

Expansion of Authentic Learning Experience

Expansion of authentic learning experience for all students and increased authentic assessment of student work consistent with 21st century learning frameworks.

Vision Statement

We envision our students enjoying and benefiting from learning experiences that are relevant to real-life. These experiences should be in the classroom and outside of the classroom in internships, work study opportunities, and other community connections. These experiences help motivate students and increase understanding. Relevant learning experiences also improve students' ability to think critically, allowing them better confidence and ability to learn skills and adapt to new situations. 21st Century learning skills are embedded in our curriculum at all levels and in all subjects.

The advancement of 21st century skills, according to leading educators and authors, depends on schools making learning more relevant and giving students opportunity to apply classroom learning in "real world" settings and situations. Knowledge relevance changes quickly. Skills and knowledge that are important today may not be important tomorrow. Job competition from the global community is much higher.

The partnership between the Newburyport Education/Business Coalition and the Newburyport Public Schools has established an exemplary model for expanding authentic learning opportunities with businesses and in the community. Strategies can build upon this model to develop explanations and examples of 21st century skills and the teaching strategies that promote authentic learning.

Opportunity for Improvement

In today's schools, many students are bored, many don't feel connected and, for some, learning lacks any relevance to life. A large national study (Aspirations- GISA) recently demonstrated the validity of these assertions and concluded that as students advance through grades 6-12 they progressively report less connection to what they are being taught and progressively report that school has less connection to their lives and futures. Further development of the NEBC program model is a unique opportunity to expand authentic learning opportunities.

Root Cause: Standards-based curriculum perceived to Impede authentic learning

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
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<p>Provide professional development for developing authentic and performance-based assessments that take place in the classroom and fit naturally in a standards-based curriculum.</p>	
<p>School Committee and administration should strengthen message about the need to reduce the “coverage” of too many standards and topics (See goal for <u>Equal Access to a Balanced and Standards-Based Curriculum</u>).</p> <p>Support efforts of 21st Century Skills coalition to require DESE to embed 21st Century learning objectives in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks standards.</p> <p>Advocate for changes in MCAS to include local options or requirement for authentic assessment of student learning.</p> <p>Better utilize community resources such as NECC, UMASS Lowell, Salem State, Whittier Vo-Tech, Audubon, and the Greater Lawrence Collaborative to increase authentic learning opportunities.</p>	<p>School Committee and administration provide strong reinforcement that teaching more topics with less depth will not improve our MCAS results. We must resist the natural tendency to teach specific test-related topics to improve student MCAS performance.</p> <p>Write letter to Governor and Secretary of Education advocating for inclusion of 21st Century skills in Frameworks documents and for MCAS to be broadened with sections of authentic assessment evaluated at the local level.</p>

Root Cause: Primary tests (MCAS) are not project-based

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
<p>Educate community about what MCAS does not measure well and the importance of teaching beyond the limited scope of MCAS.</p>	<p>The School Committee communicates what our strategic plan is, what its mission and vision are, and how it measures our quality of education. Emphasize that it is more than just MCAS.</p>

Root Cause: Insufficient time allocated for project-based learning

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Provide professional development for developing authentic assessments that achieve the purpose in the time available.	

Root Cause: Insufficient availability of authentic learning opportunities

The school and Newburyport community do not offer enough internships, civic engagement, or community service opportunities for students.

<p>Build on NEBC/NPS partnership foundation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the participation of students in NEBC sponsored programs that develop a learning continuum about career possibilities and expose students to business and professional work environments from elementary grades through high school graduation. • Provide internship opportunities to all students who want one. • Provide practical examples and experiences which bring 21st century learning expectations to life and build connections between faculty and businesses. • Increase faculty participation in NEBC programs and program planning. <p>Identify and document curriculum content and skills that can be specifically addressed through faculty and business connections supported by NEBC</p>	<p>Align NPS internship and other program models with NEBC long-term Planning vision as integrated planning model</p> <p>Increase collaboration between the School Committee and the NEBC through a working session to discuss and brainstorm ideas for improving student internships, teacher externships, and all NEBC programs and program outcomes.</p>
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<p>Increase staff to administer internship program through hiring, internships, or business volunteers.</p>	
<p>Increase opportunities for internships, civic engagement and community service. Manage all through a single student engagement facilitator.</p>	
<p>Educate students as to the value of internships and civic engagement from 21st century perspective.</p> <p>Use NEBC as the bridge between classroom and work environments.</p>	
<p>Develop external learning and civic engagement transcript for all students.</p>	<p>Develop a plan for creating and implementing an external learning and civic engagement transcript for all NHS students. Place goals in NHS's FY10 School Improvement Plan (SIP).</p>