

The Next Generation of the Narragansett School System

2008

Strategic Plan

Developed through Systems Design

## THE NEXT GENERATION OF THE NARRAGANSETT SCHOOL SYSTEM

The Narragansett School System conducted strategic planning in the spring of 2008 using an interactive systems design process. The school system chose to utilize systems design because the School Committee and Superintendent of Schools were seeking an alternative to traditional strategic planning. They also recognized that contemporary public education was in the midst of one of the most dynamic, changing, and challenging contexts ever presented to what has typically been a slow-to-change, locally controlled enterprise. One school committee member and the Superintendent had been involved with Interactive Systems Design<sup>1</sup> through their leadership roles on the Southern Rhode Island Collaborative Council. They brought their experiences to the Narragansett School Committee and the process began. Narragansett School System is one of a handful of school districts across the country that has embarked on this process for creating the future that it wants.

Interactive Design is new to education and has potential for producing a far-sighted plan, exciting, and full of challenging goals which could take the district to significantly different levels of performance for all students and adults. It is a planning process based on the assumption that the successes of the past have, themselves, created new opportunities. Traditional approaches to change have sometimes implied that failure is the only motivator.

Interactive Design<sup>1</sup> methods helped the design team develop a detailed vision of the public school system they would collectively choose to have rather than simply a mixture of incremental improvements of what they have now. The importance of the shift of thinking between the two perspectives cannot be overemphasized. Briefly, the Interactive Design process involves three phases:

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<sup>1</sup> A method developed by Dr. Russell Ackoff and Mr. Jamshid Gharajedaghi of Philadelphia, PA. See their publications for a complete description, especially Gharajedaghi's book *Systems Thinking: Managing Chaos and Complexity*, published in 2005, second edition by Butterworth-Heinemann.

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1. *High Academic Standards*
2. *Shared community wide process*
3. *Needs based*
4. *School based improvement*
5. *Mentoring of new teachers*
6. *Improve student achievement*
7. *Student intervention*
8. *High standards for student behavior*
9. *Consistent with RI CES*
10. *Improve performance in core areas*
11. *Research based literacy*
12. *Personal Literacy Program*
13. *Self- studies*
14. *Orderly education environment*
15. *Continued education for non-attending students*
16. *Health and wellness of students*

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- Understanding the set of interacting problems facing the designers;
- Generating design options based on systems theory;
- Planning for implementation.

The Interactive Design process for NSS included the creation of a Design Team, a Steering Committee, and focus groups. The Design Team consisted of 20 members from the community and the schools. The Steering Committee was comprised of 7 Design Team members. The Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and School Committee were represented on both committees. The Design Team met for a total of 12 hours over 5 meetings with the Steering Committee meeting for 6 hours over 2 meetings. A total of 10 focus groups were held with broad community representation. Over 150 individuals participated including middle and high school students, governmental officials, members of parent groups and School Improvement Teams, and citizens and teachers, some of whom answered the questions via e mail. Members of the Steering Committee facilitated the focus groups with the community. This inclusive process allowed for multiple stakeholder opportunities for creating the future of NSS. As they worked, members of the Design Team repeatedly remarked on the unique opportunity they had to shape the future they wanted. It is important to note that every team member attended every meeting. The community commitment was admirable and critical to the success of the process.

During each meeting discussions centered on a series of questions designed to elicit specifications for the next generation of NSS, determine the NSS context, identify the set of interacting challenges facing the NSS, and to test the specifications with stakeholders. (The series of questions and specific responses can be found in the addendum section of this document.) The set of questions included:

- What is happening locally and nationally impacting Narragansett's context?
- How is the definition of success changing for Narragansett?
- If you could have what you want what would you have in the next generation of Narragansett School System?
- What will success look like?

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- 17. Personalized learning environments for high school students*
- 18. Strategies for achieving grade level reading*
- 19. Applied learning*
- 20. Life planning for the whole child*

## NARRAGANSETT SCHOOL SYSTEM

There are three public schools in Narragansett. All three have recently undergone self studies and reviews by their respective evaluating organizations. In 2005/06 the Pier Middle School had a School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT) visit and in 2006/07 the Narragansett Elementary School underwent the same process. These reviews are conducted by the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) as reported in the SALT document (available on RIDE website). In May of 2007, the Narragansett High School very successfully completed its NEASC (New England Association of Schools and Colleges) accreditation process. All of these reports are available through the NSS website.

*Self Study*

Narragansett Elementary School serves students in pre-kindergarten through fourth grade. Narragansett Elementary is a targeted- assistance Title I school. Of the 500 students in attendance, 91% are white, 2% are Asian, 4% are Native American, 2% are African American and 1% Hispanic. There are fewer than 5 English Language Learners in the school. Almost 19% of the students receive special education services, and 15 % are eligible for free or reduced price breakfast and lunch.

The Narragansett Pier Middle School has a population of approximately 470 students in grades 5-8. 95% of the students are white, 2% are African American, 1% Native American, 1% Asian and 1% Hispanic. 16% percent of the students are serviced by special needs programs. Just over 11% of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

Narragansett High School has 475 students in grades 9-12. 94% of the students are white, 1.7% are Asian, 1.3% are African American, 1% Hispanic and 1% Native American. 16% of the students receive special education services and 8% are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

### CONTEXT: THE SET OF INTERACTING CHALLENGES

One tenet of Interactive Design is “context is important.” In order to identify all aspects of the NSS’ context, the Design Team needed

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to identify the set of interacting challenges facing NSS. The interacting challenges we identified are not the sole basis for future goals nor meant to identify constraints that will always hold the district back. None of the sets of problems can be dissolved completely by the design; however, the design can minimize their impact on the schools by reducing the negative nature that they have played in the past.

Five challenges were identified, each with its own contributors and each affecting the other four, in both positive and negative ways.

Certainly the most critical challenge facing the NSS is the **need to increase student achievement**. As a school department, this is our ultimate purpose and as such is our mission. This factor has positive impacts on the other four challenges. As we increase the use of data to inform practice, as instruction improves and as the system emphasizes enrichment, the development of the whole child will have a positive impact on student achievement.

The **need to improve instruction** is another challenge. Instructional improvement is recognized as a national problem, but the NSS points to local conditions that have also contributed to this concern. The following impact instruction negatively: not maximizing the use of data as a systemic tool for analysis and to drive instruction; the lack of consistent use of best instructional practices; the inconsistent implementation of curriculum objectives; and a lack of a sense of urgency regarding needed change. Because of the need for improved instruction, student achievement is negatively impacted.

The **current communication** process also poses a challenge to the NSS. There is a significant need for a systematic approach to both dispersing and collecting information from different groups within the community. These groups include parents, community leaders, governmental officials, businesses and the general public. Communication fosters transparency, minimizes misunderstandings and can bring about a sense of ownership in the school system. Effective communication can positively impact school funding as well as decrease resistance to change, and could have an influence in why residents settle or stay in the community. Improved instruction and increased student learning

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will positively impact the challenge of communication within and outside the school system.

A lack of adequate **funding in the ever-changing economic climate** greatly affects the NSS. As more unfunded federal and state mandates are passed, as capital needs continue to grow, and as many of the community's citizens view the schools as a liability, the issue of current funding, as well as identifying new sources of funding, becomes a priority. As a result, effective communication and the successes achieved from increased student learning rise in importance.

**Resistance to change** among all constituencies (community, parents, teachers, government) further creates a challenge to NSS. As our school system evolves, resistance to change could negatively impact improved instruction and the need to increase student achievement. Effective communication and an urgent desire for continual improvement can positively impact this challenge.

The picture of the set of interacting challenges can be found on page 11 in the addendum.

One of the most interesting design principles that emerged from studying the set of intersecting challenges was the realization that the Narragansett School System should *focus simultaneously on improving instruction to increase student achievement and increasing the effectiveness of internal and external communication. This should greatly affect the overarching issue of resistance to change by all constituencies as well as the challenge of funding.*

The NSS can express its mission and goals and how the mission and goals are being achieved at the school level by its student body and its faculty by creating a more effective communication system. Once the system is planned and operational, citizens in town (whether or not directly associated with the schools) will begin to understand the philosophy behind why the schools do what they do. Additionally, citizens will become knowledgeable about *how NSS conducts its business to increase achievement, to spend resources wisely and efficiently, to meet state and federal mandates, and to graduate students ready to be responsible and productive citizens.*

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The implementation of an effective communication system is critical to the NSS, as is the need to focus on improving instruction to increase student achievement. *Teachers and staff will participate in professional development in order to strengthen the implementation of research-proven teaching methods that result in increased learning.* As teachers and staff experience greater student achievement using the improved instructional techniques, they will more willingly accept the usefulness of the new methods. The resulting “changed” culture will become the default culture. Because the *new teaching methods will emphasize student engagement, “real-world” activities and assessments, community-based learning, and student choice (among other things), the schools’ environments will become more respectful and caring between and among people learning and working there.* With increased academic achievement, the citizens of the community (governing bodies, businesses, citizens without children, etc.) will regard the schools as successful, increasing the likelihood for more community support, both programmatic and financial.

#### DESIGN: CREATING THE FUTURE

The next generation of the Narragansett School System will respond to the different constituencies of the community and at the same time take a role in leading the town toward its future.

The next generation of the Narragansett School System will achieve excellence through a caring environment where students are engaged in, intrinsically motivated for, and successful in achieving high academic standards and becoming well-rounded citizens.

The next generation of the Narragansett School System will demonstrate the value of:

- Academic achievement
- Development of the whole student
- School and community partnerships
- Embracing diversity
- Recognizing and supporting the need for continual improvement

Mission,  
Vision,  
Values

*Specifications: Goals and strategies*

The next generation of the Narragansett School System will have:

1. Activities, offerings and extra-curricular opportunities that are enriching and personalized
  - Students' diverse gifts, passions, and learning styles will be identified and utilized
  - Tasks will be authentic and differentiated instruction will be practiced by all
2. Students loving learning.
  - Students will value the educational process and their intelligences
  - Students are engaged in and motivated to express their talents and gifts
  - Everyone, including peers, encourages high academic and behavioral standards and success
  - Teachers are passionate about learning and inspire their students
3. Teachers who demonstrate best instructional practices that are process and inquiry based within consistent, articulated curricula that meet the individual needs of all students.
  - Decision-making and practices are data driven and based in research
  - Technology and virtual opportunities are utilized to enhance student learning in all areas
4. Professionals dedicated to continuous learning.
  - Administrators and the teaching staff are working interdependently for continuous improvement
  - Professionals demonstrate a sense of urgency to improve instruction as well as continually learn from one another

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A. Learning and Achievement Focus  
B. Equity and Adequacy of Resources  
C. Curriculum/ Instruction/ Assessment  
D. Highly Qualified Staff  
E. Data Based Planning and Accountability  
F. Engaging Families and Community  
G. Safe and Supportive Environments



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5. Expanded partnerships between and among schools and the larger community resulting in additional opportunities for students, teachers and community members.
  - Volunteering and mentoring programs are commonplace
  - Students have opportunities for internships and work credit
  - School personnel are in leadership roles in community projects and committees
  - Elementary school is connected to community early childhood initiatives and program
6. Strong relations with its publics.
  - Communications are market driven, continuous and effective
  - The Narragansett School System is recognized as an inclusive leader and partner in the community
  - Our schools have partnerships and trust with local government officials and citizens
7. Flexible structures and facilities driven by functions derived from student needs and choices.
  - Organize the school day and year for the purpose of improving student achievement
  - Use community facilities to better provide for capacity building and collaboration to enhance student opportunities

Interactive Design principles speak to the importance of embracing and supporting change and having strong community relationships. These principles were embedded into the NSS design itself as evidenced by the inclusiveness of the process, the excellent attendance at meetings, the leadership roles that community members took, and the rich discussion among all participants.

Success will be apparent in instructional practices, the accomplishments of students and teachers, the richness of community partnerships, improved systemic communications and public relations, and the efficient use of all resources. References

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to the design specifications, the responses to the question about NSS being the “go to” district, climate data, and student achievement data will drive yearly approximations.

Reports to the community regarding changes and progress within the school district will include regular updates to the School Committee regarding student assessments, state required testing, high school portfolios, and other subjective data results. Presentations will include information regarding the platforms of shared services, communication, leadership, knowledge and new programs, at each educational level. Specifically year one approximations such as health and wellness, walk-through observations, enrichment initiatives, community partnerships, literacy and math coaching, math recovery, and the re-writing of the ELA curriculum will be a focus of the reports. The Superintendent will report to the School Committee and updates for the community will be developed.

*Reporting to the  
School  
Committee and  
Community*

*Design Team*

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*Steering Committee*

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The facilitators would like to thank Dr. Susan Leddick of PKR, Inc. for her guidance and mentorship through this Systems Design process. They would also like to extend thanks to Jamshid Gharajedaghi for his teaching and knowledge sharing into the educational community.

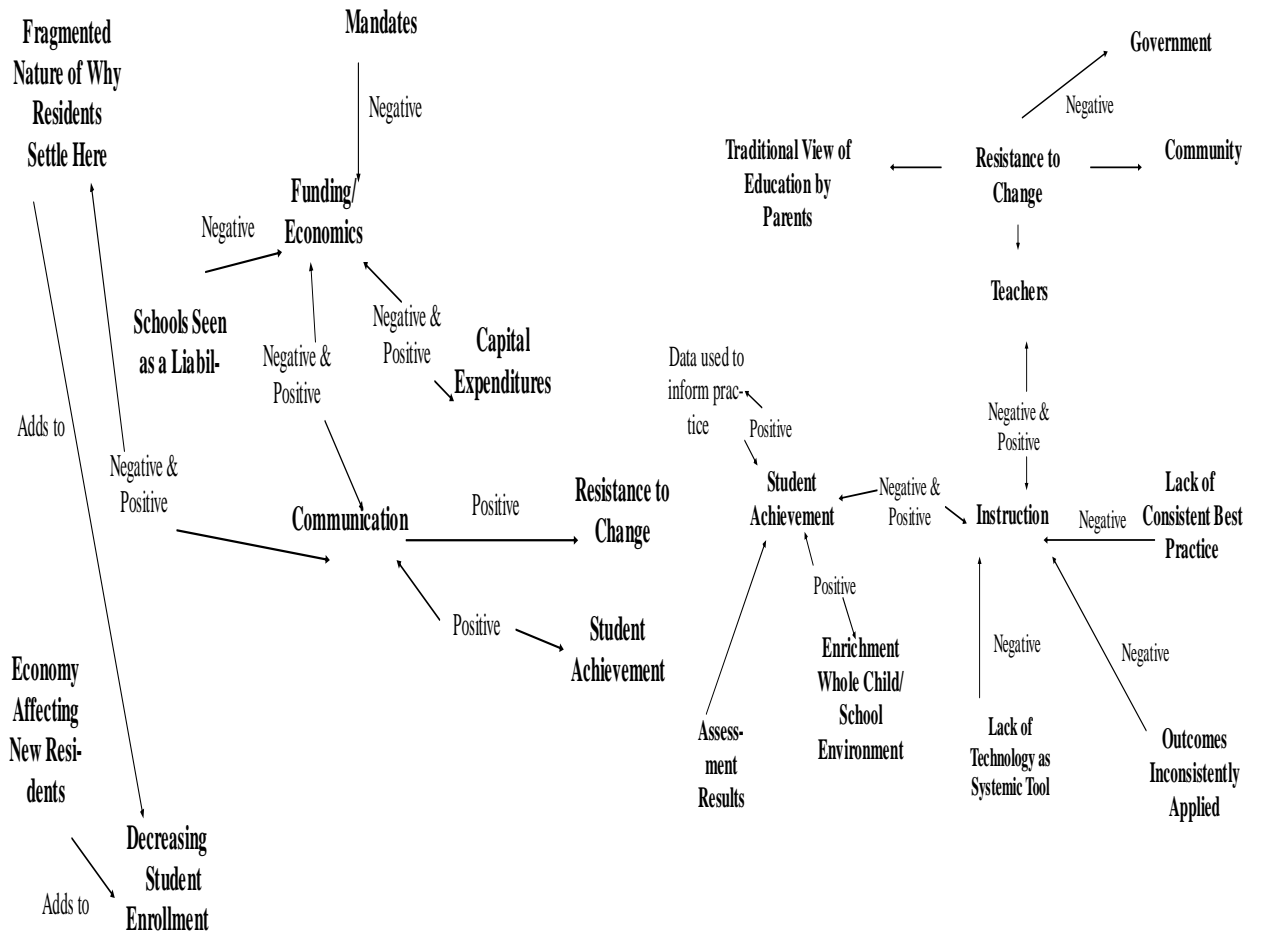
*Facilitators*

Doreen Marvin, LEARN  
Michael McKee, Superintendent of Stonington Public Schools  
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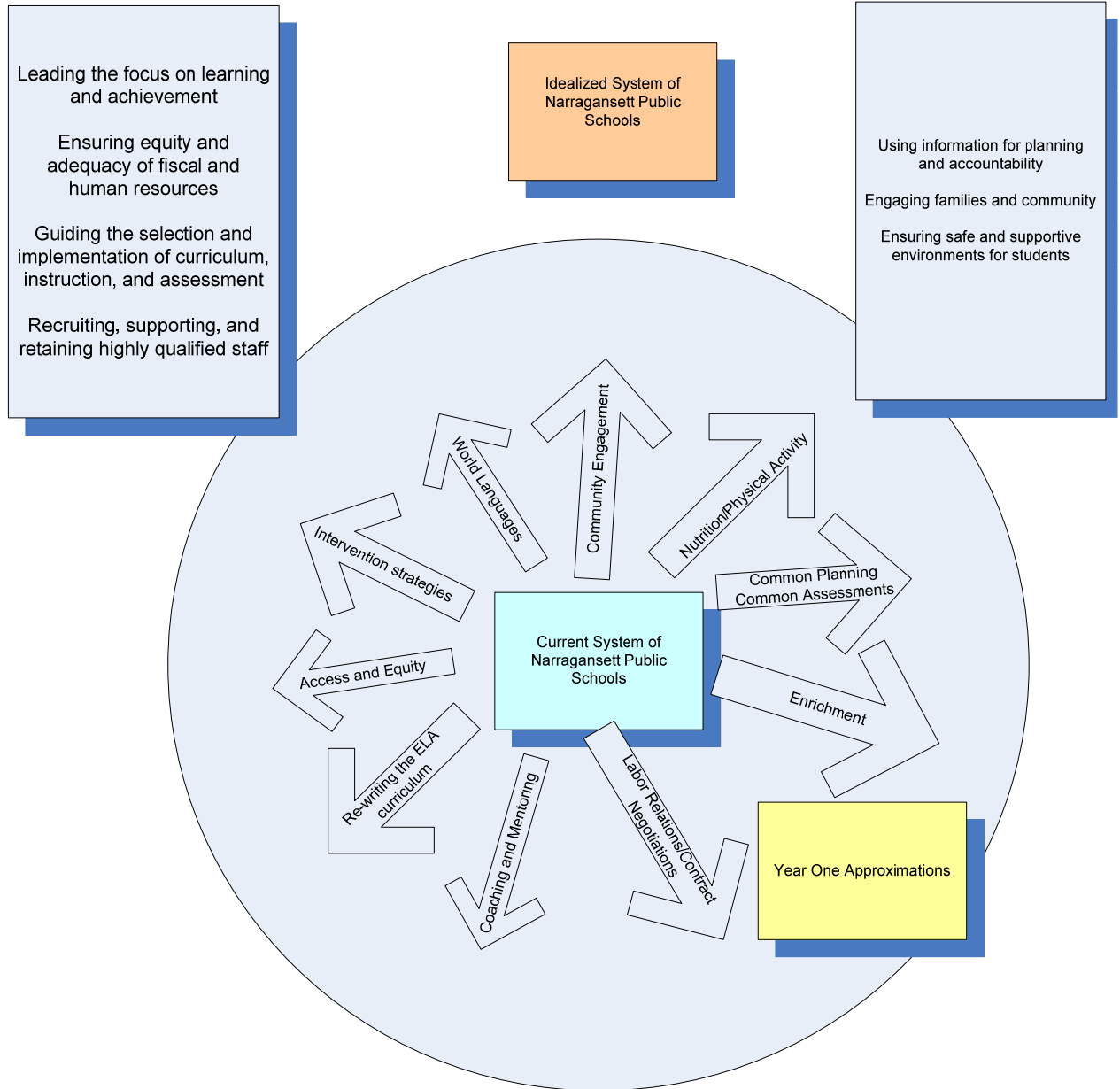
## APPENDICES

**Set of Interacting Challenges**



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Appendix B



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Design Work

The Narragansett School System Design Team met on April 3, 2008. This meeting was the first of three scheduled to occur April-May 2008. Twenty-two people participated in the session, which was held at the Narragansett Middle School. Three questions drove the discussion; responses to those questions follow.

**Question One: What is happening locally and nationally impacting Narragansett's context?**

*Responses are grouped according to like ideas; they are listed in no particular order.*

|  |   |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regulations and laws-IDEA, RTI, NCLB</li> <li>• Bill 30/50</li> <li>• New laws-Federal laws which impact us locally</li> <li>• Unfunded mandates such as No Child Left Behind</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accountability-An increase in accountability</li> <li>• Graduation by proficiency requirements</li> <li>• Change in special education requirements</li> <li>• Data driven decisions</li> <li>• Broad range of responsibilities for school districts-Expectations have changed</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity-The integration of diverse populations into the school setting</li> <li>• Changing family structure-Children are not always from two parent families</li> <li>• Increase in school responsibilities-Schools are burdened with a range of responsibilities due to the changing family structure</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing-Increase in the cost of, people that grew up here cannot afford to buy a home here</li> <li>• High percentage of rental properties-Over 50% of Narragansett's properties are rentals</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local initiatives around the building (writing, math)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business and industry impacts</li> <li>• Increased demands on graduates-Business and industry demand more from our graduates</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High parental involvement</li> <li>• Parental concerns</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School choice</li> <li>• Charter schools-Children are leaving the district</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demographics</li> <li>• Voices that are heard are those who are over-housed or on the water, those who are concerned about taxes</li> <li>• Senior population is increasing; the seniors are on a fixed</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction in the district</li> </ul>  |

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| <p>income and do not have children in the school system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retirees are moving back and “fixing up their cottages as their primary residence”</li> <li>• Declining enrollment in school-The birth rate is dropping and students are leaving the district</li> </ul> |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High per pupil cost for educating children</li> <li>• Special education cost-Cost of special education continues to rise</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wellness and health-We are required to have wellness plans</li> <li>• Declining health and wellness of children-Increase in the number of obese children</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National and local security issues-How do we make our schools more secure?</li> <li>• Security and safety awareness</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community connections-We enjoy good community connections, but need to increase the number of partnerships</li> <li>• Strong union representation, contracts and union impacts</li> <li>• Relationship between town council and school committee-Lack of trust and support, lack of understanding and cooperation</li> <li>• We are a small community with only three schools</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economy-There are increased burdens on families which is putting stress on kids (and adults)</li> <li>• The economy and dwindling money</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elections and politics-Local, state and national politics may bring unknown changes</li> <li>• Funding for education is a big question around the state; looking at the funding formula and state aid is changing</li> <li>• Pressure and question about consolidation around the state is always out there and impacts everyone (decisions, uncertainty); legislation being proposed, studies being done, lots of talk</li> <li>• International competition- Other countries are investing in their educational systems and we seem to be divesting ourselves</li> <li>• Politics</li> </ul> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Looking at the child as a whole, not just the educational needs</li> <li>• Addressing the high risk behaviors in children; high school seniors are the highest in the state for the use of alcohol however overall the district is about average for the state</li> <li>• High priority on athletics compared to arts and other activities</li> <li>• Part time work of high school students can be a priority over academics</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decrease in teaching candidates-The decrease in retirement benefits is changing the field of candidates for teaching jobs</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools not “green” enough</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child focused society changes</li> </ul>   |

**Question Two: How is the definition of success changing for Narragansett?**

*Responses listed in no particular order.*

| Moving from what success                       | Toward what success  |
|--|--|
| Most kids doing well                           | All kids doing well  |
| Isolated islands of excellence                 | Professional community of learners                           |
| Feeling like we are doing good                 | Showing evidence   |
| Good   | Exemplary- being a model                                     |
| Being responsive to parents                    | Engaging parents   |
| Having the pieces of enrichment programs       | Enriching all students and their needs                       |
| School community where respect for kids was ok | Respect for the test and showing proficiency and high scores |



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| Carnegie units proficiency                   | Proficiency based learning; business based and demonstration based   |
| Seat time in school                          | Transitioning to developmental rate of success for kids (could take more than 4 years in HS)   |
| Individual teachers teaching what they love  | Students having a more uniform experience; consistency across the grade levels; articulated curriculum (vertically and horizontally) |
| Very successful caring classroom instruction | Excellent classroom instructional practice   |
| Looking at data and collecting it            | Using data to improve instruction; acceptance of using data  |
| Strong use of technology for communication   | Technology to bring kids to the cutting edge   |
| Good relationship with union                 | Collaborative common goals and problem solving   |

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Design Work

**Question Three: If you could have what you want what would you have...**

*Responses are grouped according to like ideas; they are listed in no particular order.*

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools which encourage diversity in learning</li> <li>• Intergenerational schools-Students need to be involved with seniors and with very young children</li> <li>• Schools that encourage children to try new endeavors and learn from them</li> <li>• Excellence in instruction</li> <li>• A school system that prepares students for success in life</li> <li>• Safe schools which are optimally appointed for learning</li> <li>• Focus on the whole child/student</li> <li>• All faculty and staff and students want to come to school each day</li> <li>• A high school where students are encouraged to achieve high academic standards and success and where it is cool to be smart</li> <li>• Excellent educational programs</li> <li>• Safe schools</li> <li>• Strong school community</li> <li>• Safe, healthy learning environment</li> <li>• Best practice at all levels-Administration, technology, busing, scheduling</li> <li>• Open school setting where kids can learn to identify their gifts and passions at an early age and gear their individual learning styles to those gifts and passions</li> <li>• Facilities and services beyond the traditional educational functions-Schools are a focal point in the lives of</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated arts programs-Exposure to music, art, poetry</li> <li>• Demanded extra curricula involvement</li> <li>• Clubs-Drama, arts, school newspaper, foreign language, chess</li> <li>• Field trips</li> <li>• More varied courses at high school</li> <li>• Remote learning</li> <li>• Engaging curriculum</li> <li>• Enriching academic offerings</li> <li>• Expanded course offerings</li> <li>• Special education programs which meet all children's needs within our community</li> <li>• Training for all students in the hi tech professions of future</li> <li>• Real world applications in classrooms</li> <li>• Endless enrichment activities on a regular and consistent basis-Arts, music, athletics, technology, academic enrichment</li> <li>• Education and enrichment programs in place</li> <li>• After school programs</li> <li>• Complete curriculum that challenges students</li> <li>• Games to help engage students to be comfortable working with each other and leading the group</li> <li>• Greater emphasis on travel both within U.S. and abroad</li> <li>• Giving back would be emphasized from a very early age</li> </ul> |
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Narragansett School System  
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| <p>families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A caring environment that encourages all students to succeed</li> <li>• Child centered learning</li> <li>• A great place for kids to learn and adults to work</li> <li>• An attitude of continuous improvement by all constituent groups-An urgent desire to be better</li> <li>• Positive reactions to innovation in an environment where risk is encouraged</li> <li>• Acceptance of each person by each person</li> <li>• Schools that hire and embrace teachers who have passion about their fields</li> <li>• Passionate educators=educated students and inspired people</li> <li>• Maintenance of unique qualities that result in Narragansett greatness             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Individualized attention</li> <li>○ Small class size</li> <li>○ Diverse opportunities for all learners and people</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coursework would be a mix of the necessary basics of knowledge, the enriching opportunities and those very necessary skills needed for graduation</li> <li>• Consistent curriculum being followed</li> <li>• More opportunities e.g. physical activity and tutoring</li> <li>• Community based learning</li> <li>• Programs and program choices that will meet the needs of all learners; alternate programs for students that don't fit the mold; individualized support for social and academic needs</li> <li>• A sense of a working world in school where tasks are authentic, interest-based, process-based learning activities</li> <li>• A high school free of all temptations that will negatively impact kids (drugs, alcohol, negative peer pressure)</li> <li>• Individualized student centered learning</li> <li>• Elementary schools would focus on math and literacy skills</li> <li>• Best literacy practices</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sufficient funding that is agreed upon</li> <li>• Funding to continue to improve our schools</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased autonomy</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 21<sup>st</sup> century facilities</li> <li>• Better ventilation</li> <li>• Sun lit rooms</li> <li>• New elementary school</li> <li>• New high school</li> <li>• Town owned school buildings</li> <li>• Building maintenance</li> <li>• Track at high school resurfaced</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluative means of determining success, as opposed to a data-determined system</li> <li>• Change mind-set on testing for students from a negative to a positive</li> <li>• Outstanding scores</li> </ul>   |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air conditioning</li> <li>• Three schools that are close in proximity to one another with a seamless transition for students</li> <li>• Green schools-Solar powered</li> <li>• State of the art buildings with unlimited supplies and instructional materials</li> <li>• State of the art school buildings that are designed with teacher, student and community input</li> <li>• Comprehensive facilities that can be used year round by all</li> <li>• An auditorium</li> <li>• Lap top for each child</li> <li>• Smart boards in each round table room</li> </ul> |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retention of students defecting to private schools and out of district moves</li> <li>• Additional student base</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regionalization</li> <li>• A school system combined with South Kingstown</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proficient students</li> <li>• More students who value the educational process- Students who get enough sleep, do their homework and read for fun</li> <li>• Excellent students</li> <li>• Students who are high achievers</li> <li>• Children who are exposed to artists passionate about their work</li> <li>• Students who are able to learn at their own pace</li> <li>• Students compelled by his/her peers to be serious and prepared</li> <li>• Students use technology in a variety of ways</li> <li>• Students thinking and problem solving</li> </ul>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community participation at schools in off hours</li> <li>• Schools where the community takes pride in their students and accomplishments</li> <li>• Better relationship with town council</li> <li>• Community support of schools</li> <li>• Community involvement</li> <li>• Partnerships with universities, community groups, and other school systems</li> <li>• The community takes active role to help schools</li> <li>• Partnerships that expand opportunities for children, beyond our small town</li> <li>• Supportive community involved in new buildings</li> <li>• School, community and towns people working</li> </ul> |

Narragansett School System  
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every child is ready to learn, no emotional baggage</li> <li>• Kids work harder than anyone else in school because choice has made them engaged and motivated</li> </ul>   | <p>collaboratively</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationship with other businesses and the business community</li> <li>• Positive working relationship with schools and community</li> <li>• Community involvement/missionary work would play a big part in the education process</li> <li>• Community ideals-Schools would be integrated into the community such that it reflects community ideals</li> <li>• Community that trusted educators to make the decisions about what is best for kids</li> <li>• Community involvement in learning</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rotating school committee terms</li> <li>•</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parental involvement</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Later start for high school</li> <li>• Longer school days</li> <li>• Longer school year</li> <li>• No outside drink allowed in high school</li> <li>• Schools should be grades Pre-K through 14</li> <li>• Class size 9 to 12</li> <li>• Very small class size</li> <li>• Connection of our schools K-12 as a district</li> <li>• University type atmosphere where students are allowed to choose some studies</li> <li>• K-12 integrated programs</li> <li>• Harkness roundtable; small learning groups; 12 children</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less is more</li> </ul>  |

Narragansett School System  
Design Work

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| <p>to a round table working as a successful board of directors should to address issues posed by the teacher/coach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Year round school year; each child/family could make up their own yearly schedule based on their family’s schedule; kids could vacation at different times throughout the year</li> <li>• Cutting edge technology</li> <li>• Longer days to provide teachers and administrators opportunities to strengthen their practice and collaborate about student work, data</li> <li>• A K-12 system where each school is regarded as being equally important as the others</li> <li>• Inclusive practices</li> </ul>  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership that would allow for teachers to be trained in best literacy practice with teacher coaches</li> <li>• A leader to guide our young people to higher objectives as students, residents and individuals</li> <li>• Needed staffing for support of students</li> <li>• Time for teachers to share and collaborate about lessons and students</li> <li>• Teachers with skills needed to best meet needs of all students in classrooms</li> <li>• Teachers who use data well without it overshadowing their professional judgment</li> <li>• Teachers professional experience and knowledge would be sought out and respected when making important decisions about what and how to teach</li> <li>• PD that is keeping all staff highly proficient</li> <li>• Co-taught classrooms regular and special education</li> </ul> |  |

Narragansett School System  
Design Work

- Lots of differentiated instruction
- Teachers would integrate technology-More integration of technology
- Teachers use of technology-Technology is utilized in productive ways to enhance learning and communication
- True K-12 alignment
- A true professional learning community
- Professional learning communities that are actually solving real teaching and learning problems
- Time to meet and plan by subject area, grade level and across buildings
- More time for researched based learning
- Teachers continue to support technology and the use thereof
- Outstanding teachers who are high quality
- Dedicated teachers willing to accept change
- An outline for expectations in each discipline
- Teachers and staff would be allowed to integrate their personal strengths into the curriculum without losing track of its measurable goals
- In-service sabbatical for teachers to provide special programs/instruction in something they are passionate about
- During common planning time teachers plan instruction that they will all facilitate and analyze common assessments to inform future instruction and identify students who despite their best efforts are not learning to the desired level

Narragansett School System  
Design Work

- Well designed, research based interventions are used to accelerate students learning
- It is common to see different adults in classrooms all contributing to the learning of teachers and students- Administrators, peer coaches, volunteers
- Teachers use technology in a variety of ways
- Teachers know students well-Teachers know their families, the names of their pets, their aspirations, gaps in learning, strengths
- Teachers, administrators and other staff enjoy coming to school each day
- All teachers contribute to the continual review of programming for students
- Highly qualified faculty-One that is brought into the conversation with administration as to what is best practice
- Teachers who know students and are excited to plan ways to facilitate learning
- School administration and faculty that is committed to teaching students to think
- Staff that is open to new ideas and practices-Staff that would be excited to work together, improve teaching, improve student learning
- Staff committed to leading the charge to making our vision a reality
- An environment where all staff feels a responsibility for all students rather than just the ones in front of them
- Teachers and administrators working hand in hand to solve problems and understand children



## Narragansett School System Design Specifications

### Dedicated Learners

Comments-There is a strong relationship between *Dedicated Learners* and *Personalized and Equitable Instruction*. "If the instruction is in place, then the dedication will happen; students will value the educational process."

1. Caring environment that encourages all students to succeed
2. Students who value the educational process
3. Students work hard in school because choice has made them engaged and motivated
4. Students compelled by their peers to be serious and prepared
5. All students are encouraged to achieve high academic standards and success; schools where it is cool to be smart
6. Environment where enrichment/extra curricular offerings foster student enthusiasm for learning
7. Passionate educators=educated students and inspired people

### Flexible Structure

1. Equity for all students
2. A more flexible structure in order to connect with the community
3. School year organized into trimesters beginning at the end of August
  - o Vacations in November, December and March
  - o Second trimester being 4 days per week = cost savings for heat, transportation
4. High school day organized into 8 periods driven by student choice
  - o Students would choose 6 of the 8 courses
  - o Sports and extracurricular activities would be credit bearing and take place at end of day (3-4:00pm)
5. Longer days to provide teachers and administration opportunities to strengthen practice
  - o Authentic planning time for teachers
  - o Coordinated opportunities among and between buildings
  - o District-wide initiative-portfolio review by all

### Community Integrated Schools

1. A community integrated school system where the governing bodies contribute and schools take a leadership role in the community
2. Schools that are physically accessible to the general public
  - o Sidewalks, bike paths, streets
3. Comprehensive facilities that can be used year round by all
4. Teacher/business externships-teachers are encouraged to take sabbaticals and seek out others to come into schools
5. Students have opportunities for real world application through community

## Narragansett School System Design Specifications

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| <p>businesses</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Students are exposed to people from all cultural and ethnic backgrounds, age –ranges and life experiences</li> <li>7. Diversity is embraced and celebrated-diverse student body, business partnerships, real world experiences, work programs</li> <li>8. Community service is the mindset; giving back would be emphasized from a very early age</li> <li>9. Expanded partnerships between and among schools (within district and outside of district); community; higher-education; business; and the general public that result in additional opportunities for students</li> <li>10. Partnerships which result in work credit programs</li> <li>11. Volunteer and mentoring programs are encouraged, expanded upon and viewed as an integral part of the school system</li> <li>12. Excellence-parental involvement; community involvement; community pride; high achievers; technology; training; mentors</li> </ol>   |
| <p><b>Personalized and Equitable Instruction</b></p>  |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teachers use best instructional practices to meet the individual needs of all students</li> <li>2. Enriching, personalized offerings/activities geared toward identifying and utilizing students gifts, passions and learning styles</li> <li>3. Consistent curriculum being followed</li> <li>4. A sense of a working world in school where tasks are authentic and differentiated instruction is practiced by all teachers</li> <li>5. Small class sizes to facilitate differentiated instruction</li> <li>6. Coursework would be a mix of basic knowledge, enriching opportunities and necessary skills for graduation</li> <li>7. Enrichment programs in place</li> <li>8. Process based learning at one's own pace based on interests</li> <li>9. Inquiry based learning promoted and used</li> <li>10. Expanded choices available to meet needs of all students</li> <li>11. Opportunities for extra curricular participation</li> <li>12. Technology utilized to enhance student learning in all areas</li> <li>13. Articulated K-12 curriculum</li> </ol> |
| <p><b>Professional Community of Educators</b></p>   |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Research based, data driven decision-making and practices</li> <li>2. An <u>urgent</u> desire to be better</li> <li>3. Dedicated professionals willing to accept change</li> <li>4. Administrators, educators and professionals working interdependently for continuous improvement</li> </ol>  |

Narragansett School System  
 Design Work  
 Focus Group Notes

The Narragansett School System Design Team held 10 focus groups in the month of May 2008. Four questions drove the focus group discussions; responses to those questions follow.

**Question One: With regards to Narragansett School System, what works well?**

*Responses are grouped according to like ideas; they are listed in no particular order.*

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comfortable communicating with administration</li> <li>• Approachability of administration is strong (central office and schools)</li> <li>• Open administration, good communication</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lots of parent volunteers who feel comfortable</li> <li>• Partnership that school has with parents works well, even when you disagree</li> <li>• Many supportive parents</li> <li>• Good communication with parents</li> <li>• Supportive PTO</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual teachers are great</li> <li>• Great teachers make us strong</li> <li>• Teachers are allowed to use creativity to bring out the best in children</li> <li>• 1:1 TAs work well</li> <li>• Programs are well staffed</li> <li>• Staff is top notch</li> <li>• Good guidance support</li> <li>• Team teaching in grade 5</li> <li>• Support from staff for individual students</li> <li>• HS FL department outstanding</li> <li>• Support for students is good</li> <li>• Welcoming staff for parents</li> <li>• Collaborative staff, work well together</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anti-bullying program is great</li> <li>• Schoolnotes.com is great</li> <li>• NHS advisory works well, good connection for kids</li> <li>• Newsletter</li> <li>• Accelerated and AP classes provide challenge</li> <li>• Technical support</li> <li>• Reading department and programs</li> <li>• IMP program-different way of learning, connected to real world</li> <li>• SYSCO</li> <li>• FFA</li> <li>• Successful all day kindergarten program for past 5-6 years</li> </ul> |

Narragansett School System  
Design Work  
Focus Group Notes

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wonderful teachers</li> <li>• Easy access to teachers</li> <li>• Teachers are good, nice</li> <li>• Good to interact with the younger teachers</li> </ul>  |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cohesiveness is here</li> <li>• Warmth and sense of community is present in schools</li> <li>• Good energy and climate in NSS felt when you walk in</li> <li>• Warm school community</li> <li>• Everyone knows everybody</li> <li>• School climate is positive, students feel comfortable</li> <li>• Size of district works well in building camaraderie with students and teachers</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full inclusion in classrooms</li> <li>• Small class size</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportation system works well</li> <li>• Narragansett transportation system employees make a difference-they care</li> <li>• Personal touch of transportation is phenomenal</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discipline supports safety and ties to bullying, after school sports, student achievement</li> <li>• Discipline in HS is good, not feared; discipline is safe and comfortable</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bright, enthusiastic students</li> <li>• Students who feel safe and supported</li> <li>• Kids like teachers</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abundance of resources</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of kids going to sports</li> <li>• Sport activities are good</li> <li>• After school programming/sports</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Block schedule has worked well (except for when a student is absent)</li> <li>• Block schedule-old 6 day/5 day not a good idea</li> </ul>  |

Narragansett School System  
 Design Work  
 Focus Group Notes

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Band</li> <li>• Good selection of extra-curricular activities</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class choices</li> <li>• Lunch</li> <li>• Break time</li> <li>• 2 day schedule-block schedule</li> <li>• Offers lots of electives</li> </ul> |
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**Question Two: If you could have what you want in Narragansett School System, what would you have?**

*Responses are grouped according to like ideas; they are listed in no particular order.*

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passionate teachers</li> <li>• A common understanding among staff that this is our belief system and if you don't believe it, it can't work</li> <li>• School psychologist for counseling</li> <li>• Keep teachers who have experience and run great programs</li> <li>• No staff cuts</li> <li>• More social workers, more social work services</li> <li>• More time for math coach</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No union</li> <li>• Uniforms required</li> </ul>             |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Space for therapy rooms</li> <li>• New facility, up to date</li> <li>• Centralized approach in shared spaces</li> <li>• Improve gym floors, new floors, good bleachers</li> <li>• Better classrooms</li> <li>• Larger early childhood wing</li> <li>• Wings by grade level</li> <li>• Larger classrooms</li> <li>• Green buildings</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe environment</li> <li>• Security in buildings</li> </ul> |

Narragansett School System  
Design Work  
Focus Group Notes

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality air control and temperature control</li> <li>• Greenhouse/garden in every school</li> <li>• Proper ventilation</li> <li>• Air conditioning</li> <li>• More electrical outlets in rooms</li> <li>• Projector system in every room</li> <li>• Work room for parent volunteers</li> <li>• Larger rooms</li> <li>• Larger windows</li> <li>• Higher ceilings</li> <li>• Larger library space</li> <li>• Updated and sufficient numbers of materials in all classrooms</li> <li>• Fully equipped classrooms, state of the art</li> <li>• More space for independent work</li> </ul> |  |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differentiated instruction</li> <li>• An individualized game, individual learning</li> <li>• Educating of whole child</li> <li>• Have each child's needs met</li> <li>• Focus on all kids</li> <li>• Help prepare children to go to college</li> <li>• Broaden focus</li> <li>• Challenge students</li> <li>• Improve differentiated with PD</li> </ul> |

Narragansett School System  
Design Work  
Focus Group Notes

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A school department caring and inclusive of everyone's needs with the appropriate supports</li> <li>• Shared decision making, do not have to look up for answers</li> <li>• Ownership</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life skills added to program</li> <li>• Integrate athletics as a requirement</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look to best schools in country, mimic</li> <li>• Strive for excellence, not mediocrity</li> <li>• Don't just catch bottom</li> <li>• Look at schools in RI who are more forward thinking/challenging in science and other areas and replicate those</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More parents at upper grades</li> <li>• More parents involved on Special Education Advisory Council</li> <li>• Give more information to parents earlier</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seamless transition for school to home as kids work with their issues</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexibility in structure of school day</li> <li>• Value of recess and time to eat</li> <li>• New structure for lunch</li> <li>• Family environment for lunch</li> <li>• Better arrangements and supports for lunch room</li> <li>• Year-round schooling</li> <li>• Earlier start time</li> <li>• New school schedule</li> <li>• Kindergarten until 2:00, students too sleepy by 3:30</li> <li>• Longer school day, starting earlier</li> <li>• Students need more time to eat</li> <li>• Re-structure schools-5<sup>th</sup> grade back in elementary</li> <li>• District wide calendar</li> <li>• Longer lunch period</li> <li>• Building open beyond school day</li> </ul> |

Narragansett School System  
 Design Work  
 Focus Group Notes

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|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More study periods</li> <li>• Flexible day, allow kids to go outside</li> <li>• Current schedule too early for high school</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special education children get real diploma</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different math program</li> <li>• Consistency across grade levels</li> <li>• Reading centers</li> <li>• More tech and home economics</li> <li>• More diverse programs</li> <li>• Music center, science center, math center, reading center</li> <li>• More science in lower grades</li> <li>• Stronger music and art programs</li> <li>• For MS–full year content area SS/Sci for grades 5 &amp; 6</li> <li>• FL promoted at early age</li> <li>• Banking/finance program for girls, actually for everyone; incorporated yearly so kids know how to use credit cards</li> <li>• Career development/explanation of majors and professions</li> <li>• More course options at high school</li> <li>• More levels particularly in math and foreign languages, not just the top and regular</li> <li>• Bump up college prep so it is not so far below accelerated</li> <li>• More tech. courses</li> <li>• Get rid of portfolios and senior project</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less testing</li> <li>• Do something about excessive assessments</li> <li>• Use assessments properly, not overuse</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain discipline</li> </ul>  |



Narragansett School System  
 Design Work  
 Focus Group Notes

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enrichment clusters</li> <li>• Give enriched students equal access to remedial</li> <li>• Polar enrichment, top kids to get enrichment too</li> <li>• Integrate enrichment programs in school</li> <li>• Theater program</li> <li>• More variety in activities</li> <li>• Continuous focus on enrichment</li> <li>• Opportunity for extra curricular in all classrooms</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better use of email, communication</li> <li>• Get email addresses</li> </ul>            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More time</li> <li>• Time was not a constraint</li> <li>• Too many interrupted chunks of time</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better interface between three schools</li> <li>• K-12 campus system for all</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scholarship program to support student financial aid for lower class students who want to go to special programs</li> </ul>   |  |

Narragansett School System  
 Design Work  
 Focus Group Notes

**Question Three: What would make Narragansett the “go to” school system?**

*Responses are grouped according to like ideas; they are listed in no particular order.*

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology advanced</li> <li>• Accelerated math in 7<sup>th</sup> &amp; 8<sup>th</sup> grade</li> <li>• Accelerated classes at all levels, but especially MS</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nice facilities, bigger and better buildings</li> <li>• More bathrooms</li> <li>• Improved physical buildings</li> <li>• Use proper “green” for facilities</li> <li>• A good looking school</li> <li>• Outdoor classrooms</li> </ul>                             |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More equipment for sports</li> <li>• All activities need more support e.g. theater</li> <li>• Stronger theater program</li> <li>• Great sports</li> <li>• More emphasis on enrichment</li> <li>• Providing enrichment like FL</li> <li>• Build athletics and after school programs</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High graduation rate</li> <li>• Students being accepted to post secondary schools</li> <li>• Colleges that look to NSD for recruits</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It’s a nice community/surroundings</li> <li>• Our close-knit community is an asset, but it would be good if we were a little bigger</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low tuition</li> <li>• Small class size</li> <li>• Flexible scheduling which helps students access outside resources/mentors and helps teachers be more flexible to work with students</li> <li>• Low student, teacher ratio</li> <li>• Higher scores</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive teachers who are here</li> <li>• Grant writer on staff dedicated to bring money into district</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address problems as soon as students have them, do not wait</li> <li>• The performance of students will make us the go to system</li> </ul>  |

Narragansett School System  
 Design Work  
 Focus Group Notes

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requiring progress reports on a timely basis and consistently. Make sure they are updated frequently.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide programs for community that brings community into the schools</li> <li>• More tie in to the community-business and university</li> <li>• Community service projects that will benefit the town</li> <li>• Think beyond our town, philanthropic efforts together</li> <li>• A real partnership and link between high school and universities</li> <li>• Capitalize on willing community that is cohesive and supportive</li> <li>• Reach out to businesses/community partnerships for real life experiences to learn</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senior posters all over town was a great way to link and inform</li> <li>• More active publicizing of our great efforts</li> <li>• Heightened representation of the accomplishments of students</li> <li>• If other towns saw us raise our standards</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have kids think bigger</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share resources and demonstrate that ability</li> <li>• Generate cash flow</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenging curriculum</li> <li>• Having other unified special education program with no distinction between regular and special education</li> <li>• Add culture and life learning skills to curriculum</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leave no child behind</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take parent engagement piece up a notch by using our great resources to the extent possible</li> <li>• Have parents attend therapy sessions or classroom lessons so they can bring same structure home</li> </ul>   |   |

Narragansett School System  
Design Work  
Focus Group Notes

**Question Four: How would you measure success?**

*Responses are grouped according to like ideas; they are listed in no particular order.*

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achievement of students on an individual basis</li> <li>• By a teacher allowing individual's needs to be met</li> <li>• More than follow the law and not having lawsuits, understanding that all kids are taken for where they are and make them stretch, looks different for all kids in a positive direction</li> <li>• Individual growth of child, a small achievement e.g. better reader, better writer</li> <li>• Having each child involved in activities outside of academics, social</li> <li>• Challenge our kids, push them to grow</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through love and concern displayed and demonstrated</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having families and community value and trust the schools as an asset of the town and community</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minute and global-state testing improvement for one year to another</li> <li>• SAT scores and college acceptance rate for our senior class, type of colleges</li> </ul>                              |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are people doing at 25?</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Happy child who does his homework at end of day</li> <li>• Happy child</li> <li>• A child wanting to be a lifelong learner</li> <li>• Good citizenship, whole child, more than just tests</li> </ul> |