



# AMHERST, PELHAM & AMHERST-PELHAM REGIONAL SCHOOLS

## **DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT PLAN: A Blueprint for Continuous Growth**

Revised August 2011  
July 2010

***“The challenge of sustaining the change process is the challenge of creating a critical mass of educators within the school who are willing and able to function as change agents. Creating this critical mass requires attention to the three Cs of sustaining a change initiative—communication, collaboration, and culture.”***

*Professional Learning Communities at Work  
DuFour and Eaker*



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# 2011-2012

## School Committee Members

### Amherst

Chair Irv Rhodes  
Vice Chair Rob Spence  
Rick Hood  
Katherine Appy  
Steve Rivkin

### Pelham

Chair Kathy Weilerstein  
Vice Chair Ann Marie Foley  
Debbie Gould

### Region

Chair Rick Hood  
Katherine Appy  
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Kristen Luschen  
Irv Rhodes  
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## Superintendent's Planning Council

Superintendent of Schools ..... Maria Geryk  
Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment ..... Beth Graham  
Director of Human Resources ..... Kathryn Mazur  
Director of Finance and Operations ..... Rob Detweiler  
Director of Maintenance and Facilities ..... Ron Bohonowicz  
Director of Information Systems ..... Jerry Champagne  
Interim Director of Student Services ..... Jo Ann Smith  
Director of Student Achievement & Accountability ..... Marta Guevara  
Assistant to the Superintendent ..... Debbie Westmoreland

## District Instructional Leadership Team

Superintendent of Schools ..... Maria Geryk  
Director of Curriculum and Instruction ..... Beth Graham  
Interim Director of Student Services ..... Jo Ann Smith  
Director of Student Achievement & Accountability ..... Marta Guevara  
Interim Special Education Administrator ..... David Slovin  
Interim Special Education Administrator ..... Jeanne White  
ARHS Principal ..... Mark Jackson  
ARHS Assistant Principal ..... Miki Gromacki  
ARHS Assistant Principal ..... Diane Chamberlain  
ARMS Principal ..... Michael Hayes  
ARMS Assistant Principal ..... Betsy Dinger  
Pelham Principal ..... Lisa Desjarlais  
Crocker Farm Principal ..... Michael Morris  
Crocker Farm Assistant Principal ..... Derek Shea  
Fort River Principal ..... Monica Colley  
Fort River Assistant Principal ..... Susan Kennedy Marx  
Wildwood Principal ..... Nick Yaffe  
Wildwood Assistant Principal ..... Linda Gianesin

# THE AMHERST-REGIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

*Serving Amherst, Pelham and the Amherst-Pelham Region*

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*“If the key to the future success is the increase of system thinking in action, system leaders have a dual role. One is to make system coherence more and more evident and accessible, the other is to foster interactions—horizontally and vertically—that promote system thinking in others.”*

— Michael Fullan

## **Continuous Improvement Planning**

This continuous improvement plan describes the map to move the Amherst, Pelham, and Amherst-Pelham Regional Schools in a direction consistent with the mission identified by our staff, community, and School Committees. Our commitment to the continuous improvement of teaching and learning, and the overall improvement of our school systems, incorporates the tenets of our mission statement and is based on a set of core beliefs and on theories of action. Corresponding goals, indicators of success, and timelines will be used as a means of focusing our work on our mission. The information gathered during this process will be used to adjust and refine our practice and ensure that we assign our human and financial resources wisely.

District Departments and Building Administrators will create implementation plans to correspond to goals identified by the Superintendent and School Committees. This cycle of continuous improvement began in the summer of 2010 with the review and analysis of data related to goals. Areas of growth and areas in need of improvement were identified and the information was used to reflect on our practice and to adjust planning. Periodic review of goals occurred during the school year. A District end of the year update will be presented to the Regional School Committee in August to accompany this updated plan.

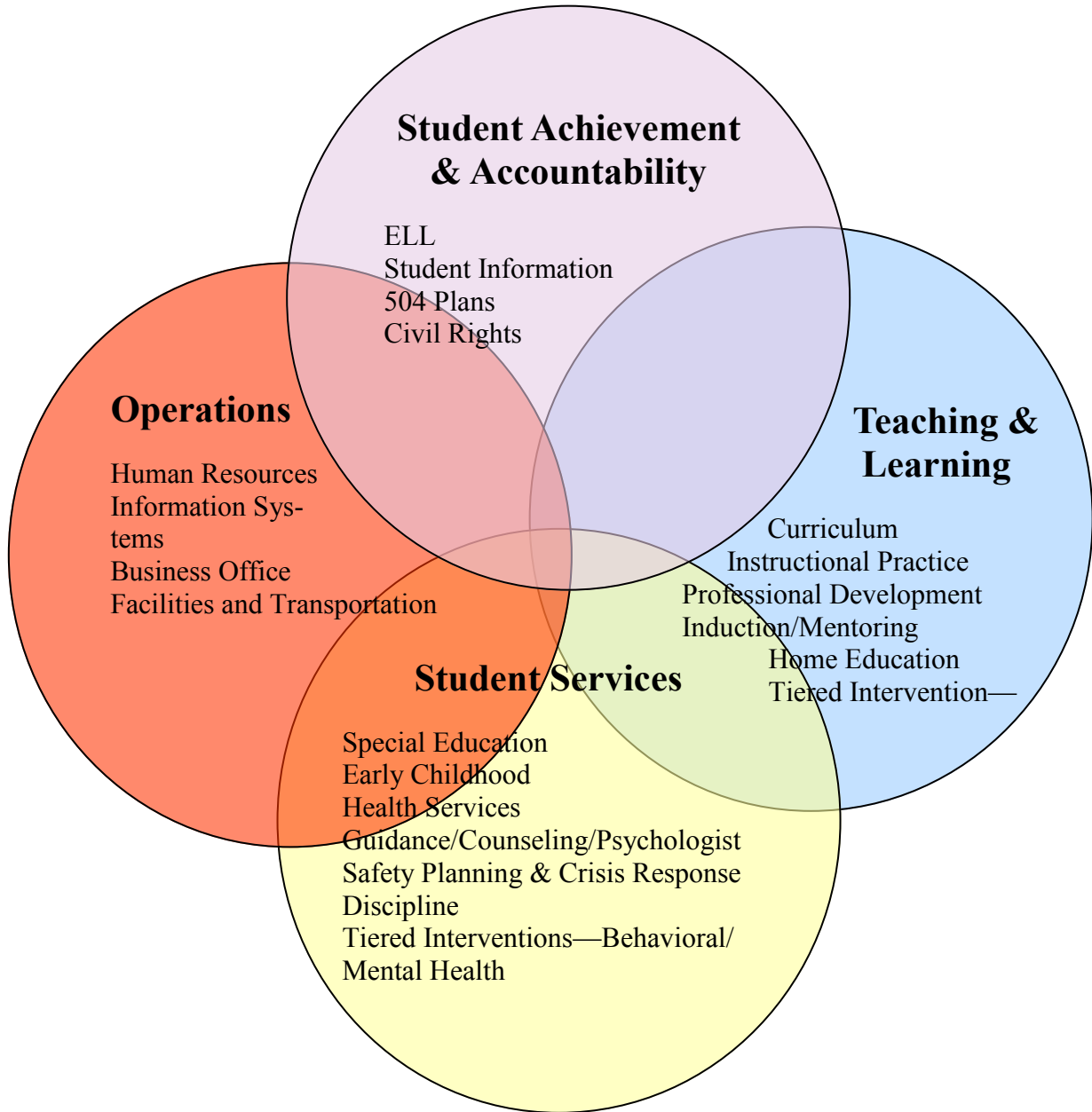
We are committed to celebrating our accomplishments, identifying our areas of necessary growth, and addressing all present challenges. This unwavering focus on practice will move us closer to our vision of supporting our students in their growth and, thus, to realizing their goals and become contributing members of our wider community.

I would like to thank the faculty, staff, students, School Committees, community members, and families for their input into this guiding document. I would like to specifically note the input of Dr. Rossi Ray-Taylor and Dr. Rebecca Woodland who provided their expertise and their willingness to support our Districts’ work. Lastly, I would like to thank our wider community for their support of the schools. In particular, faculty members of the Five Colleges, members of the RaDAR group, our community and town partners, and individual community members who have a voice in this work by their continued focus on access, equity, and excellence, and for their willingness to work collaboratively with the schools to benefit every student, every day.

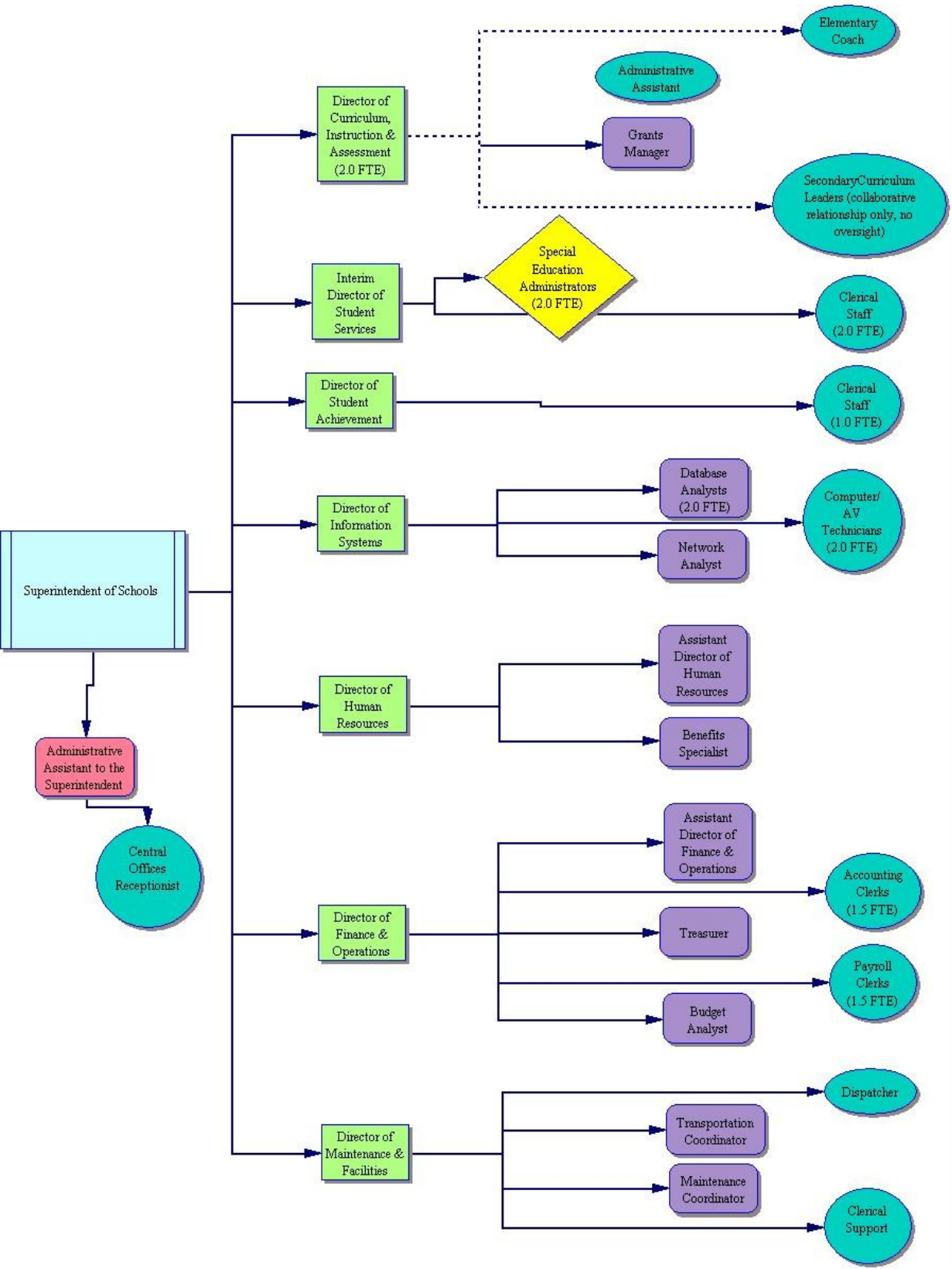
Maria Geryk  
Superintendent of Schools  
August 2011



# Organizational Models



# Central Office Organizational Chart



## District Mission for the Amherst, Pelham and Amherst-Pelham Regional Schools

The mission of a school system is a long-term goal that is kept in mind against which we design (and forever adjust) schooling.

*-Adapted from Schooling by Design*

*The mission of our schools is to provide all students with a high quality education that enables them to be contributing members of a multiethnic, multicultural, pluralistic society. We seek to create an environment that achieves equity for all students and ensures that each student is a successful learner, is fully respected, and learns to respect others.*



### Theory of Action

A theory of action is a set of casual connections that serves as a story line that connects broad visions with the more specific strategies used to improve the instructional core.

—Adapted from *Instructional Rounds in Education*

If all teachers engage in an ongoing cycle of disciplined collaboration, focused on the examination and continuous improvement of student learning and instructional practice, engagement and achievement will increase for all students.

If instructional leaders provide teachers with timely, specific, standards-based feedback about how to improve their collaborative practices and instructional performance, and if teachers are expected to demonstrate improvements in their collaborative practices and instructional performance, then more students will experience meaningful learning.

# Core Beliefs for the Amherst, Pelham and Amherst-Pelham Regional Schools

## Students

- We believe in maximizing the potential of all students by respecting and developing their individual learning styles and interests.
- We believe in setting challenging expectations of performance and supporting all students to achieve high standards.
- We believe in developing all students' ability to problem solve, think critically, work collaboratively, express themselves creatively, and communicate effectively.
- We believe in developing our students' understanding and acceptance of differences, and affirming our common humanity.
- We believe in school experiences that emphasize intellectual, physical, and social/emotional well-being.
- We believe in providing opportunities for students to question and challenge ideas and participate as active citizens.
- We believe in developing a passion for lifelong learning and the importance of connecting students to the school community, and the world.

## Parents and Community

- We believe that families are essential in establishing the foundation of lifelong learning.
- We believe that families know their children best and we value and incorporate their knowledge and input.
- We believe in the importance of effective communication between the schools, students, and families to foster a positive educational experience for students.
- We believe that active involvement of families and community members enhances and enriches the learning experiences of students and staff.
- We believe in establishing strong community partnerships to strengthen the educational experience of all students.

## Faculty

- We believe that faculty continuously strive to be expert in instruction and content knowledge and they use curriculum and strong practice to instill a sense of excitement and love of learning.
- We believe in the value of collaboration and communication among faculty within and across grade and department structures.
- We believe that faculty commitment to and implementation of continuous learning leads to improved student performance.
- We believe in collecting, analyzing, and sharing data to guide decisions to improve student learning, individualized instruction, and promotion of social, emotional, and physical development.
- We believe in the importance of staff knowing the individual students and their strengths and challenges, and having the responsibility to make connections to foster a positive learning environment.
- We believe in the importance of reflecting on our practice and our classroom culture to identify and eliminate barriers to educational achievement.

## System

- We believe that the school community must strive for continuous improvement to progress toward becoming an institution of educational excellence.
- We believe that an understanding of and respect for diverse beliefs, cultures, backgrounds, abilities, and perspectives enriches the lives and the learning environment of all of our students.
- We believe in preparing students for a global, interconnected society, which will require facility with relationships, higher order thinking, technology, and languages.
- We believe in the importance of collaborative decision-making and systemic examination of our practice.
- We believe in the appropriate allocation of resources to provide a cohesive, guaranteed, viable, and relevant curriculum for all students.
- We believe in promoting a cohesive and safe environment that ensures students' membership in the community, and knowledge that adults know each student well.
- We believe in the proactive recruitment, retention, and ongoing professional development of excellent and diverse staff, teachers, and administrators.

## **District Process Goals**

### Goal Areas

1. Continuous improvement of high quality instruction
2. Create a safe, positive learning environment for students and staff
3. Create a cohesive approach to recruitment, hiring, induction, and development
4. Improve communication among and between the administration, staff, students, families, and community
5. Develop partnerships with communities, agencies, and institutions of higher learning

## Goal Area 1: Continuous improvement of high quality instruction

Goal	Person/Department Responsible	Timeline	Evidence	Resources Needed	Corresponding State Standard
A. Implement Phase III of the Mathematics action plan	Superintendent, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Principals,	Begin 11/2011-8/2013	Implementation of the Professional Development Plan; refinement of curriculum documents; lesson plans; text review .	K-16 meetings; DILT meetings; Coaches & Intervention staff; teacher collaboration time;	Standard 1
B. Implement Phase I of Policy IL reviewing science K-12. <b>Conduct a rigorous review of the K-12 science curricula, in accordance with Policy IL, which includes course offerings, sequence, programs, requirements, facilities, and consideration of programs used by our comparison districts.</b>	Superintendent, Director of Curriculum and Instruction with K-16 Science Council, Instructional Leaders in Science, and Principals	8/2011—12/2011	Action Plan Created	K-16 Science Council,; support and organization of science dept. leadership meetings; materials and documentation; scheduling and organizational support	Standard 1
C. Implement Phase II of Policy IL creation of science action plan. <b>Develop a set of recommendations based on that review</b>	Director of Curriculum and Instruction with K-16 Science Council, Instructional Leaders in Science, and Principals	1/2012—1/2015	Plan & Implementation: Professional Development Plan; refinement of curriculum documents; lesson plans	Identification of potential funding for PD; funds for materials; structure for collaboration	Standard 1
D. Create ongoing collaboration of content-specific teams across schools to foster horizontal and vertical alignment K-6 <b>Continue to create a vertically and horizontally aligned, challenging K-6 Curriculum</b>	Superintendent, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Principals & Coaches	9/2011—ongoing	Schedule of ongoing K-6 content team meetings, agendas, and minutes  Walkthrough data	Time for ongoing collaboration; technology for between forum conversations	Standard 1, 2 & 4
<b>E. Implement and make significant progress on the action plan based on the 2010 evaluation of the SE Program</b>	Superintendent, Director of Student Services, & Director of Curriculum & Instruction	9/2010—ongoing	Action Plan updates	Funds, time, Materials, professional development, and compliance oversight (ETLs)	Standard 1-4

Goal	Person/ Department Responsible	Timeline	Evidence	Resources Needed	Corresponding State Standard
F. Implement Teachers College Reading and Writing Project reading and writing workshop model practices and Units of Study	Superintendent, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Principals, & Coaches	9/2011— 9/2014	Implementation of Professional Development Plans; lesson plans	Professional Development funds; teacher time for collaboration; instructional coaches	Standard 1 & 4
G. Create and implement a tiered approach to academic intervention (RTI) using evidence-based programs to increase achievement <b>Prepare and implement a plan designed to address the academic needs of our struggling students and raise the academic achievement of those students.</b>	Superintendent, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Director of Student Services, Instructional Coaches, Intervention Staff, and Principals	9/2011— 9/2012  Begin to implement elementary 9/2011, & secondary 9/2012	Defined Universal screening; defined interventions; and defined tools for monitoring progress  Data from universal screenings & progress; CST data using data points and documenting interventions tried ; longitudinal student achievement profile	Consultant; intervention staff; coaches; stipends for action planning; and funds for materials	Standard 1 & 2
H. Create the conditions and structures which allow for intervention/support to be integrated into the school day, after school, and/or summer without reducing time in direct instruction in the content areas.	Superintendent, Director of Curriculum & Instruction & Principals	9/2011— 9/2012	Schedules reflecting 30” enhancement block at the elementary level at each grade level; after school programming; achievement academy; summer intervention work	Time in the daily schedule; funds for achievement academy and summer interventions	Standard 1 & 2
I. Create the conditions and structures for highly disciplined collaborative teams which engage in a continuous cycle of inquiry around the instructional core.	Superintendent, Director of Curriculum & Instruction & District Instructional Leadership Team Members	8/2010— 6/2013 & then ongoing	PLC survey data indicates raised literacy; community of practice maps; assessment of collaboration using TCAR	DILT (4 hours), SILT (4 hours), and Teacher Team time weekly, funds to support professional development.	Standard 1-4
J. Conduct Instructional Rounds one time per semester	Superintendent, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, District Instructional Leadership Team	9/2011—& then ongoing	Creation of a common set of instructional practices; scheduling of rounds in all schools	Schedule time to conduct rounds; time to reflect on observations, documentation tools, PD time	Standard 1- 4
K. Schools use data routinely to inform instruction, consistent with a tiered instructional model	Superintendent, Director of Student Achievement, Director of Curriculum & Instruction & Principals	9/2011 & then ongoing	Provide teachers with data from last year’s class and data regarding current teaching assignment to inform planning. Ongoing use of formative and summative data in collaborative teams	Data packets provided before the first day of school, ongoing monitoring of collaborative teams using the TCAR	Standard 1
L. The Districts will use student data in an ongoing cycle of instructional improvement					

## Goal Area 2 : Create a safe, positive learning environment for students and staff

Goal	Person/ Department Responsible	Timeline	Evidence	Resources Needed	Corresponding State Standard
A. Develop and implement positive behavioral supports consistent with a tiered intervention program for students (PBIS)	Superintendent, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Director of SSO, Director of Student Achievement & Principals	9/10—9-14	Survey data analysis, & tiered model created and accessed on web page	Consultant, PD, Educator's Handbook cost, survey	Standard 1 & 2
B. Identify and implement evidence-based programming to support students in increasing social competency.	Superintendent, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Director of SSO, Director of Student Achievement & Principals	9/11—9/14	Tiered model created and accessed on web; data used during CST process	Consultant, PD, Educator's Handbook cost, survey & materials	Standard 1 & 2
<b>C. Develop and implement strategies for achieving equal access to educational and other opportunities regardless of race or class</b>	Superintendent, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Director of SSO, Director of Student Achievement & Principals	9/11—9-14	Policy & guideline revisions, resource allocation, data is reviewed routinely, & data demonstrates improvement	Funds & Time Baseline information	Standard 1—4
D. Create and implement next steps in the ARPS school safety & crisis response plan	Supt & Student Services Administrator	9/11- 6/12	Implementation of flip-chart, utilization of phone buzzer, table top activity	Time, professional development	Standard 2
E. Provide professional development for staff which supports creation of a professional, collaborative work environment	Supt, Director of Curriculum & Instruction & leadership team	9/11—ongoing	Shared readings, handbook expectations, ongoing PD, and evaluation	Time, PD	Standard 3 & 4
F. Increase the capability of staff to work in a co-teaching environment, particularly in the area of Special Education and English Language Learners	Supt, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Director of Student Achievement, Director of Student Services, & Principals	9/11—6-12	Professional Development Provided, Data provided through rounds/walkthroughs to support this model & survey data	Consultant, PD, time, trips to other schools	Standard 1, 3 & 4
G. Provide tools to monitor discipline data so to adjust programming and intervention.	Supt, Student Services Administrator, Director of Student Services, and Principals	Pilot spring 2010 9-11—6-12	Educator's Handbook is routinely used at all schools which informs interventions to be implemented	Educator's Handbook cost, PD	Standard 1 & 2

Goal Area 3: Create a cohesive approach to recruitment, hiring, induction, and development

Goal	Person/ Department Responsible	Timeline	Evidence	Resources Needed	Corresponding State Standard
A. Provide embedded professional development through teacher teams focused on classroom instruction and student learning	Superintendent, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Principals	9/2011–9/2014	Agendas for embedded professional development, TCAR used to monitor, and walk-throughs to sample implementation	Time	Standard 1 & 4
B. Create a professional development committee to create meaningful learning opportunities	Superintendent & Director of Curriculum & Instruction	9/2011—ongoing	Agendas for committee meetings and corresponding PD plan	Time & stipends	Standard 1 & 4
C. Mentor, guide, and evaluate all Amherst, Pelham, and Regional Principals.  <b>Mentor, guide, and evaluate all Principals of the elementary and regional schools.</b>	Superintendent	9/2011—ongoing	Completed evaluations, DILT & Principal meeting dates & agendas	Time	Standard 1-4
D. Ensure implementation and adherence to current teacher evaluation process and timeline in accordance with the high standards outlined by the APEA teacher evaluation program  <b>Manage the transition to state mandated teacher evaluation process in accordance with the high standards of the Amherst-Pelham school districts</b>	Superintendent, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Leadership Team, & Principals	9-2011—ongoing	Creation of a committee to explore and implement the new state mandated evaluation process; agendas and notes	Time & stipends	Standard 1 & 2
E. Review and revise practice related to recruitment and hiring	Superintendent, Director of Human Resources	9-2011—6/2012	Procedures and process clearly articulated	Time	Standard 2

**Goal Area 4: Improve communication among and between the administration, staff, students, families, and community**

Goal	Person/ Department Responsible	Timeline	Evidence	Resources Needed	Corresponding State Standard
Develop a monthly newsletter from Central Office for faculty/staff, and a principals' weekly business update	Superintendent	9/2011—ongoing	Newsletters & Updates	Time, Administrative Staff & Reporters	Standard 3
Develop a monthly newsletter for community	Superintendent	9/2011—ongoing	Newsletter	Time, Administrative Staff & Reporters	Standard 3
Create and implement a cohesive plan to strengthen parent/family engagement	Superintendent & Director of Student Achievement	9/2011—6/2012	Self-assessment using the Mass Family, School, and Community Partnership Fundamentals as baseline; action plan; survey data	Time, outreach strategies and resources	Standard 3 & 4
Develop a community and student volunteer team of reporters through partnership with Amherst Media.	Superintendent	9/2011—ongoing	Creation of team and generation of news stories	Administrative Support, Volunteers	3 & 4
Continue use of Amherst Media to share school related information, and continue informal opportunities for the community to meet with the Supt: "Conversation with the Superintendent."	Superintendent	9/2010—ongoing	Documented videos and events	Time, Access to ACTV	Standard 3
Engage and support the Special Education Parent Advisory Council and various PGOs	Superintendent, Director of Student Services and Leadership	9/2010—ongoing	Newsletters, Meetings documented, partnerships	Time, funds	Standard 3
Begin work on revisiting our school Districts' mission and vision	Superintendent & Leadership Team	1/2012—6/2013	Surveys and forums to gather internal and external feedback/input	Time	Standard 3 & 4
<b>Improve communication and transparency. Keep the School Committee and public appropriately informed and solicit and respond to feedback</b>	Superintendent	9/2011—ongoing	Chairs meetings, e-mail updates, Supt Updates for SC meetings in advance to allow for dialogue and post for public after meeting	Time & Administrative Support	Standard 2, 3, & 4

## Goal Area 5: Develop partnerships with communities, agencies, and institutions of higher learning

Goal	Person/ Department Responsible	Timeline	Evidence	Resources Needed	Corresponding State Standard
A. Partner with institutions of higher learning regarding teacher preparation programs	Superintendent	9/2011—ongoing	Creation of partnerships, agendas, meeting dates	Time	Standard 3 & 4
B. Seek additional resources (e.g., grants, partnerships). <b>Maximize financial efficiency by identifying further cost-saving measures, increasing alternative resources (e.g., grants, partnerships), and incorporating enrollment trends in budget planning</b>	Superintendent & Leadership Team	9/2010—ongoing	Partnerships, grants, & donations  Comprehensive Spending plan,; Capital Planning; Energy Efficient Initiatives	Time, trend information	Standard 2 & 3
C. Develop a resource bank of organizations with a mission to benefit student access and success in higher education, e.g., faith based organizations, fraternities and sororities, universities and colleges, professional and alumni associations	Superintendent	9/2010—ongoing	Document regularly expanded and revised	Time & Volunteer Coordinator	Standard 3 & 4
D. Partner with Town , Private Providers, and families to strengthen and align afterschool programming for our students K-6	Superintendent, Director of Student Achievement, and Principals	9/2010—6/2012	Meetings, Agendas, Aligned Programs, and expanded opportunities	Time, funding for transportation and waivers	Standard 3 & 4
E. Strengthen the Five College Superintendent’s Advisory	Superintendent	9/2011—ongoing	Meetings, Agendas, activities and resources	Time	Standard 1—4
F. Strengthen ability to access interns, practicum students, and volunteers	Superintendent	9/2010—ongoing	Documentation of interns, students, and volunteers to assess benefit to districts/student outcomes	Volunteer Coordinator Position	Standard 3
G. Strengthen partnership with Amherst Education Foundation	Superintendent	9/2011—ongoing	Expand fundraising options and identify alternative methods of raising funds	Time	Standard 3 & 4

## **District Analysis and Review Tool (DART)** **(Adapted from the DESE's User Guide)**

The Massachusetts School and District Accountability and Assistance System has been designed to gauge the progress of schools and districts toward helping all students in the Commonwealth achieve grade level proficiency in English language arts and mathematics. The system enables policymakers, parents, and the public to assess the effectiveness and monitor the improvement of all public schools and districts, hold school leaders accountable for that performance and improvement, and identify where intervention is needed.

One of the first steps in the accountability system is to review pertinent data so that the ESE and stakeholders throughout the education community can gauge the overall "health" of a district or school. The DART allows users to easily track pertinent data elements over time and make sound, meaningful comparisons to the Commonwealth or to comparable districts. The DART provides a snapshot of school and district trends seen through various pieces of data. It allows users to:

- Look at trends over the most recent five years of available data
- View school and district data by way of easily accessible graphical displays
- Reflect and self-evaluate
- Find comparable districts and schools based on demographic characteristics

Make comparisons so that a district can collaborate with a similar district that has shown promising trends.

We will use the DART as a starting point for exploring the data and identifying areas of focus in our districts and schools for further study. These are the indicators included in this tool:

### **District Context**

- Enrollment
- Stability rate (Enrolled All Year)
- % Kindergarteners enrolled in full-day K
- % School-aged residents enrolled in public school\*

### **Curriculum and Instruction; Assessment**

- % of students scoring proficient or above in ELA and mathematics
- Median student growth percentile in ELA and mathematics
- % of students averaging 2 or above on open response items in ELA and mathematics
- Grade 8 enrollment in Algebra
- % of high school graduates who completed MassCore
- % of test-takers scoring 3 or above on AP U.S. History exam
- % of juniors/seniors enrolled in at least one Advanced Placement course

### **Curriculum and Instruction; Assessment: *Achievement Gaps***

- ELA CPI achievement gaps
- Mathematics CPI achievement gaps

### **Leadership and Governance, Human Resources, and Professional Development**

- Superintendent turnover rate
- Principal turnover rate
- Teacher turnover rate
- Professional development spending per teacher (FTE)\*
- Students-to-Arts-Teacher ratio (K-8) (Fine and performing arts)

### **Student Support**

- Student attendance
- Percentage of students suspended out-of school at least once
- # of incidents resulting in out-of-school suspensions
- # of criminal, drug- or tobacco-related, or violent incidents resulting in out-of-school suspensions
- 9th to 10th grade promotion rate (first-time 9<sup>th</sup> graders only)
- Annual dropout rate
- Four-year cohort graduation rate
- Five-year cohort graduation rate
- % of ELL Students who attained English language proficiency
- Return to classroom rate from school nurse\*
- Determination of need for special education technical assistance or intervention\*

### **Finance and Asset Management**

- Total per pupil expenditures\*
- Average teacher salaries\*
- In-district per pupil transportation cost\*
- % spending above foundation budget\*
- % actual net school spending above required net school spending\*

