



# **LYME SCHOOL STRATEGIC PLAN**

**2013-2018**

## Introduction

Since 2001, the Lyme School has created and implemented 2 strategic plans, mapping out goals and priorities for the following 3-5 years. Last fall, the Lyme School Board embarked on the drafting of a new strategic plan for 2013-2018, seeking to build on the strong foundation laid by the two previous plans. Involving the various stakeholders in the education of Lyme's children, our process has taken us outside of the daily tasks of running a school so that we may reflect on where we are, where we aspire to be and how to get there. The result is a vision for our school and prioritized ideas for moving toward it in the subsequent 3-5 years.

The Lyme School is successful on many measures: it is ranked among the best public schools in New Hampshire; parents and community members are confident that the school provides high quality education for Lyme's children; and the high schools to which our students matriculate affirm their preparedness. We have much to show for the ongoing commitment, effort and support of our educators, parents, students and community. As we look forward, we want to build on the strength of our school through the use of best practices in education while being mindful of the needs of our stakeholders.

### The Strategic Planning Process

Many parents, educators and community members gave generously of their time toward the development of this plan. The process began by **community surveys**—of parents, school staff, and Lyme residents—as to their ideas about the role of the school, its strengths and weaknesses, and their hopes for its students. Over 200 surveys were completed. The data collected was organized by themes and trends.

These themes and trends were first examined in a round of **focus groups and interviews** of parents, faculty, administration, and school board members. The common threads of data were slowly pieced into recommendations, which were vetted again by another round of focus groups and interviews. This process was repeated until the recommendations were finalized, and ready to release in this document.

This document reflects the efforts and ideas of a community truly dedicated to the education of Lyme's children. The School Board is grateful to have had the opportunity to consider and include these many perspectives as we map the school's priorities over the coming years.

## Our Goals: An Overview



This box represents the most commonly expressed ideas shared by community members, parents and school staff when asked what they believed the goals of the Lyme School should be. The larger the word, and darker the font, the more frequently it was mentioned.

As expressed in the previous two strategic plans, the Lyme School aspires to provide its students with an experience that gives them **the tools to succeed in further education, career, and life in general**. Additionally, as we spoke to stakeholders, it became apparent that it is very important that the school be **community minded in all aspects**—both as a supportive environment for the students, staff, parents, and community members who spend time there, as well as a place that educates individuals to be responsible community members. As a result, the goals set by this plan articulate the importance of both academic and social experiences at the Lyme School.

Generally, the goals we articulate fall into three categories:

- **Curriculum and Instructional Practice** goals that will ensure a better education for our students. Specifically, we will:
  - Develop curriculum and instructional processes that advance our educational goals both across and within the lower and middle school grades
  - Develop curriculum that helps students build social and emotional skills
  - Define the future of foreign language at the school
  - Elaborate our philosophy for using technology as a tool for learning
- **Stewardship** goals that allow us to respond to the needs of our students, staff, and surrounding community. We will:
  - Support our educators so that they may achieve our educational goals
  - Develop a physical space that accommodates best practices for learning
  - Manage/control the growth of expenditures and taxes
- **Organizational** goals that allows us to work better together. Our purpose is to:
  - Promote effective collaboration and communication between stakeholders to facilitate the achievement of our educational goals

## Our Plan for the Next 5 Years

The Lyme School will endeavor to work toward the goals recommended in this plan over the next five years. Some of the goals – such as a comprehensive review and revision of curriculum and instructional – are wide-ranging and will consist of many steps over time. Others can be accomplished more rapidly and easily. All, however, are interdependent and the choices made in one domain will affect those in another, making coordination of effort and effective communication essential.

### Implementation

We firmly believe that bringing people with different points of view to a given task expands the breadth of discussion and promotes an outcome that considers the interests of many. As we implement the recommendations within this document, we seek to honor the importance of diverse voices and to promote harmonious collaboration as we consider alternative viewpoints.

The school administration, under the direction of the Board, will be responsible for the coordination of effort for each initiative, monitoring the progression toward our goals. For each recommendation, it will establish a team to work toward the implementation of these goals. These teams, together with the administration, will determine the process, required resources, and timeframe most appropriate for the successful achievement of our goals. Teams will report on a regular basis to the school's administration, which in turn will report to the School Board.

Undoubtedly, stakeholder roles with regard to a process that involves decision-making, implementation and feedback will differ. Understanding how these roles differ and collaborate will allow us to achieve common goals. The role of school administration is to provide the framework for and facilitation of efforts to develop school-wide pedagogical goals. In doing so, administration invites and considers the ideas of educators, administrators, parents and students, each a valuable representation of a different perspective. However, if differences of philosophy or practice emerge in relation to these goals, it is the role of administrative leadership to make the ultimate decision as to how to achieve a desired result.

All voices are essential to this process. We affirm that harmony—defined as the consistent, orderly, or pleasing arrangement of parts—is achievable and is a worthy goal of a workplace dedicated to the education of children. As adults, we model the behavior that will become familiar and habitual to our children, and by doing so we influence the intellectual, communal, and moral fabric of our shared future. We will endeavor to bring harmony to the collaboration of effort required to implement the recommendations that follow.

## Our Recommendations

### **Curriculum and Instructional Goals (Recommendations 1-3)**

In connection with previous strategic plans, the school has articulated student learning goals, captured in *The Lyme School Principles of Learning*. Feedback received by stakeholders closely mirrors the ideas expressed in this document, indicating that these aspirations continue to be fundamental to achieving our educational goals. As such, we open our discussion with the words of this document to affirm the importance of these values as we examine and revise our curriculum and instructional practices.

#### The Lyme School Principles of Learning

The Lyme School provides an environment rich with opportunities to discover and explore possibilities; that promotes and encourages students to be engaged, dynamic and creative thinkers. To develop students who are:

- *Informed and Reflective Learners* who can
  - Acquire a core body of knowledge to prepare for life and further learning.
  - Apply knowledge across academic disciplines and outside of the classroom.
  - Assume a personal investment in the process of learning through curiosity, exploration, and discovery.
  - Understand what they need as learners and to advocate for themselves.
- *Clear and Effective Communicators* who can
  - Use written, oral, and visual expression in a variety of settings to convey thoughts, feelings, and perspectives.
  - Read, listen to and interpret messages from multiple sources. Understand, organize, reflect upon, and present information to a specific audience.
- *Creative Problem Solver & Analytical Thinkers* who can
  - Use observations, analysis, and creativity to identify problems and formulate practical and / or innovative solutions.
  - Recognize the role of context, perspective, facts, and opinion in critical thinking.
  - Understand problem-solving to be a process that involves persistence, logic, and trial and error.
  - Organize information, make connections, formulate meaning, and reflect upon the process.
- *Involved & Cooperative Community Members* who can
  - Recognize that personal and group participation is essential to learning.
  - Engage in activities that demonstrate the ability to work with others in an ethical and responsible manner.
  - Accomplish group tasks by listening, contributing, valuing and integrating multiple points of view and skills.
  - Understand their role in the larger community.

From the very first day of school, students are immersed in a program of curricular and instructional activities designed for the achievement of these goals. Learning and mastery

by nature are gained incrementally. Today's lesson reinforces yesterday's and simultaneously lays the foundation for tomorrow's. As such, it is critical for school curriculum to reflect **conceptual progression from year to year and across subjects**. Similarly, to maintain quality instruction throughout the grades, it is critical for us to consider and incorporate **'best practices' in instruction**, i.e. methods that have consistently shown results superior to others.

Because learning styles differ among students, we aspire to address individual student needs first by understanding those needs and then addressing them to the extent possible through **differentiated** instructional practices inside classrooms and on an individual basis. With 'differentiation', we offer students multiple avenues to master content and skills.

We recommend that the Lyme School enhance its commitment to coherent and progressive curricular objectives for and across all grades. In conjunction with a review of its curriculum, the school will examine, revise and articulate its instructional processes and educator practices to promote **more consistency and coherence within and across grades and subjects**. These practices should reflect the school's commitment to address the unique learning needs of individual students both within classrooms and through individualized instruction.

With a K-8 education housed in the same facility, the Lyme School is in a unique position to promote coherence in student learning until high school. We are able to design a coherent experience over nine years of student education while also attending to the differing needs of particular age groups. As the school examines its instruction and practices, it should both link and distinguish between the models used in lower and middle school education to reflect the discrete developmental needs of each age group.

As the school undertakes this process of examination and revision, it should use the *Lyme School Principles of Learning* to inform decisions of priority, policy, program, practice, and curriculum development.

**Recommendation 1: Develop Curriculum and Instruction that Promote Our Educational Goals**

**Action: Develop a progressively sequenced program of instruction that can maximize and monitor student progress toward the goals of the Lyme School's Academic and Social Curriculum. Specific steps toward this goal include:**

- Align new and existing curricula to our school's goals as reflected in the *Principles of Learning*,

(Continued on the next page.)

**(Recommendation #1. Continued from the previous page):**

- Identify and implement a progressively sequenced program of instruction that moves students toward developmentally appropriate goals.
  - Due to the breadth of a full curriculum review and because of recent legislative requirements to adopt Common Core State Standards, we recommend the school first examine the Common Core subjects as a means to both organize its process and achieve compliance with state regulation. New Hampshire – like most states – has established a single set of clear educational expectations, known as Common Core, for English language arts/literacy and mathematics that will be the basis for standardized assessment.
- Identify and implement instructional practices and pedagogy that
  - Address the unique learning needs of individual students
  - Promote consistency and coherence of instructional practices within and across grades and subjects
  - Engages, supports, challenges and inspires learners to achieve
- Identify and implement a means to report student progress on discrete skills and content.
- Identify and implement a means to communicate grade level objectives to promote a common understanding of how these objectives sequentially develop over time.
- Refine and articulate the school’s approach to ‘differentiation’, as described above, including its goals, practices, resources, and scheduling to ensure optimization within the curriculum, throughout the instructional process and across all grades. Particular focus should be given to the differentiation processes that promote coordination of service delivery.
- Review our Middle School approach, as described above, to leverage our unique K-8 ability to both distinguish curriculum for the developmental needs of middle school aged students, while benefiting from coherence with lower school linkage. Develop and incorporate tools that are developmentally sequenced for middle school students in order to:
  - Promote critical thinking, curious engagement, independence, and citizenship.
  - Increase the engagement of students through instructional methods that address their individual needs and skill levels, particularly in mathematics.
  - Better support students and parents in their daily activities and in connection to high school choice. Strengthen the role of key teachers – perhaps in the form of an advisory role – so that they may be aware of student performance across all subjects in order to help students and parents address developing challenges, make curriculum decisions or navigate the process of high school choice.
- Articulate homework policies and practices that can be rationalized as supporting educational objectives and that reflect coherence across grades and subjects.

### **Recommendation 2: Define the Future of Foreign Language**

**Action:** The School will develop a recommendation for the future of a **foreign language program** that incorporates early foreign language instruction as well as language choice in the upper grades. These curriculum objectives will be supported by the school budget.

### **Recommendation 3: Define a Philosophy for the use of Technology**

**Action:** Anticipating continued expansion of technology as a means to promote learning, the school will develop statement of philosophy for classroom use and instructional **integration of technology and technological tools**. A committee composed of school staff and individuals with technological expertise should look at existing models for using technology in education to leverage best practices. This statement should

- Identify the goals for using technology as an instructional tool.
- Consider technology as tools to be integrated into classroom activities instead of being discrete curriculum subjects.
- Identify ways to assess and select technologies available to the School in consideration of a lack of universal Internet access in Lyme, ways to train and support educators/students in the use of acquired technologies, and ways to assess the effectiveness of technologies used.
- Determine proper storage, security, maintenance of equipment
- Identify sources of funding and support.
- Propose a phased implementation plan



## **Stewardship (Recommendations 4-6)**

The Lyme School is so very fortunate to have its many resources to deploy in its mission to educate the children of Lyme. From the talent of its educators to the availability of space and equipment to the support of the Lyme community, these resources are invaluable to the continued success of the school's educational achievements. As such, we need to appreciate and remain responsible stewards of the resources availed to us.

### **Recommendation 4: Support Our Educators**

The talent and skills of our educators have the greatest direct impact on the education we offer our students, making them our most valuable resource. Accordingly, the compensation of these educators is the Lyme School's largest investment. For these reasons, we aim to recognize and support the effort of these educators in the most effective manner.

**Action: Recognize the talent and skills of our educators as the school's most valuable resource and support their efforts to be effective in their roles.** The following have been identified as key elements to achieving this goal:

- Complete and implement the Teacher Evaluation System, a newly designed means of measuring teaching effectiveness and of promoting professional development. We commend the collaborative efforts of teachers, administrators, and community members in developing an innovative means of assessing success.
- Examine, revise, and articulate professional development, training, and mentorship practices to ensure educators have the knowledge, support, and resources necessary to carry out the instructional goals of the school.
- Support competitive compensation models.

### **Recommendation 5: Invest in Physical Space that Promotes Learning Goals**

To serve the current school population as well as that anticipated over the next decade, the Lyme School should rebuild the section of the school currently referred to as the Laura Barnes School.

#### **Action: Rebuild the section of the school currently referred to as the Laura Barnes School.**

- Augment and reorganize to create flexible classroom spaces, including, new small group and individual instruction spaces and a multipurpose room to be used for band, chorus and double activity instruction.
- Eliminate the need for \$500,000 in anticipated maintenance and replacement costs over the next 5-10 years, including a new roof, boiler/heating plant, fire alarm system, and windows.
- Manage the disparity between the upfront costs and the longer-term benefits of this project through bond issuance as a means of smoothing taxpayer burden.

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### **Recommendation 6: Manage and Control Growth of Expenditures and Taxes**

**Action:** The School Board seeks to manage and control expenditure growth rate and the amount to be raised by taxes to the greatest extent possible. To that end, the school board will:

- Review the economic indicators used by the school as benchmarks for assessing the controllable portions of the school budget. Adjust the benchmarks as necessary to better synchronize them with Federal guidelines, town policies, and the best interests of citizens of Lyme. Consider also the possibility of looking at the use of multi-year benchmark averages and targets.
- Examine and address the largest drivers in the budget—the collective bargaining agreement and high school tuition—with a goal of keeping those expenses in line with our overall budget management goals.
- Look for ways to prudently adjust staffing levels when enrollments increase or decline, balancing the reality that while excessive changes year-to-year can cause whiplash, but failing to make adjustments can lead to longer-term sub-standard or staff-heavy outcomes.
- Monitoring ongoing changes in health care reform and manage impact on the school budget.
- Examine the use and original purpose of reserve funds, outlining a plan for managing the funds in the future.

## **Organizational Goals (Recommendation 7)**

As we move forward to implement the best curricular and instructional practices, examining the factors that enhance collaboration and communication between stakeholders is essential to achieving the goals set forth in this plan.

Parents, students, educators, board members and community members can all make valuable contributions to the discussion of education at the Lyme School. Through communication that values respect, open dialogue, and clear expectations, stakeholders can create an environment in which educational objectives can be achieved *because of*, not in spite of, our differences.

### **Recommendation 7: Promote Effective Collaboration and Communication between Stakeholders**

**Action: Look for ways to improve collaboration and communication among stakeholder groups.** In creating new communication and collaboration processes, we will favor practices that encourage open dialogue, acceptance of different perspectives, and direct linkage of individuals with needs and individuals with remedies. This examination should include, but not be limited to, the enhancement of practices in the following situations:

- Communication with parents and students around curriculum choices, instructional processes or classroom activity goals.
- Communication with parents about issues specific to their child.
- Communication between educators to promote consistency and coherence of student experience and educator practices.
- Communication practices between educators and administration to promote consistent and effective school practices.

# TIMELINE

The following is an estimated timeline that will be refined by the teams that work to implement specific action toward each goal. **The chart is color-coded to show which stakeholder group(s) will be most prominent in taking specific action toward that goal.**

- **Multiple stakeholders:** staff, board, in some cases outside consultants
- **School staff:** faculty, staff, administration
- **School Board:** in consultation with school staff

