

**JUNE 2015 PROGRESS REPORT
MARCH 2015 PROGRESS REPORT ON
2014-2015 Approved District Goals and Objectives
(APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
ON AUGUST 26, 2014)**

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Schools exist for children.

This mission of the Darien Public Schools is to work cooperatively with families and the community to provide for its students a safe, supportive, respectful, and intellectually challenging learning environment that promotes personal excellence through active, collaborative, and creative thinking and that stimulates individual development of the skills and integrity necessary to become productive members of society.

Purpose of the District Goals and Objectives

The District Goals and Objectives document is a blueprint of action designed to support the continuous improvement of all teaching and learning activities for the 2014-15 school year and to support the goals and objectives developed by the Board of Education and the continuation of previously identified District Goals and Objectives from prior school years. The document is organized by area of responsibility, linking directly to the recently approved administrative reorganizational structure. It includes goals and objectives that (1) continue current instructional and/or operational initiatives; (2) initiate new approaches to strengthen Darien's learner-centered approach; and/or (3) address other essential areas to support an effective organizational structure.

Collaboration fosters learning and professional growth by encouraging individuals to take responsibility for their own learning in an environment which allows for risk-taking and reflection.

Learner -Centered Instruction is focused on learners building on what they know and engaging in activities that develop their critical thinking and problem solving skills through meaningful applications of content.

Communication contributes to the development of a shared vision and expectations among all constituents.

Efficiency reflects a commitment to maximum performance given set resources.

PART I – TEACHING AND LEARNING

GOAL 1: Maximize Learning Through Learner-Centered Instructional Environments That Promote Challenge and Engagement for Each

Objective TL1.1: Professional Learning Communities: The District will continue to strengthen the consistent and effective implementation of the Professional Learning Community (PLC) process. The primary focus of PLC teams will be the exploration, implementation and evaluation of strategies that support learner-centered instruction.

1. *Provide professional development focused on the structure, functioning, and anticipated outcomes of the PLC process.*

Update: All elementary principals reviewed the structure, function and outcomes of the PLC at the beginning of the year and supported teams in their understanding throughout the year via faculty meetings and PLCs.

This is the 11th year PLCs have been instituted in various structures at Middlesex on a regular basis. This year, the PLC primer was redistributed and protocol was created to establish norms and expectations for the PLCs. There are currently 16 functioning PLCs that the administrators oversee through weekly agendas and conversations with department leadership.

Professional Learning Communities have been in place at Darien High School for four years. This time provides an opportunity to collaborate and explore teaching and learning through data analysis and examination of practice and its impact on learning. PLCs maintain a focus on developing skills that are essential to a particular academic discipline, developing common learner-centered practices within departmental course offerings and pedagogical strategies that improve learning outcomes. High School PLC work has increased collaboration and a deep examination of practice within shared units of instruction. Essential to its success is the connection between goal setting in PLCs and goal setting within the framework of the Teacher Evaluation Plan. PLCs provide a meaningful opportunity for professional development as teachers collaboratively establish action plans that are measurable. The data collected is examined to evaluate group progress as well as individual success. The deep, collegial discussions about teaching and learning taking place in PLCs has fostered sharing, collaboration, and increased continuity within the classrooms. Outcomes of PLC work will be shared with the entire High School faculty on May 29th.

2. *PLC teams will set goals, develop action plans, implement strategies, and review progress periodically. Each team will submit evidence of how student learning was impacted through the implementation of strategies that support learner-centered instruction.*

Update: At the elementary schools, each PLC submitted a goal, action plan and related strategies. Principals reviewed goals at the beginning of the year and at midyear conferences to monitor progress and support PLC growth.

PLCs will upload evidence of student learning through the evaluation model by the end of the year.

At Middlesex, the PLC is linked to the Teacher Evaluation Plan. For the grade levels, there are common goals and common benchmarks that the individual teachers use to analyze the outcomes for their classes. The PLC work is linked to department initiatives and is worked on weekly and during Professional Development Days.

3. Extend opportunities for the consistent sharing and application of PLC outcomes.

Update: At elementary faculty meetings, teams meet in cross grade level groups to share information across PLCs. This includes all faculty (Regular, Special Education, SRBI, Special Areas).

At Middlesex, this year there has been a concerted effort to link the work of the English PLCs to the Science and Social Studies PLCs emphasizing non-fiction reading sources and strategies. Within the department there are ongoing conversations that occur at department meetings, where the PLC work at grade levels is shared and outcomes are reviewed, analyzed and discussed.

4. Identify and implement professional development opportunities based on PLC goals and year end outcomes.

Update: Professional Development days at the elementary level are used to support the needs of PLC goals. Districtwide activities such as progress report calibration, discussion of best practices and collaboration occurred throughout the year.

At Middlesex during Professional Development Days, ongoing and focused work occurs that is aligned with the PLC work. Teachers' College has been instrumental in working with the English, Science and Social Studies departments to educate the teachers about the Common Core expectations, SBAC format and appropriate strategies for reading and writing.

Objective TL1.2: Curriculum Review and Revision: The District will develop and present recommendations for modifications to the current process for curriculum review and revision, including analysis and recommendation on the use of technology applications for curriculum documentation.

Curriculum review and revision will focus on the following priority areas:

K-12 Literacy

1. Expand and strengthen the implementation of the Columbia University's Teachers College Reader's and Writer's Workshop Model at the elementary and middle school levels, including review of grade level units of study and instructional resources and practices.

Update: In the elementary schools, there has been continued partnership with the Teachers' College Reading and Writing Project. In grades K-2 the focus has been on strengthening reading and writing instruction through the analysis of word study content and best practices across the day in encoding and decoding instruction. In the upper grades, the focus has been on strengthening instruction around reading skills and strategies in order to improve student progress at all levels. This included a focus on differentiation, specifically small group instruction methods.

At the middle school, the focus has been on the continued support and study around the implementation of the units of study books in writing in grades 6-8. In addition, teachers were able to, through classroom based professional development, engage in the creation of high quality test preparation materials and instruction for the SBAC.

2. Investigate, develop, and implement, if appropriate, additional literacy instructional approaches that meet the diverse learning needs of students.

Update: The SRBI Specialists, with the support of the Literacy Program Coordinator, studied the Wilson Foundations program, which is a highly explicit, systematic, multi-sensory approach to teaching phonemic awareness, phonics-word study, high frequency words, fluency, vocabulary and spelling. In the spring the district began to implement the program with SRBI students who were not responding to other methods of instruction in this area. Further study is being done to determine if this program will be effective in all general education classes in kindergarten and first grade.

3. Evaluate the following programs and/or courses at Darien High School:
 - a. Review American Studies Program **Deferred**
 - b. Develop English Writing Skills Continuum **Completed, Summer, 2014**
 - c. Update Reading and Study Skills **Deferred**
4. Identify and implement professional development opportunities based on program needs.

Update: In addition to the professional development from Teachers' College described above, teachers in fourth and fifth grade received professional development in an area that they identified as high need. That area was word study, with more emphasis on encoding (spelling). Nancy Chapel Eberhardt, an educational consultant with 3T Literacy Group, provided the professional development. This is an area that will continue to be a focus area next year.

Furthermore, elementary teams of teachers worked with the Literacy Program Coordinator to receive professional development in areas specific to their team needs. These areas included: shared reading, reading skills and strategies, SBAC test preparation, unit specific support, word study and others.

At the middle school, the focus has been on the continued support and study around the implementation of the units of study books in writing in grades 6-8. In addition, teachers were able to, through classroom-based professional development, engage in the creation of high quality test preparation materials and instruction for the SBAC.

K-12 Mathematics

January 27, 2015

1. Strengthen the implementation of the Grades K-5 mathematics curriculum, including review of grade level units of study and instructional resources and practices.

Update: A focus group with a cross-sectional representation of teachers and building administrators is meeting to examine the implementation of the K-5 Mathematics Program. Findings and action items resulting from that meeting will be available in April.

2. Strengthen practices that support the transition of students from Grades 5 to 6, including review and updating of student course placements.

Update: The Grade 5-6 placement process has been reviewed and revised. Previously used CMT scores will be replaced with an in-house benchmark assessment and a performance task administered at the elementary schools. The use of the non-verbal OLSAT score will remain in place, as will the use of the Grade 6 Course three Placement test. This change has been communicated to parents through the Middlesex Middle School parent letter and was shared with Grade 5 teachers.

To encourage clear communication with parents regarding placement, the district is in the process of revising the MMS Math Department webpage which will include placement information, course descriptions, and support resources.

A report was presented at the January 13, 2015 Board of Education meeting.

3. Implement and evaluate the use of the newly selected Grades 6-8 textbook resources for Courses 1, 2, 3 and Algebra I, including review of pacing guides and assessments.

Update: Teachers and students provided feedback on the textbook resources to the Board of Education Curriculum Committee on January 16, 2015.

4. Evaluate the following programs and/or courses at Darien High School:
 - a. Update Algebra I
 - b. Update Geometry 200/300

Update: The Algebra 1 curriculum document has been updated and was presented to the Board in January 2015, along with the Grades 6-8 Course Curriculum documents. The Geometry 200/300 course scope and sequence had been revised in Summer 2014 for implementation in the 2014-2015 school year, with updates to

include new state standards. The updated Geometry 200/300 curriculum document is being drafted.

5. *Identify and implement professional development opportunities based on program needs.*

Update: At Middlesex Middle School, two Professional Development days were held for the department with a math specialist from Cooperative Educational Services. Planning is underway for scheduling similar in-service days next year, including engaging a representative from Big Ideas to conduct training sessions.

Contact has also been made with the local Investigations Consortia (CT schools that use Investigations) requesting names of professional developers to support the K-5 Math program.

Opportunities for off-site conferences, workshops and courses are communicated to all mathematics teachers grades 6-12.

K-12 World Languages

1. *Review and refine the Grades K-5 world languages curriculum, including units of study and assessments. **In progress.***
2. *Investigate the impact of the evolution of the Grades K-5 world languages curriculum on the Grades 6-8 world languages program. Develop program recommendations that align with the advancement of student learning needs. **In progress.***
3. *Implement and evaluate the use of the newly selected Grade 7 textbook resources.*

~~Update: The 7th grade Spanish teachers are implementing and evaluating the new textbook and online resources. Through PLC time, they have organized work so that they are implementing various aspects in their classes followed by discussing the results. Since last September, teachers have been using the various activities and materials to determine the most beneficial materials that align to units of study.~~

Update: The 7th grade Spanish teachers are implementing and evaluating the new textbook and online resources. Through PLC time, they have organized work so that they are implementing various aspects in their classes followed by discussing the results. Since last September, teachers have been using the various activities and materials to determine the most beneficial materials that align to units of study. In April, the K-12 Spanish teachers met with the Director of Human Resources to discuss the anticipated transition of fifth grade students – who will transition with increased proficiency the longer they have received elementary Spanish Instruction – to the middle and high schools. The department identified ways in which the middle and high school curriculum units will need to be revised to reflect greater challenge. Curriculum writing projects were approved for summer 2015 for elementary unit development and middle school alignment of resources.

4. Evaluate the following programs and/or courses at Darien High School:
 - a. Update Spanish 2 Accelerated **Deferred to 2015-16 school year.**

K-12 Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)

1. Evaluate the following programs and/or courses at Darien High School:
 - a. Review AP Physics C (E and M) – **required AP syllabus was submitted and approved by the College Board – Curriculum is set by College Board**
 - b. Update Earth Science – **will be completed by May 1st**
 - c. Update Systems of Technology – **will be completed by May 1st**
 - d. Update Electronics – **will be completed by May 1st**

Update: The 9-12 courses that are offered are evaluated and updated on a four year cycle. This year the curriculum documents for Fundamentals of Engineering and Electronics were revised.

2. Identify and map current K-12 STEM curriculum programs. Identify options for program expansion.

Update: The 6-12 STEM program was reviewed and updated. Changes were made to mirror the current High School model creating one department for Technology Education and Computer Science. A curriculum outline, that puts emphasis on problem solving and design using project-based learning, has been developed along with units of study and course materials for all grade levels in the program. Work will continue during the April 6th Professional Development Day to prepare a presentation for the Board of Education Curriculum Committee and full Board of Education for discussion and approval, that leads to summer curriculum work.

During the update and revision of the current 6-8 program, it was determined that it was appropriate to examine the curriculum development on a K-12 scale. Currently, the DHS Technology and Engineering teachers conduct a day of STEM outreach at each elementary school based on a district theme each year. This program was launched at Ox Ridge four years ago and has continued to grow. This school year, an outreach program from computer science has been added around the “hour of code,” a national program from code.org. The revision of the 6-8 program will create new opportunities for elementary teachers to bring these hands on experiments to their everyday program. The K-5 STEM standards are under review in preparation for development of a formal K-5 curriculum.

Choral Music Program – Grades 6-12

1. Update curriculum to reflect initiatives, classroom practices, and changes over time.
2. Align curriculum with National Core Arts Standards and incorporate language, terminology and process skills/components which align to the Common Core State Standards in Math and English/Language Arts.

3. *Align curriculum with the expectations of the district-wide common assessments as well as our new recently revised Instrumental Music Curriculum.*

Update: The Middlesex and Darien Choral Music teachers met last summer to address the issues of revising the current Grade 6-12 Choral Music curriculum to align with the new National Core Arts Standards. The teachers revised the scope and sequence of grade level expectations, reviewed Essential Questions and Essential Understandings and also referred to the recently revised 3-12 Instrumental Music Curriculum for format and departmental curriculum alignment. All music students have specific grade level curricular and conceptual expectations regardless of their choice of course or ensemble.

The Grade 6-12 Choral Music curriculum has been edited and reviewed in preparation for upcoming presentations to the Board of Education Curriculum Committee and the full Board of Education. The Board of Education approved the revised Choral Music Curriculum on May 12, 2015.

Objective TL1.3: Student Achievement and Success:

1. *Continue to identify appropriate K-12 resources and instructional strategies that address the diverse learning needs of all students, with particular emphasis on:*
 - a. *Building capacity of general classroom and special education teachers to meet the learning needs of students identified as Special Education or Section 504.*
 - b. *Examine and implement best practices in Scientific Research Based Interventions.*
 - c. *Continue to explore the link between classroom practice and student performance results, including analysis of standardized and non-standardized performance data.*
 - d. *Examine and implement best practices in recording data and reporting on student progress.*
 - e. *Investigate the potential restructuring of Darien High School 200 Level Courses.*

Update: Over the course of the 2014-15 school year, internal work groups at both Darien High School and the Central Office have analyzed and developed recommendations regarding 200-level classes at DHS. These processes have led to a redefinition of the effort to encompass a broader and deeper analysis of special education and student services (SESS) at DHS. The Central Office work group has developed a draft plan for the restructuring of SESS at DHS in three phases, starting this spring and extending through the 2016-17 school year. School and Central Office administrators presented this draft plan to the Board Curriculum Committee on March 18, 2015 and to the full Board of Education on March 24, 2015.

2. *Implement a revised K-5 Progress Report that is aligned to currently defined curriculum. Provide clear communication to the parent community of each school regarding the change in practice.*

Update: In the summer of 2014, teams of teachers from each K-5 school completed a draft of a revised K-5 Progress Report. A final draft was developed, following distribution and discussion among all K-5 teachers and the approved revised K-5 Progress Report was launched in October, 2014.

Meetings were scheduled and held at the Central Office to provide parental education with regard to the revised document. Dedication discussion on this topic also occurred at each school during faculty meetings and a full day of professional development occurred in November, 2014 dedicated to calibration.

On-going review of implementation of the revised Progress Report will occur for the remainder of the 2014-15 school year with summer curriculum work anticipated to further revise the document for the 2015-16 school year, based on feedback.

3. Prepare students in Grades 3-8 and 11 for administration of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium assessments.

Update: A District Test Administration Plan was presented to the Board of Education on February 24, 2015 relative to Smarter Balanced assessments. The administration involves some or all students in grades 3-8, 10, and 11. Prior to a grade-level testing window, staff and students participate in online and in-person training opportunities as part of preparing for taking the SBAC. In addition to curriculum embedded work, students will take an ELA and math practice tests. Across all schools, a planned Orientation/Training Day will be held to ensure test administration is fully operational, and norms have been set to ensure a safe, secure, and positive testing environment for students.

Objective TL 1.4: Student Success Plans: Implement the Student Success Plan model for middle school and high school students that is designed to provide each student with support and assistance in setting goals for academic, career, social, emotional, and physical development.

1. Review implementation of the Darien High School Developmental Guidance Program, including focus on the requirements of Student Success Plans.
2. Continue to monitor the development and implementation of Student Success Plan (SSP) portfolios for students in Grades 6-8.

Update: The MMS Administration has been overseeing the Guidance Department's implementation of the SSPs for all students. The Guidance Department has been collaborating with the Healthy Living Department throughout the year to incorporate lessons about Naviance and the SSPs during class time. The goals of Naviance and SSPs align to the setting of long- and short-term goals for students.

3. Review the effectiveness of the use of Naviance as the electronic application for Student Success Plans.

Update: *There is a district commitment to Naviance, a program available to the middle school which feeds directly into the high school. In the early stages of its implementation, Naviance appears to be an effective tool for students to begin using at Middlesex and carry forth into the high school.*

4. *Expand communication of Student Success Plans with faculty, staff, parents and the community.*

Update: *Current plans are for a summer time roll out for the parent portal access. At the February Middlesex Faculty Meeting, the curriculum monitor for the Guidance Department shared the purpose and format of Naviance and the State requirements for Student Success Plans.*

A report on the implementation of the Student Success Plans Model for Middle and High School students was presented to the Board on April 21, 2015.

Objective TL 1.5: Safe School Climate Plans: *Review and revise the state-mandated Safe School Climate Plans for the district and schools to align with mandated requirements and assure that all members of the school community receive the updated information.* **December 9, 2014**

1. *The District Safe School Climate Committee, in concert with school-based school climate committees, will ensure effective implementation of Board of Education policy dealing with Safe School Climate Plans.*

Update: *A report was presented at the December 9, 2014 Board of Education meeting.*

Objective TL 1.6: School Evaluation: *Review and respond to commendations and recommendations from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) Evaluation Report of Darien High School in preparation for the required Two-Year Progress Report.* **October 14, 2014** **September 23, 2014**

1. *Review the NEASC Special Progress Report submitted on August, 2013. The report summarized continued efforts to communicate learning expectations and revise the school-wide analytic rubrics.*
2. *Complete the required NEASC Two-Year Progress Report due in October 1, 2014 that will highlight Darien High School's response to the NEASC recommendations.*

Update: *Presentation and discussion occurred at the October 14, 2014 Board of Education meeting.*

Objective TL 1.7: Supervision and Evaluation: *Continue to revise the Administrator and Teacher Evaluation and Professional Development Plans to ensure alignment with updated requirements from the Connecticut State Department of Education.* **September 9, 2014/June 9, 2015/June 23, 2015**

1. Continue to provide professional development to all staff members to ensure understanding of the components and processes in the revised evaluation plans including calibration of the evaluation process for administrators and the use of the software management system.

~~**Update: Copies of the Teacher Evaluation and Professional Development Plan 2014-15 were distributed to all staff in August 2014. During the October 13, 2014 Professional Development Day, the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction led a two-hour calibration session for all administrators and evaluators. Over the course of the year, the Director of Instructional Technology has provided guidance documents for all staff and individual support for administrators related to ProTraxx, the online program used to house all evaluation materials.**~~

Update: Copies of the Teacher Evaluation and Professional Development Plan 2014-15 were distributed to all staff in August 2014. During the October 13, 2014 Professional Development Day, the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction led a two-hour calibration session for all administrators and evaluators. Over the course of the year, the Director of Instructional Technology has provided guidance documents for all staff as well as individual support for administrators related to ProTraxx, the online program used to house all evaluation materials. That support was particularly critical in the last two months of the 2014-15 school year as teachers submitted their summative evaluation reflections and assessment data related to student goals and administrators completed summative evaluations for all staff based on that information.

2. The Teacher Evaluation and Professional Development Committee will monitor implementation of the plan, including the refining the process, procedures, and rubrics for administrator and teacher evaluation and make those revisions.

~~**Update: The Teacher Evaluation and Professional Learning (TEPL) Committee has met monthly to review and discuss components of the evaluation plan and professional development programs. During the February meeting, committee members began the process of reviewing the plan for revision and submission to the Connecticut State Department of Education prior to the end of the 2014-15 school year. The items that were identified for further study by the committee were clustered into areas that will be reviewed by subcommittee work groups. In addition to revising the evaluation plan, the TEPL Committee will develop a preliminary plan for professional development for the 2015-16 school year. This professional learning will be (1) linked to Board of Education goals and district and school curricular priorities; and (2) responsive to student learning needs based on an analysis of multiple student performance data points. Besides the TEPL Committee members, administrators, instructional leaders, department chairs and grade level leaders will be involved in the planning of these programs.**~~

Update: The Teacher Evaluation and Professional Learning (TEPL) Committee has met monthly to review and discuss components of the evaluation plan and professional development programs. During the February meeting, committee

members began the process of reviewing the plan for revision and submission to the Connecticut State Department of Education prior to the end of the 2014-15 school year. The items that were identified for further study by the committee were clustered into areas that will be reviewed by subcommittee work groups. In addition to revising the evaluation plan, the TEPL Committee developed a preliminary plan for ongoing training and communication to support the plan's implementation during the 2015-16 school year. Under the guidance of the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, the committee will develop a plan for professional development for 2015-16. This professional learning will be (1) linked to Board of Education goals and district and school curricular priorities; (2) supportive of the implementation of curriculum writing projects completed during the summer of 2015; and (3) responsive to student learning needs based on an analysis of multiple student performance data points. Besides the TEPL Committee members, administrators, instructional leaders, department chairs and grade level leaders will be involved in the planning and delivery of these programs.

PART 2 - SPECIAL EDUCATION AND STUDENT SERVICES (SESS)

GOAL 2: Improve outcomes for students with disabilities, engage their parents as partners, improve regulatory compliance, and utilize approaches that are effective and efficient.

Objective SESS2.1: Planning and Development: The District will continue to implement action plans developed in response to the recommendations included in the Gamm Report and the Special Education Ombudsman's work during the 2013-14 school year. May, 2015

- 1. Review the status of the short-term action plan (2013-2014) and determine areas for continued focus.*
- 2. Implement the medium-term action plan (2014-2015) with regular review of the status of implementation.*
- 3. Based on the status of the short and medium-term plans, develop a long-term action plan that is responsive to the future needs of the district (2015-2016 and beyond).*

Update: The targets of the medium-term action plans have been incorporated into the on-going planning and implementation being led by the Interim Assistant Superintendent for Special Education and Student Services. Planning, development and implementation in literacy is being pursued collaboratively with the Coordinator of Literacy, in secondary transition with support from consultants

at CREC, and in parent engagement through SEPAC, CDSP, and the SESS Facilitators in the schools.

Objective SESS2.2: Leadership and Management: A transition plan will be developed to support the success of new leadership and management in special education and student services.
October 28, 2014

1. Assistant Superintendent for Special Education and Student Services (SESS).
2. Program Director for SESS/K-12.
3. Provide on-boarding and continuous professional learning and support for seven (7) new SESS Facilitators.
4. Clarify and support the continued role of Principals and Assistant Principals in the special education and Section 504 process.

Update: The search for the Assistant Superintendent and the Program Director of SESS has been delegated to Hazard, Young and Attea, a national search firm, and this process is being coordinated by the Interim Director of Human Resources. On-boarding and on-going professional learning and support for SESS Facilitators is being provided by the Interim Superintendent for SESS with the assistance of the Special Assistant to the Superintendent and appropriate consultants. Key@ED, a nationally-recognized professional development firm, is providing training in problem-solving and planning. Continuing support for the Principals and Assistant Principals is being provided by the Interim Superintendent for SESS and the Special Assistant to the Superintendent.

Objective SESS2.3: Standard Operating Procedures: Strengthen the understanding and implementation of procedures in compliance with regulations.
November 25, 2014

1. Implement the new standard operating procedures manuals in special education and Section 504, including posting these on the website and distribute a limited number of hard copy documents. Establish structures and processes for on-going evaluation, updating, and revision of the manuals.
2. Implement a comprehensive annual SESS professional learning program that is aligned and integrated with the District professional development plan.

Update: Three new manuals have been adopted by the BOE and issued electronically and in hard copy in accordance with the approved communications plan. The manuals are searchable and provide a mechanism for anonymous feedback that is processed on a regular basis and will be utilized in the first annual review and updating of the manuals during summer 2015. The manuals are being utilized on an on-going basis in the improvement in practice at the school level, led by the Principals and the SESS Facilitators, and at the district level, led by the administrators in the Office of Special Education and Student Services.

Update:

Three new manuals – Special Education Standard Operating Procedures Manual, Section 504 Standard Operating Procedures Manual, and Parents' Guide to Special Education – were adopted by the Board of Education and issued electronically and in hard copy in accordance with the approved communications plan.

The manuals are searchable and provide a mechanism for anonymous feedback that is processed on a regular basis and will be utilized in the first annual review and updating of the manuals during summer 2015.

The manuals are being utilized on an on-going basis in professional development activities and in the improvement in practice at the school level, led by the Principals and the SESS Facilitators, and at the district level, led by the administrators in the Office of Special Education and Student Services.

Objective SESS2.4: Best Practices: Engage in evaluation and planning to identify, prioritize and implement best practice. March 11, 2015 February, 2015

1. Continue to review and improve the PPT process, IEP development and implementation, and problem solving among parents, schools, and the central office.
2. Expand and deepen District approaches to data collection, analysis and utilization that will result in improved inputs, outputs, and outcomes for students.
3. Utilize a variety of work groups to analyze and plan for improvements in newly-identified critical areas of need.

Update: Planning and problem solving with parents is being led by SESS Facilitators at the schools, supported by the SESS Interim Assistant Superintendent and Program Director, and the Special Assistant to the Superintendent, and facilitated PPTs are being utilized in appropriate cases. Improvements in data collection, analysis, and utilization is a collaborative effort among the Interim Assistant Superintendent for SESS, the District Coordinator of Instructional Technology, and the Director of Information Technology, and linked to improvements in special education and SRBI. Internal work groups are currently working in the areas of literacy, assistive technology, and secondary transition. Specific new activities being planned and implemented include tech “cafes” for staff, and summer staff development in technology and assistive technology for staff.

Facilitators completed training with the Key2Ed consultants on facilitated meetings; components of that training now being utilized in PPT meetings.

Improvements in data collection, analysis, and utilization has been a collaborative effort among the Interim Assistant Superintendent for SESS, the District Coordinator of Instructional Technology, and the Director of Information

Technology and linked to planning for improvements in special education, Section 504, and SRBI.

The training for the full implementation of EasyTrac has been completed with high levels of effectiveness in both provider engagement and student coverage. Plans have been developed for continuing professional development and support during the first school year (2015-16) of full implementation.

Objective SESS2.5: Parent Engagement: The District will continue its commitment to identify, develop, and implement effective approaches to the engagement of parents of students with disabilities. March 11, 2015 January 27, 2015

1. Continue to engage parents as participants in collaborative work groups.
2. Finalize and implement print and on-line versions of the Parent Informational Manual.
3. Develop and implement informational sessions responsive to the needs and interests of parents.
4. Maintain close partnerships with the Special Education Parent Advisory Council and the Council of Darien School Parents in the areas of special education and student services.

Update: The Parent Guide to Special Education has been completed, adopted, and distributed in electronic and hard copy. In collaboration with SEPAC, CDSP, and SESS Facilitators, regular informational sessions for parents of students with disabilities are being held at the school, district and community levels. Areas of focus have been the PPT process, literacy and dyslexia, and assistive technology. In addition, SESS parent coffees are being held at some schools, a panel discussion on secondary transition is planned for parents in the spring, tech “cafes” are being planned for parents once a month, and a tech “boot” camp for parents is being planned for one week this summer.

In collaboration among OSESS administrators, SEPAC co-chairs, CDSP co-chairs, and SESS Facilitators, regular informational sessions for parents of students with disabilities have been held at the school, district and community levels. Areas of focus have been the PPT process, literacy and dyslexia, ADHD, and assistive technology.

High school coffees have been held both daytime and evening; topics included transition, post-21 services, college support services, adaptive technology .

PART 3 - HUMAN RESOURCES

GOAL 3: Establish a Human Resources Department that is Responsive to the Needs of the District and its Employees and Compliant with State and Federal Regulations.

Objective HR3.1: Board of Education Policy: The District will continue to review and revise Board of Education policies. September 23, 2014/October 14, 2014/
October 28, 2014/November 25, 2014/
December 9, 2014/February 10, 2015/
February 24, 2015/ March 11, 2015/ April 8, 2015/
April 21, 2015/ May 12, 2015/May 26, 2015

1. Identify priority policies for review based on the Board's legal counsel's annual policy advisory.
2. Identify new and/or priority policies for review based on the Board of Education's recommended specific needs of the district.
3. Prepare a spreadsheet reflecting policies by series (1000, 2000, 3000, etc.), date of latest revision, and recommendations for revision or deletion.
4. Following Board approval, communicate and implement policy changes to various constituencies.
5. Maintain the most current Board policies on the district's website and in school communications, as appropriate.

Update: ~~A comprehensive review of Board of Education policies and regulations was initiated in the fall and overseen by members of the Board's Policy Committee. As of the March 11, 2015, Board of Education meeting, a total of twenty-nine (29) policies and/or administrative regulations were reviewed and approved by the Board, bringing the district into greater compliance with State statutes. This number includes the Darien Public Schools' Student Activities Accounting Manual, which received a thorough review prior to being approved by the Board in January. A new link was created on the district's webpage to make the revised policies and regulations accessible to staff, parents, and the greater Darien community. The review process will continue during the remainder of the 2014-15 school year, with additional policies slated for review at upcoming Board of Education meetings.~~

Update: A comprehensive review of Board of Education policies and regulations was initiated in the fall and overseen by members of the Board's Policy Committee. A total of thirty-nine (39) policies and/or administrative regulations

were reviewed and approved by the Board, bringing the district into greater compliance with State statutes. This number includes the Darien Public Schools' Student Activities Accounting Manual, which received a thorough review prior to being approved by the Board in January. A new link was created on the district's webpage to make the revised policies and regulations accessible to staff, parents, and the greater Darien community. Binders of the approved documents were created for Board of Education members and administrators. Hard copies of all approved policies and recommendations were also made available in individual schools and at the Board of Education Offices.

Objective HR3.2: Human Resources Department Practices and Procedures: With the creation of a Director of Human Resources position, current practices and procedures will be reviewed in order to establish structures that are efficient, reflective of best practices, and aligned with state and federal regulations. September 23, 2014

1. *Establish and coordinate a protocol for the recruitment, hiring, orientation, evaluation and retention of staff.*
2. *Determine a format for maintaining employee personnel records, resulting in greater consistency and accuracy.*
3. *Support the work associated with the implementation of both the Teacher Evaluation and Professional Learning Plan and the Administrator Evaluation Plan.*
4. *Coordinate the preparation and submission of all state and federal reports, requiring accurate maintenance of statistical information on all personnel.*
5. *Implement all collective bargaining agreements and facilitate the resolution of employee disputes.*
6. *Develop an open, positive and respectful working relationship with the leadership of the various bargaining units.*
7. *Provide support and ongoing communication regarding the work of the Human Resources Department.*

Update: ~~A focus area for the Human Resources Department this year was establishing a protocol for the recruitment, hiring, orientation, evaluation and retention of staff. In July, 2014, a protocol was developed for the hiring of all staff; this included teachers, administrators, support staff and both paid and volunteer coaches. A posting requisition form was developed and implemented that includes verification of budget funds prior to the actual position posting. Following a building-based interview process, all finalist candidates are interviewed by the Director of Human Resources and building/program administrator. The district has hired or reappointed approximately 160 employees~~

~~across the eight bargaining units during the 2014-15 school year. In addition, thirty (30) substitute teachers have been added to the system. Efforts have begun to prepare for the recruitment and hiring of staff for the 2015-16 school year. Related to this, the administrative team will review the performance of all non-tenured teachers to determine the status of their continued employment with the district. The Director of Human Resources shares the leadership and implementation of the Teacher Evaluation and Professional Learning Plan. During the remainder of the school year, the department will review the process for maintaining employee personnel records and will continue developing positive working relationships with the leadership of the various bargaining units.~~

Update: A focus area for the Human Resources Department this year was establishing a protocol for the recruitment, hiring, orientation, evaluation and retention of staff. In July, 2014, a protocol was developed for the hiring of all staff; this included teachers, administrators, support staff and both paid and volunteer coaches. A posting requisition form was developed and implemented that includes verification of budget funds prior to the actual position posting. Following a building-based interview process, all finalist candidates are interviewed by the Director of Human Resources and building/program administrator. The district has hired or reappointed approximately 160 employees across the eight bargaining units during the 2014-15 school year. In addition, thirty (30) substitute teachers were added to the system. The district is in the process of recruiting and hiring approximately thirty-three (33) certified staff for the 2015-16 school year, several of whom have already been appointed. Related to this, the administrative team reviewed the performance of all non-tenured teachers to determine the status of their continued employment with the district. In February, the Director of Human Resources assumed leadership and implementation of the Teacher Evaluation and Professional Learning Plan and Administrator Evaluation and Professional Learning Plan. Collaborative work, including matters related to individual employees, has continued with the leadership of the various bargaining units. The process for maintaining employee personnel records is deferred to the 2015-16 school year.

Objective HR3.3: Administrative Searches: As a result of the district's organizational restructuring, the Human Resources Department will be conducting several key administrative searches. January 13, 2015

1. *Oversee and chair all administrative searches, including the recruitment of potential candidates.*
2. *Lead the search process for a permanent Director of Human Resources and then support the leadership transition of the new Director.*
3. *Facilitate the transition and initiation of administrators new to the district.*

Update: ~~A total of seven (7) administrators or interim administrators have been appointed since July, 2014. This includes a Director of Instructional Technology, a middle school assistant principal and two (2) elementary assistant principals. In~~

~~addition, interim appointments were made for the Assistant Superintendent for Special Education and Student Services, Director of Human Resources, and Royle School Principal; searches are underway for permanent appointments to these positions. Searches are also currently underway for a Program Director for Special Education and Student Services, K-12 and an Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, K-12.~~

Update: A total of nine (9) administrators or interim administrators were appointed since July, 2014. This includes a Director of Instructional Technology, a middle school assistant principal and two (2) elementary assistant principals. In addition, interim appointments were made for the Assistant Superintendent for Special Education and Student Services, Director of Human Resources, and Royle School Principal. Searches this spring have resulted in permanent appointments for the Assistant Superintendent for Special Education and Students Services and Director of Human Resources. Searches are underway for permanent appointments to the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction and Program Director for Special Education and Student Services, K-12.

PART 4 - FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

GOAL 4: Effectively Manage Fiscal and Operational Resources while Delivering the Highest Quality of Services to Students, Staff and the Community.

Objective FO4.1: Budget, Procedures and Reporting: *Develop a clear financial plan that uses the budget and monthly reports as a road map for fiscal stability, strategic planning, program continuity and student achievement.* **November 11, 2014**

1. *Implement a revised budget process that incorporates a modified zero based budgeting philosophy. This model will prepare school leadership to build all financial requests from the ground up. This revised process will move oversight and development of the budget to each school for increased accountability.*

Update: *This objective has been achieved.*

2. *Simplify the monthly 'year to date' reporting with the creation of dashboards.*

Update: *This objective has been achieved.*

3. *Streamline excess cost reporting with the implementation of the 'EasyTrac' software system that will eliminate the manual paper process of reporting. The 'EasyTrac' system will now allow the district to manage caseloads electronically. (Excess cost is a reimbursement from the State for special education expenses. The district is reimbursed when costs exceed 4.5 times the average cost of educating students in the district.)*

Update: The implementation of EasyTrac is delayed. EasyTrac is intended to provide an online format for the daily entry of individualized data relative to services actually delivered. Because the information is available online, using appropriate security and password access only, supervisors and administrators will be better able to monitor completeness and accuracy of entries related to services and excess costs. The switchover to this comprehensive tracking system has required expensive training and a complete revamping of the excess costs tracking system previously utilized.

4. Continue to modify practices and procedures related to the school-based student activity funds for athletics.

Update: A revised practices and procedures manual was adopted by the Board of Education on January 13, 2015.

5. Organize all non-union contracts scheduled to expire after the 2015-16 school year and develop a transition plan to the Human Resources Department.
 - a. Custodians – Expire June 30, 2016 (Wage Reopener SY 2015-16)
 - b. Maintenance- Expire June 30, 2016

Update: Maintenance wage reopener has been approved by the Board of Education. Custodians wage reopener is currently in mediation.

6. Implement the required chart of account system prescribed by the State Department of Education for SY 2015-16.

Update: On March 9, 2015, a memo was received from the CT State Department of Education (CSDE) outlining the next steps to the CSDE's project to develop and implement a uniform system of accounting for the reporting of education revenues and expenditures at the school and district level. Over the coming months, Blum Shapiro is expected to contact the district to launch the mapping process. An electronic file of the trial balance for the fiscal year 2013-2014 will be provided which Blum Shapiro will use to map the district's chart of accounts to the Uniform Chart of Accounts (UCOA). An update was also provided on the format to be used for reporting the fiscal year 2014-2015 as the district moves forward. A partnership with the Connecticut State Department of Education has been established to make this transition as seamless as possible.

Objective FO4.2: Facilities and Enrollment Analysis: Engage in a comprehensive process in evaluating how facilities support programs and the educational needs of students, staff and the community.

1. Engage an independent consulting firm to perform a facility analysis that determines the existing and future needs of all facilities.

Update: Milone and MacBroom continue to work on the current facilities study for which they were engaged. They are scheduled to unveil the final portion of their study to the Board Facilities Committee in July.

2. Engage the New England School Development Council (NESDEC) in an independent review of enrollment projections/trends.

Update: NESDEC performed an independent review of enrollment projections which was presented to the Board of Education on October 28, 2014.

Objective FO4.3: Safety and Security: Establish and implement accountability mechanisms to ensure the performance, efficiency and effectiveness of the safety and security program.

1. Ensure that each school building is in compliance with Public Act No 123-3. This Act requires that each school adopt and modify an all hazards plan. These all hazards plans include emergency prevention, protection, mitigation, response and recovery procedures relevant to natural and human caused disasters.

Update: All buildings have a safety plan in place. The schools have held emergency drills that involve the local emergency responders.

2. Evaluate and potentially act on grant funding opportunities that are presented that relate to safety and security.

Update: The district has applied for, and been awarded a grant that will cover 21.07% of our safety and security expenditures from 2013 through July, 2014.

3. Strengthen methods of community/staff communication in the event of an emergency through technology (School Messenger/radio communications).

Update: The district has supplied additional radios for all schools.

Objective FO4.4: Infrastructure Management / Investment: Maintain a solid multi-year short- and long-term financial /management plan that supports all of the District's infrastructures. **November 11, 2014/ December 9, 2014**

1. Maintain the multi-year capital improvement plan of the district. This includes the review of the condition of all district facilities in the fall of 2014 while taking into consideration any potential changes in enrollment, program initiatives or regulatory requirements.

Update: An updated Capital Budget was presented to the Board in November, 2014 and adopted at the February 10, 2015 Board of Education meeting.

2. Utilize Energy Star to measure utility usage and savings. Continue to identify and implement energy conservation methods.

Update: Energy Star is utilized monthly to track utility costs. The district has implemented additional energy conservation measures including pipe and ceiling insulation, LED lighting installation, and digital controls.

3. *Examine usage of field conditions (artificial and turf) and maintain a comprehensive system for allocating fields for both school and community purposes.*

Update: The district has adopted new facility use policies that assist in the allocation of fields. A report was presented to the Board on November 11, 2014.

4. *Review all programs that require environmental compliance to insure that all facilities are in compliance with regulatory requirements.*

Update: The district is engaged in a variety of programs that require environmental compliance such as the use of green cleaning products in schools; products used for athletic field maintenance; all hazards plans and conditions surrounding the placement and maintenance of oil tanks. The Facilities Department is responsible for regular review of all requirements and regulations to ensure that the district is in compliance or achieves compliance, if indicated.

PART 5 – SPECIAL INITIATIVES

Objective SI5.1: Technology: Continue to develop and implement a K-12 curriculum approach that supports a culture of responsible use amongst students, teachers, staff, and administrators through the implementation of curriculum materials that promote digital citizenship, integrated technology use in the classroom, and ongoing assessment of 21st century skills to help inform instruction.

1. *Address technology requirements set forth from Connecticut State Department of Education guidance with regard to implementation of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium assessments.*

Update: Technology guidance from the CT State Department of Education (CSDE) is being monitored. Updates to technology will be deployed as necessary to ensure all devices are fully operational and ready for student use with Smarter Balanced assessments.

2. *Conduct a study to examine the potential advantages and implementation challenges of a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) program.*

Update: Student and staff feedback on BYOD was collected in February and March, 2015 through administration of a technology survey. The data and related information has been forwarded to the Technology Steering Committee for consideration as part of its work on a new technology plan.

3. *Develop a visionary and comprehensive 2015-2018 District Technology Plan as mandated by the Connecticut State Department of Education.*

Update: A plan and timeline to complete the Darien Public Schools Technology Plan was presented to the Board of Education on December 9, 2014. An 18-member steering committee comprised of a variety of stakeholders was established in January, and work launched on March 3, 2015 during a full-day Technology Retreat. Work in digital workspaces and scheduled meetings is on-going through March and early April. A target date of April 21, 2015 has been set for a Board of Education presentation.

Objective SI5.2: School Schedules: Review schedules across the district to ensure that structures and times provide maximum benefit to students and to the learning process.

1. Examine instructional programs and related capital and facility needs in an effort to establish a long-term strategy to maximize learning for students.
 - a. Develop visionary and comprehensive instructional program options at Middlesex Middle School and identify potential impacts on the school schedule and facility needs. **Deferred.**
 - b. Implement the action plan to integrate the delivery of special education services to a six day rotating schedule in 2015-2016.

Update: The current elementary schedule has been carefully reviewed by the Interim Assistant Superintendent of SESS and elementary principals. A recommended action plan to integrate the delivery of special education and related services to students that is consistent with the current K-5 schedule was presented and discussed at the March 11, 2015 Board of Education meeting.

Objective SI5.3: Interscholastic Athletics Program: Strengthen communication with all key stakeholders of the athletic program, including students, coaches, DHS staff, parents, and community members.

1. Evaluate and update existing policies and procedures of the athletic department, including the plan to evaluate coaches.
2. Continue the process of updating the Darien High School Athletic Handbook and Darien High School Coaching Handbook.
3. Work collaboratively with community organizations (Darien Athletic Foundation; Blue Wave Booster Club; Darien youth organizations, etc.) to enhance the Darien High School Athletic Department, including facilities and resources.

Update: A number of policies and procedures have been implemented by the Board of Education that have a direct impact on the DHS Athletic Department including; Automatic External Defibrillators, Pool Safety Plan & Use of School Facilities. Additionally, the DHS Athletic Handbook and Coaching Handbook are being updated to be more consistent with one another as well as more current. This work will include examining the current evaluation of coaches' documents. Work continues to occur with youth groups in town regarding the use of, and upgrade of the many facilities used by DHS Athletics.

Objective SI5.4: Strategic Planning Process: The district will engage in a comprehensive and systematic process to develop a strategic plan for the Darien Public Schools.

- 1. Identify an experienced consultant to partner with the Board of Education and newly appointed superintendent and lead the strategic planning process.*
- 2. Identify a wide-ranging group of stakeholders to be involved in the development of a comprehensive strategic plan.*

Update: Deferred. Although several possible consultants specializing in leading strategic planning efforts with the Board of Education have been identified, it is recommended that this objective be deferred until the Superintendent-Elect assumes his responsibilities on July 1, 2015.

APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION ON AUGUST 26, 2014