.
- *This is a work in process. Use of data and looking at student work is quite inconsistent across the grades and schools. High-stakes test (PARCC, MCAS) continue to be laced with uncertainty and mixed-messages from the DOE which has been detrimental to WPS's attempt to make student data a tool for improving instruction. Use of formative assessments (literacy and numeracy) at the early elementary level is occurring, but the instruments used are not consistent. A clearly defined and broadly communicated district assessment strategy and plan is important. Use of this plan, with fidelity, is crucial.*
  - *We have made progress in beginning to build useful databases of student work. These databases include dashboards of student work (a myriad of assessments and demographic information) for students in grades 3,4 and 5, and in converting the paper-version of the "blue files" to an electronic format for more efficient utilization.*
  - *An on-going conversation across the district regarding a balanced role that student data (including PARCC and MCAS, SATs, AP) can, and should, play in accountability, instructional improvement, and need for additional services or programs is important to the district's future improvement efforts.*

**II. Professional Practice Goal: Provide coaching and support to district and school leaders to build capacity and enhance conditions for learning.**

- i. Model and provide coaching and support to the district's administrators to help each build his/her capacity to grow as a leader of learning, be a contributor to district-wide improvement, and lead change.
- ii. Review the district's leadership structure to ensure an effectiveness in clarity of roles, decision making and system-wide interdependence.
  - A collaborative review team comprised of teachers (leaders and non-leaders), administrators, and a school committee member, met on over 20 occasions and 50+ hours from October to June. This Leadership Review Team (LRT) developed, and unanimously recommended, a new model of teacher leadership for grades K-8. It was not endorsed by the WEA Executive Committee; thus the status quo remains for 2016-17.
  - The LRT did not recommend a change for Department Heads/Directors (Grades 6-12) given the upcoming review of other key organizational aspects of the high school.
  - While this goal (an enhanced teacher leadership model) was not attained, I believe the district is a good position to address curriculum and instructional issues that were identified by this process and the efforts of the LRT.
  - A new PreK- 12 district curriculum and assessment structure evolved from the work of the LRT. This structure outlines relationships and responsibilities across the district to drive teaching and learning, build greater interrelationships both vertically and horizontally, and provide for greater accountability and consistency. The model has been rolled out to administrators and high school department heads and directors. This stands on its own and can be implemented if consistent with the new superintendent's vision.
- iii. Monitor and support, with fidelity, the implementation of the district's teacher/administrator evaluation protocol; assure that dialogue and feedback are targeted, meaningful, clear, and growth oriented in nature.
- iv. Encourage and model the celebration of student and staff success and contribution to the vision of the district.
- v. Support practices that seek to recruit and retain racially and ethnically diverse staff and assure the respectful treatment of all.
  - This goal was not addressed and remains an important initiative going forward.

**III. District Improvement Goal: Develop a process to address the opportunities and implications arising from the projected enrollment decline facing the district, for program, operations, staffing, and budget.**

- i. Develop and initiate a timeline and process, with the school committee and staff, to identify the most elastic aspects of the school/district operations associated with the projected enrollment decline; implement a systematic plan for review and action. (e.g. class size policy, programming, staffing allocations).
  - The progress made on this goal results in a more clearly identified understanding of the “aspects of the school/district operations associated with the projected enrollment decline” and positioned these issues to be considered in the entry plan for the new superintendent in 2016-17.
    1. The issues for further study include: high school (and other schools) start times, the high school 40-block structure, graduation requirements, student choice within a department, scheduling and class size policies, appropriate world language and other programmatic opportunities, curriculum and instruction leadership and coaching models (see Goal II.ii), and efficiency in Pre-K to Grade 5 school configuration,
- ii. Work with the school committee, administrators, faculty and staff to assure a smooth transition to a new Superintendent of Schools on July 1.
  - Dr. Robert Tremblay has developed a strong entry plan and has already made numerous connections across the district and in the community.
  - Dr. Tremblay and I have met regularly since April to help create a seamless transition beginning July 1.
- iii. Provide support during this year’s collective bargaining process.
  - Fair and responsible contracts have been reached (at the time of this writing) with WEA and Food Service. Tentative agreements have been reached with two additional unions that await ratification.
- iv. Provide leadership and demonstrate a commitment to transparency and to direct and effective communication with district staff and with parents and community. Use existing technology to expand opportunities for broader communication.
- v. Provide leadership to ensure that student and staff safety remains our top priority. Review the district’s safety protocols and recommend actions that are needed to enhance district/school preparedness
  - Staff at all schools have been trained in the most current safety response protocols. At the high school and middle school this is ALICE; at elementary schools it is Safe and Sound Schools. Both are aligned, but employ different age-appropriate vocabulary.
  - Key parents and PTO leaders have participated in the training. Informational meetings for all parents have been held at HS/MS and most recently for elementary grades.
  - This program will be picked up in September with additional training, informational meetings and ultimately with an age-appropriate roll-out to students.

- We will be adding exterior security cameras in the high school student parking lot.
  - Communication infrastructure is a significant need across the district. Lack of reliable cell-phone reception, PA systems, efficient school-to-home real-time communication system (e.g. Reverse 911 systems) must be included in any future district safety plans.
- vi. To develop and implement an exit interview/data collection process for families choosing to enroll their child(ren) in an independent school, or to home school, rather than in Weston Public Schools. Present a report to the school committee at year's end.
- The Why Not Weston Survey was administered, analyzed and results presented to the School Committee and community.
  - Exit interviews, both individual and focus groups, were held with 21 parents.
  - The survey results were posted on the website and distributed to the community via Grapevine. The results were also sent to all staff and were the topic of discussion with staff forums across all schools. The Administrative Council reviewed the results and discussed the lessons to be learned.
  - A plan for future administration of the survey has been developed (Ms. Bator to lead).
  - Anecdotally – in June we have become aware of 5 families who will be returning from private schools to WHS in 2016-17.

TO: School Committee

FROM: John R. Brackett

RE: Midyear Goals & Intentions Update

Date: February 8, 2016

I am presenting here a brief update on the progress we are making toward several of the identified 2015-16 goals and intentions.

- I. **Student Learning Goal: Provide consistent, strong student support, academic rigor and achievement in all classrooms.**
  - i. Reinforce and support, by action and professional development opportunities, a district-wide, student-centered, collaborative teaching and learning culture.
  - ii. *Support and encourage teachers and administrators to reflect upon and "Just Start" to adapt and stretch existing pedagogy, practice and programs to help students learn differently and creatively.*
    - *With support of Babson College, introduced and provided training in Entrepreneurial Thinking and Action to all administrators and to the District Leadership Team.*
    - *Each school has a number of "Just Start" initiatives in place at the classroom or school level. For example, iLab at Woodland; .....*
  - iii. Inquire and challenge all staff to examine existing individual, departmental and school practices to ensure we are providing rigorous, consistent, transparent and student-focused opportunities for all students.
  - iv. *Continue to enhance the student services department; including creating an effective departmental structure; assuring a continuum of services for students with disabilities; supporting new programs (e.g. LBC and ACCESS); reinforcing the goal to serve students in-district as appropriate; addressing achievement gaps; and demonstrating effective communication with all stakeholders.*
    - *A program review has been completed with an action plan to address a number of*
    - *Keynote speaker and a breakout session at the January \_\_ Professional Development Day focused on special education law and the implications for teaching, programming and supporting students.*
    - *Programs for students with special needs have been revitalized and clarified with staff (e.g. LBC at middle school, Skills at HS, .....*)
    - *A district coordination team, which includes Team Chairs or department leaders, has been formed. This team meets weekly with the Director of Student Services to coordinate services and .....*
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  - v. *Continue the program review process with self-study (year 2) of ELA and action planning for World Language; initiate a targeted external review of new special education programming and Instructional Technology operations and staffing.*

8/21/2015

- *The ELA review is in process and internal survey data is being collected and benchmark districts' information is being collected.*
  - *The World Language review is at the point where .....*
  - *The Technology Review has been completed and an action plan/tech plan is being created.*
- vi. Promote and support teachers working collaboratively to use student work, outcomes and other data sources to inform their instruction and service to students.

**II. Professional Practice Goal: Provide coaching and support to district and school leaders to build capacity and enhance conditions for learning.**

- i. *Model and provide coaching and support to the district's administrators to help each build his/her capacity to grow as a leader of learning, be a contributor to district-wide improvement, and lead change.*
- *Lyle Kirtman*
  - *Admin Council*
- ii. *Review the district's leadership structure to ensure an effectiveness in clarity of roles, decision making and system-wide interdependence.*
- *LRT form and review in process*
- iii. *Monitor and support, with fidelity, the implementation of the district's teacher/administrator evaluation protocol; assure that dialogue and feedback are targeted, meaningful, clear, and growth oriented in nature.*
- *Needs attention.....*
- iv. *Encourage and model the celebration of student and staff success and contribution to the vision of the district*
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- v. Support practices that seek to recruit and retain racially and ethnically diverse staff and assure the respectful treatment of all.

**III. District Improvement Goal: Develop a process to address the opportunities and implications arising from the projected enrollment decline facing the district, for program, operations, staffing, and budget.**

- i. Develop and initiate a timeline and process, with the school committee and staff, to identify the most elastic aspects of the school/district operations associated with the projected enrollment decline; implement a systematic plan for review and action. (e.g. class size policy, programming, staffing allocations).
- ii. *Work with the school committee, administrators, faculty and staff to assure a smooth transition to a new Superintendent of Schools on July 1.*
- *Selection complete, transition beginning*
- iii. *Provide support during this year's collective bargaining process.*
- *This is just beginning*

- iv. *Provide leadership and demonstrate a commitment to transparency and to direct and effective communication with district staff and with parents and community. Use existing technology to expand opportunities for broader communication.*
  - *Marginally implemented*
- v. *Provide leadership to ensure that student and staff safety remains our top priority. Review the district's safety protocols and recommend actions that are needed to enhance district/school preparedness.*
  - *ALICE*
  - *Safe and Sound Schools*
  -
- vi. *To develop and implement an exit interview/data collection process for families choosing to enroll their child(ren) in an independent school, or to home school, rather than in Weston Public Schools. Present a report to the school committee at year's end.*
  - *Why Not Weston*