

STATE OF SCHOOLS NORTHBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School Committee
Michael McGrath, School Committee Chair

Northbridge Public Schools is truly a district that is on the move. There have been several years of significant change in the school district recently and 2009 proved to be no different. In early 2009 after much debate, it was determined that we would reorganize our schools to better serve our students and to improve the social and emotional environment in our lower grade schools. The new configuration resulted in all students of a certain grade attending the same school. We decided to make Northbridge Elementary School a Pre-Kindergarten to grade 1 school and W.E. Balmer School a grade 2 through 4 school. It is hoped that this reconfiguration will lead to additional collaboration between teachers and a better transition for students when they enter grade 5.

At the annual reorganizational meeting of the School Committee, we established several subcommittees: goals, fees & fields, budget/finances, superintendent evaluation, negotiations and policy. These subcommittees have proven to be a great way for our large committee to get significant work done in small groups outside the bi-monthly full school committee meetings.

In April of 2009, we hired a new Superintendent, Susan Marie Gorky, to lead our district and entered into a 3-year contract. Superintendent Gorky hired a new Assistant Superintendent, Nancy Spitulnik, and a new Director of Pupil Personnel Services, Cathy Stanton. Each of the administrators comes to our district with significant experience in their areas and we look forward to the impact they will have on our district. Ms. Stanton has implemented 2 additional special education programs dedicated to serve students with Autism and social emotional disabilities. The programs provide improved in-district school programming and reduce our special education outplacement costs. Ms. Spitulnik joins the district in a critical position which remained unfilled for the last three years. In her short time here, she has initiated a mentor/induction program, professional development program and is working with teacher leaders to vertically and horizontally align our curriculum. These projects will have significant impact on our student's educational experiences in the years to come.

In late summer, the goals subcommittee organized a Saturday workshop with all school administrators and the full school committee to work through a process to establish goals for the district. At the end of the workshop, the following goals were established:

1. To increase academic achievement with high expectations and active engagement for all students and staff.
2. To secure a fiscally responsible budget for the 2010-2011 academic year that addresses the mission and beliefs of the district.
3. To improve the social and emotional climate in the district.
4. To strengthen the district's relationship with the Town of Northbridge
5. To the support the consistent implementation and review of School Committee policy

In early fall 2009, the budget subcommittee initiated our FY11 budget development process. Working with Superintendent Gorky, the subcommittee requested that the district utilize a zero-based budget process for FY11. The school committee supported this process as we are very aware that the next few budget cycles are going to be very critical and pivotal for the district. We are facing a situation where our expenses are far outpacing our expected revenue sources in the next few fiscal cycles. We closed this gap last year and expect to close it again in FY11 through the use of accumulated revolver funds. However, it is anticipated that after FY11, there will not be enough funds left in the revolver accounts to cover the significant gap between revenue and operating expenses. Therefore, the zero-based budgeting process was used to get a concrete understanding of where all funds are being spent in the district. This process asked that every site manager build a budget from the ground up and justify every expense. Throughout November, the budget subcommittee met with district leadership to review the presented budgets. This process culminated with Superintendent Gorky presenting the consolidated budget to the School Committee.

In December, the negotiations sub-committee initiated negotiations with the Northbridge teachers Union. Our current collective bargaining agreement between the school committee and the Northbridge Teacher Union expires at the end of June 2010. We hope to settle a fair contract in a timely manner.

The school district faces difficult financial times ahead, but we are also inspired by our new leadership team and the impact we are confident they will have on every student in our district.

Northbridge Public Schools
Susan M. Gorky, Superintendent

Mission Statement and Beliefs of the Northbridge Public Schools

Mission Statement

The mission of the Northbridge Public Schools is to prepare our students to become responsible, contributing members of society by providing a challenging, rigorous educational program which will maximize academic achievement, enable intellectual, physical, social, and emotional development in an atmosphere which promotes creative and critical thinking.

Beliefs

In support of our mission, we are committed to the following beliefs:

- Excellence in instruction and student achievement must be accomplished through ongoing opportunities for professional growth and development of staff.
- All students should acquire, and use wisely, a basic core of knowledge in an environment that promotes higher level thinking skills across the curriculum.
- All students should be encouraged to attain high standards of achievement and to reach their maximum individual potential.
- Students should be able to communicate effectively through reading, writing, speaking, computing, the arts, and technology.

- Students should develop a sense of self-discipline, self-respect, self-reliance and demonstrate social and civic responsibility.
- Student learning is promoted through a safe and orderly environment, free of prejudice, violence, and harassment.
- All students should understand, respect and appreciate the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of our community and society.
- Community involvement should be actively solicited, encouraged, and developed.

The future of our school depends on what we set in motion today. The Northbridge Public Schools is proud of the rich traditions that we have all come to know and the educational programs it offers to students. The town's citizens have been supportive of our schools. Yet, the last three years have been challenging for the Northbridge Public Schools.

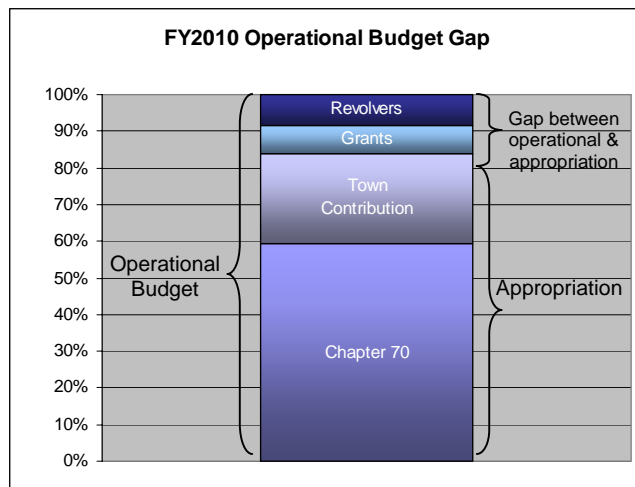
In fiscal 2008, the District faced devastating budget cuts resulting in the elimination of 87 positions. Since that time, the District has been trying to recover and move forward in a time when expenses continue to increase and revenues continue to decrease. In fiscal 2009, state aid, known as Chapter 70 increased by a mere 1% (\$142,075) and in fiscal 2010, it was cut by 2% (-\$285,138). The Town's appropriation in fiscal 2009 was reduced at the May 2009 Town meeting by \$75,000 and was level funded for fiscal 2010. In fiscal 2010, the school department utilized \$130,000 of State Fiscal Stabilization Funds to help the Town cover health insurance costs for some District employees. However, despite these setbacks, the District has been able to restore some of the positions previously cut from the budget. These positions were funded by additional appropriations, retiree savings, and through the District's revolver accounts.

Through a reorganization of positions in fiscal 2010, the District was also able to restore 13 positions without increasing the total number of district staff. The positions restored included 3 Middle School special education teachers, 1 High School special education teacher, an elementary music teacher, an elementary gym teacher, an adjustment counselor to split between the Northbridge Elementary and Balmer School, an adjustment counselor at the Middle School, two kindergarten teachers, a grade 1 teacher, a grade 4 teacher, and an instructional technologist. Although these positions are key in moving the school department forward, the District had to eliminate 13 other positions including 2 administrators in order to not increase the total number of staff employed by the School Department.

The District is fortunate to have a healthy balance in its revolving accounts, which has allowed the District to continue operating at a level above the Town's appropriation. The revenue coming into the revolving accounts, however, is being spent faster than it is coming in. These revolver monies are also being spent on recurring operating expenses, rather than one time emergency or sustainable expenses. If not for these monies, however, the District would not have been able to build back some of what was lost in fiscal 2007. Unfortunately, like all other revenue sources, the amount of money coming into the revolvers is expected to decrease. The largest factor contributing to this decrease is the change in the Circuit Breaker reimbursement rate. Circuit Breaker is a special education reimbursement from the state for any student who has a per pupil cost of more than four times the statewide per pupil average cost. This reimbursement rate has dropped from 75% to 40%, resulting in an estimated \$280,536 decrease in revolver revenue.

The District was fortunate to receive Stimulus money in fiscal 2010. Four classifications of Stimulus money were received, including Special Education IDEA ARRA funds, Title I ARRA funds, Early Childhood IDEA ARRA funds, and State Fiscal Stabilization funds. As a result of this stimulus money, the District was able to build a specialized in-district special education program which resulted in the return of some out-of-district students back to the District where they could be educated with their peers in their home school system. Along with offering these students a better education, the District also was able to cut down on the cost of out of district tuitions and transportation. This savings will compound and carry forward in future years. The stimulus money also enabled the District to invest in some advanced classroom technology and participate in some excellent professional development activities.

As the economy continues to struggle, the District is faced with building the fiscal 2011 budget. In order to ensure that all money is accounted for and is being spent in the best interest of the students, the District has turned to a zero based budgeting model. By planning and working together we believe that we will continue to provide a quality education and meet the economic challenges we



face in fiscal year 2011. With depleting revolvers and a significant gap between the appropriation and operational budget, the long range fiscal forecast for 2012 is bleak. Northbridge continues to have a heavy reliance on state revenues. The town needs to make a commitment to increase its local contribution to the schools, otherwise, the School Department will no longer be able to close the gap in the operational budget and fund a high quality educational program that meets the needs of all learners.

"...the train of childhood passes through the station only once in life; if you miss that train you will not be able to recuperate."

Dr. Joseph Biederman, Harvard Medical School, Boston

Respectfully,

Susan M. Gorky
Superintendent of Schools

Teaching & Learning
Nancy Spitulnik, Assistant Superintendent

The goal of the district for 2009-2010 is High Expectations and Active Engagement for All Learners. Staff and administration are working on a number of initiatives to incorporate this goal into our teaching practices and school programs. These initiatives include:

High-quality professional development for all staff

Staff have participated in three full days of professional development focused on our goal of High Expectations and Active Engagement for All Learners. Money from the Stimulus Bill has allowed us to hire experienced trainers from agencies such as Teachers 21 and the Massachusetts Elementary School Principals Association to work with staff on this training. Teachers working in grade-level or subject-specific groups have learned about best practices such as differentiated instruction, high-level questioning, Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Domains, project-based learning, Professional Learning Communities, and Backwards Design. Subject specific training was provided to paraprofessionals, related arts teachers (art, music, library, physical education/health, and technology), world language teachers, and special education specialists. Professional development will continue beyond the three full days, with staff working to incorporate best practices into their individual practices and grade or subject level initiatives. All schools and the district leadership are working in Professional Learning Communities to enhance collegial discussions and collaborate on educational goals. Continued coursework will be offered for staff to extend their learning and understanding of professional development initiatives. We will also be working to develop a District Professional Development Plan that drives the analysis and implementation of a cohesive plan for on-going professional development in the district.

Responsive Classroom training

The school district has trained 4 administrators and 25 teachers from grades pre-school to 6 in the Responsive Classroom approach to classroom organization, management and learning. Responsive Classroom emphasizes practical strategies that are infused throughout the school day and school year. These strategies incorporate interactive social skills and collaborative problem-solving, student engagement and guided discovery learning, modeling and teaching of expected behaviors, and a positive classroom and school environment that stresses student responsibility and self-discipline.

Funding for this training is coming from DESE grants for Safe Schools and Teacher Quality. As teachers and administrators are trained in Responsive Classroom methods, we will be comparing this approach to our current social competency curriculum, Open Circle, in order to design a comprehensive program that provides a framework for student learning and behavior, and high-quality teacher instruction. We will also be exploring related programs to bring to grades 7-12 to ensure a strong continuum of expectations and skills that build a positive, cohesive school climate focused on learning and respect.

Curriculum alignment

In order to develop cohesive curriculums in major subject areas, we are working on a number of initiatives:

- **Math Task Force:** This task force will look at the Math Scope and Sequence that was developed a few years ago, and align it with the state Curriculum Frameworks and our current math textbooks. The goal is to clarify what and when we're teaching students to better align our instruction with the MCAS.
- **District Literacy Plan:** We will be developing a District Literacy Plan that details our curriculum in the areas of reading, comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and writing. We will fund part of this effort through a DESE ELA grant that we've received that will support consultation from a literacy specialist for this work.
- **Science/Technology Engineering:** We will be applying for a grant from the Museum of Science to support a group of 3-4 teachers as they develop a science/technology engineering curriculum that integrates instruction of these standards into our science curriculum from grades 2-12.

Data analysis training

We are training teachers and administrators to utilize data analysis at the district and school levels to analyze scores from district surveys and evaluations, school formal and informal evaluations, and MCAS (school and student scores, Growth Model, Power Standards) to identify strengths, challenges, and curricular and instructional trends in order to strengthen the quality of the district's educational program.

Instructional technology integration

Our PK-12 technology integration specialist is working with staff to incorporate instructional technology in classroom planning and instruction, staff and student communication and collaboration, and data analysis in order to build a high quality educational program that meets the needs of all students. A special focus is on providing support and professional development for grades 4-12 math teachers on the integration of newly purchased Smart Boards into their math instruction.

All administrators and staff continue to strive for excellence in creating a high-quality educational program that prepares our students to become caring and competent individuals, responsible and productive citizens, and lifelong learners.

Pupil Personnel Services

Catherine Stanton, Director of Pupil Personnel Services

The Northbridge School District provides high quality education with active engagement for students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and students with emotional and health needs as they access the general education curriculum.

Historically, the position of Pupil Personnel Services Director was held by the Director of Special Education. The position changed on July 1, 2009 to encompass all aspects of student needs within

the district. Pupil Personnel Services incorporates special education, guidance, nursing, preschool, paraprofessionals, English Language learners and homeless students.

The mission of the Pupil Personnel Services Department aligns with the mission of the district. Currently, our schools serve 446 students with disabilities to date. These disabilities include autism, communication impairment, developmental delay, emotional impairment, health impairment, intellectual impairment, physical impairment, sensory impairment and specific learning disability. Students range in age from three years of age to 21 years of age. Special education provides a variety of services that meet individual needs from full inclusion to substantially separate programs. Special education services are provided in accordance with state and federal regulations.

The Northbridge Public School district strives to provide a continuum of services for students ages 3 through 21 that meet our students needs. The professional staff includes team chairpersons, special education teachers, psychologist, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and instructional assistants. The school district has contracted services providers to provide students with services not available in-house.

One aspect of Pupil Personnel Services is providing education for our English Language Learners. This year a full time teacher has been hired to instruct our identified limited English proficient students across the district. Our district trained many of our teachers in sheltered content instruction at the end of the summer to improve the instruction and scaffolding of instruction to meet student needs and state regulations. Continued training will occur this year as we train teachers in the different aspects of sheltered content instruction. Our ELL teacher administers and tracks the state mandated MEPA scores and maintains the individual student files in conjunction with the Director of Pupil Personnel Services.

The Northbridge Public School district has moved to meet the social emotional needs of students across the district through access to a shared adjustment counselor at NES and Balmer School, a guidance counselor and an adjustment counselor at the Middle School and the Guidance Department at the High School. The adjustment counselor for the therapeutic programs works across the school settings providing social skills training for students, communication with families, and assisting with outside agency coordination.

Our nursing staff continues to provide students and staff with updates to health initiatives. The most recent initiative this year involves the H1N1 flu clinics organized and staffed by our nursing staff over and beyond their work day. The nursing staff works closely with the students and is often the first to learn when families require assistance through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Act.

Pupil Personnel Services coordinates efforts with the NES principal to provide educational programming for the integrated preschool program at NES. Approximately 120 three and four year olds attend the language-based preschool program. Attendance has decreased this year in the four year old program most notably. Students with disabilities attend the program to receive their required services. Additional walk-in services are provided for students with disabilities who do not attend the preschool program.

If anyone wishes to refer a student for special education services due to a suspected disability, please contact your child's school or the Special Education office at (508)-234-8156.

Technology
Brian L'Heureux, Information Systems Manager

The Technology Systems Department delivers robust, reliable and necessary technology solutions to 5 buildings, more than 365 faculty/staff/administrative/support users and more than 2,500 students.

The summer of 2009 saw significant improvements in District technology, including the installation of 270 refurbished computers, memory upgrades for older computers, and the installation of interactive boards in all Grade 4-12 math classrooms.

The recent restoration of the district-wide Instructional Technology Specialist position has greatly increased teachers' access to technology support and offers significant opportunities for the daily integration of technology into the curriculum.

Ongoing projects include the continuous improvement of the District network. Efforts toward this end include the implementation of server virtualization and the consolidation of storage by leveraging the District's wide area network.

The Technology Systems Department strives to provide the best value possible in its expenditures. To this end, free open source software is used extensively throughout the District, including the OpenOffice office suite, the Koha library automation system, and the Moodle learning management system.

Moodle supports and extends opportunities for students to learn outside of the traditional face-to-face classroom environment. Learning management systems have quickly become the standard at colleges and universities and corporate environments that desire the ability to provide those opportunities.

Despite these positive developments, the District is still struggling with older equipment in some areas that is over eight years old. The District is continuing to replace these computers as funds are available.

School Nurses
Lori Johnson, School Nurse Leader

Northbridge Public Schools employs 5 full time and 1 part time registered nurses. Each school in the district has nursing coverage throughout the school day. The Middle School, which has the highest population and the highest acuity of student needs, has 2 nurses throughout the school day.

This year, nurses saw over 32,000 student visits and screened 2110 students for vision, hearing, height, weight and scoliosis. Nurses also saw 492 staff members for health related visits. We have 693 children with special health care needs, both physical and behavioral/emotional, who are able

to attend school because nursing care is available to them. Our dismissal rate for students was 4.3%. This is a great accomplishment, as the Department of Public Health has set a goal of keeping dismissal rates below 15%.

In addition to everyday nursing care and health promotion, the nurses have accomplished many health improvement measures this year.

- Nurses participated in a Parent Satisfaction survey and received 93+% in all areas surveyed.
- Nurses also participated in a study of response rate when a student is referred for a vision problem that is detected at annual vision screening. We achieved a return rate of 85%, which was up from 55% the previous year. Nurses accomplished this by consistent follow-up with parents and Guardians. Nurses also enrolled in the Vision Service Plan and were able to give gift certificates for eye exams and glasses to needy students.
- During the H1N1 crisis, nurses educated all students and staff on proper hygiene to avoid the flu. They monitored absence rates and H1N1 infection rates. Nurses, along with many other volunteers, have volunteered their time and vaccinated over 700 people for H1N1 this fall.
- Nursing arranged to offer CPR/AED and First Aid training for staff at all schools this year.
- Nurses monitor and track Body Mass Indices of all students in grades 1, 4, 7 and 10.
- Presentation of an educational program on the effects of substance use on driving and head injuries to the Junior and Senior classes.

Dr. Dahl continues to provide support as the District's School Physician, and provided sports physicals for over 75 students this year.

Custodial and Maintenance Department
Paul Halacy, Supervisor of Buildings and Grounds

The Custodial and Maintenance Department is committed to cleaning and maintaining a safe and clean learning environment for the children of Northbridge. On a daily basis our staff clean and maintain 494, 921 square feet in five buildings, as well as approximately 100 acres of grounds and playing fields.

In the summer of 2009, a major construction project at the Northbridge Elementary School was completed. Asbestos containing floor tiles were removed and new vinyl composite floor tiles were installed in the original 1952 section of the school. At the same time the classrooms were painted and safety stair treads were installed on all of the stairways in the 1952 section of the building.

At the Balmer School, all of the hallways and interior doorways were painted as well as all of the stairwells. At the Middle School, the cafeteria was painted and the gym floor and several other classroom wood floors were sanded and refinished. At the High School, the wood floors in the field house and the dance studios were sanded and refinished.

Also in the summer of 2009, the custodial and maintenance staff helped facilitate the reorganization of the W. Edward Balmer School and the Northbridge Elementary School, which now have the grade configuration of Grade Pre-K through Grade 1 at the Northbridge Elementary School and Grade 2 through Grade 4 at the Balmer School.

The School Department is currently exploring several programs being offered through the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources and our utility company to make our buildings more energy efficient. We are also beginning the process of switching all of our cleaning chemicals to green seal certified products.

Food Services
Debra King, Food Service Director

Northbridge School Food Service participates in the National School Lunch, School Breakfast, Special Milk, After School Snack, and Commodity Food Distribution programs in compliance with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Nutrition regulations.

Our primary goal is to provide nutritious and appealing meals that meet our student's dietary needs based on nutrition standards developed by the United States Department of Agriculture. Meals that are high in fiber, low in added fats, sugars, and sodium and served in appropriate portion sizes, with specific calories and key nutrients are offered. Fruits, vegetables, dairy products, whole grains, and a variety of proteins are served each day. We served 265,880 meals during this past school year. Lunch costs \$2.50, \$.40 reduced price or free to those that qualify for free lunch. Breakfast cost \$1.50, \$.30 reduced price or free to those that qualify for free meals. The cost of food has drastically risen over the past few years. These price increases affect all of us at home as well as the School Food Service Program.

All areas of the program, including the preparation and service of meals, administration of funds, program monitoring, reporting, and record keeping meet state and federal regulations.

All food is received, prepared and served following strict sanitation regulations as required by the Massachusetts Food Code. All staff has been trained in the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point procedures of food safety and sanitation known as HACCP. Our school kitchens follow these standards as they prepare and serve hundreds of meals each day. All school kitchens were awarded the Certificate of Merit in Food Safety and Sanitation by the Northbridge Board of Health in October. Receiving these awards is an example of the exemplary food safety practices performed daily by our dedicated staff serving the students, faculty, staff, and community.

In September, we started a "Grab and Go Breakfast" option at the Middle, Balmer, and Elementary schools, to enhance our student's preparedness to start each school day ready to learn. We now offer a "Senior Citizen and Friends Luncheon" held twice a month at the High School. This program has had good participation and meets a community need.

As one of the Town's largest meal providers, feeding your children and the school community is our business, and we take great pride in accomplishing this task.

Northridge Elementary School
Jill Healy, Principal

Northridge Elementary School is committed to providing high quality, developmentally appropriate, educational experiences for all learners. Our school is a place where the faculty is committed to working with children to reach their academic potential as well as develop good moral character. We believe that reaching academic potential is fostered by a positive learning environment. Northridge Elementary School has developed the “**HEARTS**” program to enhance the learning environment within our classrooms. The values of **H**onesty, **E**ffort, **A**chievement, **R**espect and **R**esponsibility, **T**eamwork, **S**elf-control and **S**afety are integrated into the curriculum. Our goals for the 2009-2010 focus on increasing academic achievement, secure a fiscally responsible budget, improving the social and emotional climate, strengthening relationship with the Northridge community, and supporting the consistent review and implementation of School Committee policy.

The educational program for preschool is an extension of the Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences as outlined by Early Childhood Advisory Council to the Massachusetts Board of Education. The Kindergarten Learning Experiences directs the kindergarten curriculum while the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education guides the grade 1 curriculum. The curriculum responds to the different learning styles and abilities of each student. It is interactive, engaging, and has a long-lasting positive effect on academic achievement. The Northridge Elementary School students, parents, faculty, staff and administration comprise a diverse, creative and caring community. The Northridge Elementary staff works hard to promote a life-long love of learning in their students.

Learning requires active, constructive involvement of the student. To optimize student learning, children are heterogeneously grouped in the classrooms. Teachers utilize differentiated instruction and “hands on” activities in an interactive environment. To best meet the varying needs of individual students, children are flexibly sub-grouped in the classroom based on ability, interest, and learning styles. In order to meet the varying rates of growth and development, these sub-groupings may change.

Our learning community utilizes formative and summative assessment data to drive instruction so that every learner’s educational program meets his or her individual needs. Academic support is available through a full inclusion model in special education and Title I support for English Language Arts and Mathematics.

Parental involvement is critical to student success. Northridge Elementary School staff believes that parents work as partners guiding their child in an exhilarating journey. We are committed to providing our students with a strong foundation for learning and recognize that it takes a community effort (i.e. students, faculty, parents, and community members) to accomplish this goal.

W. Edward Balmer Elementary School
John Zywień, Principal

The Balmer School is a dynamic Community of Learners that strives to provide a high-quality education for all our students.

The **Balmer Vision Statement** is as follows:

We would like our school to become a community where:

- Our collegiality embodies a sense of respect, leadership and pride.
- Learning is exciting and ever evolving.
- Curiosity, enthusiasm, individuality and diversity are valued.
- Mental and physical wellness are encouraged and supported.

Our community will reflect the belief that:

- Students, faculty and parents are responsible for working toward common goals.
- Everyone's role is important in building a community of learners.
- We work in an environment conducive to learning through site-based management.

We are a school that believes all children can learn. We believe that it is our responsibility to answer the important questions regarding student learning:

- What is it we expect our students to learn?
- How do we know if they are learning it?
- How do we respond when they don't learn?

The Balmer Staff provides students with academic support through special education services, Title I services and enrichment opportunities. The Balmer special education and inclusion teachers at each grade level work collaboratively as a team to create an environment where all students are included in and have access to the regular education curriculum. Also, students not on an Individualized Education Plan receive academic support in the areas of math and language arts during the school day through the Title I Grant.

Students at Balmer School are offered extracurricular activities outside of the school day such as Chorus, Show Choir and Destination Imagination. Balmer school also has an after-school program called BASE (Balmer After School Enrichment).

The Balmer School continues to strengthen its relationship with community organizations. During the Winter Holidays, students wrote cards and letters to soldiers serving their country in Afghanistan and Iraq. On two separate occasions the Northbridge Parent Teacher Association organized food drives for the Northbridge Food Pantry. Lastly, the Balmer staff worked closely with volunteers from Alternatives of Whitinsville to have a handicapped ramp built in the Balmer Courtyard. We look forward to building even stronger relationships with our community organizations.

The Balmer Staff is committed to a professional development program based on identified needs in instruction and curriculum, resulting in the adoption of best teaching practices. Teachers attend workshops, conferences, and seminars in all curricular areas and share their experiences with other teachers. The staff and administration at Balmer are committed to fostering a love of learning by promoting an educational community that sparks interesting, mind-expanding ideas with multi-sensory activities through which high expectations for all students are realized.

Northbridge Middle School
Jill Carroll, Principal

Northbridge Middle School houses 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students and currently has a population of 780 students and approximately 70 faculty members. Northbridge Middle School is the largest school in the district in comparison to Balmer, Northbridge Elementary, and Northbridge High School in square footage, students, and teacher population.

The school operates on a 7 period rotating schedule, along with a 23 minute home room period every morning and a 25 minute lunch block per grade. Each classroom period is approximately 46 minutes. Grade 5 is made up of three teams of teachers and Grades 6 – 8 are made up of two teams of teachers. The middle school also has a New Horizons classroom and the Pathways Program, which are special education classrooms which help students with individual needs ranging from basic life skills to social-emotional needs. Other special education students are educated in an inclusion classroom, alongside regular education students, or in a resource room setting in which they receive small group instruction in a specific content area.

Professional Learning Communities are being utilized by staff throughout the school to collaborate on high-quality curriculum, instruction, and assessment initiatives. Based on professional development days in the Fall, faculty are working to incorporate best instructional practices such as differentiated instruction, inquiry-based active learning, and cross-curricular planning into their classroom teaching. The English Language Arts department is focusing on integrating writing across the curriculum, supported by a literacy grant from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Math teachers are working to horizontally align the math curriculum, and provide needed supports for at-risk learners. All math teachers now have SMART Boards in their classrooms, which provide integration of technology to support academic learning. Social Studies and Science Departments are engaged in aligning the middle school curriculum with the state curriculum frameworks.

This year a spark has been re-ignited in the area of Related Arts. The Music Department is actively working to build student interest and participation in the school band and chorus. The school Drama Club has been re-activated, and is looking forward to showcasing their talents in upcoming productions.

This year, the school has an adjustment counselor and a guidance counselor, which were cut positions for the previous three years. Adding these two positions back into the daily life at NMS has contributed to the other important pieces alongside the academics in a child's life; social and emotional development and support. These positions have also been very positive additions with the reduction of an assistant principal, leaving one assistant principal and a principal in administrative roles. As for the teaching staff, no teachers were cut from last year and no teachers were added.

Areas for improvement during the 2009-2010 school year are focused on MCAS scores for ELA and math, especially in the low income and special education subgroups, curriculum alignment with state standards, and data analysis. The school's School Improvement Plan was approved in

December 2009. The plan focuses on high expectations and active engagement for all students, especially in the areas of ELA and math. Refer to www.nps.org to view this plan. Through district wide professional development and school based initiatives at NMS, there are many positive changes taking place this year.

Regardless of educational abilities, we believe that all students can learn at Northbridge Middle School. Our goal is high expectations and active engagement for all learners. In support of our goal, we are committed to our students every day and will continue to move forward every day!

Northbridge High School
Michael Gauthier, Principal

Northbridge High School's mission statement embodies our belief that in order for all students to achieve academic and personal growth, the entire community must work collaboratively to provide students with opportunities to become competent, productive, and responsible participants in an ever-changing and diverse society.

Our expectations are clearly articulated – **R**esponsibility, **A**chievement, **M**utual Respect and **S**ervice. Our academic program of studies features varied and diverse athletic activities and co-curricular programs which ensure that all students are given opportunities to strive for personal excellence.

The staff at Northbridge High School is committed to and invested in the success of each student and encourages both parental and community involvement. We embrace RAMS pride and celebrate the accomplishments of our students. As evidence that Northbridge High School continues to strive to attain its mission, it was awarded full accreditation by NEASC despite the challenging fiscal climate. The next decennial visit is scheduled for 2018; however, NEASC requires each secondary school to provide special progress reports whenever specific concerns or extraordinary conditions exist. The first special progress report was submitted in August which addressed continued concerns over the consistent funding and support of the educational budget. The staff is currently working on compiling the two year follow-up report which is due in October 2010. The students, staff, and parents are commended for their commitment and dedication throughout this process.

Northbridge High School met Adequate Yearly Progress status requirements in all areas except in the low income subcategory for 2009 and is working with the Central office to devise a plan to address this area of concern.

Forty-three students in the Class of 2010 were awarded the John & Abigail Adams Scholarship for excellence on the MCAS test in both English and Mathematics. Recipients qualified for full four year tuition at a state college or the University of Massachusetts. We continue to see growth in the numbers of students who take both the PSAT and the SAT tests: SAT Critical Reading (514); Mathematics (503) and the Verbal SAT 1/II Critical Reading (611) Math (588).

The Class of 2009 participated in the spring 2008 test administration of the State MCAS. Eighty seven percent of the students in the Class of 2009 passed the English Language Arts and eighty one

percent passed the Mathematics MCAS tests; 70% scored in the proficient/advanced area in English and 60% in Mathematics.

The 142nd Commencement was held in the Veterans' Memorial Field House at Northbridge High School on May 29th, 2009. Diplomas were awarded to 144 students. Fourteen students were recognized for outstanding scholarship by receiving the highest academic honor awarded graduates, the Gold Medal. Receiving Gold Medals were: Carlos Arriaga, Courtney Beauregard, Lindsay Castonguay, Michael Deneault, Susan Emmerling, Michael Gosselin, Brendon Grabowsk, Amy Holmes, Lynnzie Marinaccio (Valedictorian), Grace Pimentel, Robin Reiss, Sarah Spencer, Kayla Sullivan, and Nicole Webb. The salutatorian was Robin Reiss and the Class Marshall was Casey Petersen. Eighty-nine percent of students plan to enroll in postsecondary study.

We gratefully acknowledge the support of our community patrons, members of the business community, and alumni for their generous support in the form of scholarships and awards. The Class of 2009 received recognition for its many accomplishments in the areas of academics, activities, and athletics in the form of locally sponsored awards exceeding \$56,555; college & university grants/scholarships in excess of \$1,126,170 for a total grants and scholarships awarded in excess of \$1.1 million. A full list of scholarships and recipients is available at NHS.

Our NHS RAM athletes had an outstanding season of play receiving much recognition: Field Hockey-League Champions; Football - Div 2A Superbowl participants; Boys Basketball - District Finalist; Boys Lacrosse – District Semi-finalist; Hockey, Baseball, Girls Basketball, Boys and Girls Soccer, Golf team - District participants. Also, Alec Labonte made it to the States in Wrestling. Casey Hippert was named to the All State team. Haley Young was named to T&G Central Mass Super Team. The tennis team had its first season as a varsity sport in the spring and swimming made its varsity debut in December. All of our co-curricular activities, which are fee based, offer students an opportunity to enhance their experiences through participation in award winning co-curricular activities. Students were recognized for excellence through participation in DECA, AP Humanities Collaborative, Poetry Slam, Bridge Design, and Chorus. Students embrace service to community in school through Student Council, National Honor Society, Citizenship in Action, and athletics. Northbridge High School extends a sincere appreciation to the Northbridge Education Foundation for their continued support.

In March a pilot program called P.A.V.E. (Program for Academic and Vocational Excellence) was created in order to address an at risk population of students who were not reaching success via the traditional curriculum and classroom environment. The underlying goal of the program is to keep identified at-risk students from dropping out. The pilot was a success and, through a state grant, we were able to spend time over the summer developing and re-vamping the program to ensure it meets the needs of our students while maintaining academic integrity.

The High School welcomed Middle School Principal Michael Gauthier to Northbridge High School as the Interim Principal in August.

Freshman transitioning was identified as an area of concern and so the “Link Crew” transition program was implemented in September, welcoming in the class of 2013. The program is designed to help freshman enter on their first day of school feeling welcomed, prepared, and overall more

comfortable by partnering them with upper class “Link Leaders” who underwent extensive training for two days. The program also includes follow-up presentations and meetings throughout the year to help every freshman transition to High School successfully.

At their state meeting, Leaders of the Student Council who had seen a presentation by Craig Scott, one of the victims of the Columbine High School shooting in 1999, immediately went into action to try and bring him to Northbridge. After extensive fundraising, Mr. Scott came to Northbridge High school and captivated students in grade 8-12 on December 3rd. He presented the story of his sister Rachel who was the first student to be killed that fateful day, and he issued “Rachel’s Challenge.” The presentation is designed to teach students to spread kindness. He also made a presentation to the entire Northbridge community that evening at a packed Northbridge Middle School auditorium. In addition he spent approximately two hours training over 60 selected students in grades 8-12 on how to continue to spread Rachel’s challenge by starting the “Friends of Rachel” club which will be a welcome addition to the Northbridge High School community.

Northbridge High School news and information may be found by visiting our high school link from our district home page, [www.nps.org/High School/](http://www.nps.org/High%20School/)

At Northbridge High School, we continue to live our motto, “Together...We Can.”