

**JOINT MEETING
CITY COUNCIL
AND
SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**Monday, January 26, 2009 – 7:00 PM
O'Maley Middle School Library**

AGENDA

**Mayor's Overview of 2010 budget
Potential 9(C) Cuts and Implications
North Shore Voke and Charter Discussion
Rezoning Fuller School
Report on Consolidation Effort
Use of School Buildings for Voting**

**Bruce Tobey, Council President
Greg Verga, School Committee Chairman**

The Gloucester Public Schools

Our mission is for all students to be engaged, successful, lifelong learners

To the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and
the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

The Proposed Gloucester Community Arts Charter School

Comments on behalf of the Gloucester Public Schools

Submitted by Christopher Farmer, Superintendent of Schools

January, 2009

**The Gloucester Public Schools
6 School House Road
Gloucester
MA 01930**

978-282-3060

Executive Summary

The Gloucester School Committee has a record of supporting thoughtful, research-based innovation and parental choice. In considering the application for the establishment of the proposed Gloucester Community Arts Charter School the School Committee has reviewed both the case made for the establishment of the school and the probable impact on the educational opportunities which would be available to Gloucester students not attending the charter school. In undertaking this review, the School Committee has been mindful of the financial challenges which currently face the nation, the Commonwealth and its constituent municipalities, as well as the implications of the Governor's Readiness project and his review of the funding of public schools.

The School Committee has concluded that the probable impact of the establishment of the proposed charter school on the educational opportunity which could be afforded to children attending other schools outweighs any merits associated with the charter school.

In reviewing the philosophy and the approach to teaching and learning proposed in the application, the district finds little that is not already addressed by the district's curriculum policy statement *Entitlement and Achievement*, or by programs introduced by the district and its schools over the past several years. As the report which follows demonstrates, the district has introduced programs in Literacy, Mathematics, Science, the Arts, and in the area of social and Emotional Intelligence; in the assessment and reporting student progress; often in collaboration with a wide range of organizations.

The district recognizes that families are the primary educators of their children, and has taken steps to ensure that a system of intra-district School Choice is available to all families insofar as resources will allow.

Between FY03 and FY04 Chapter 70 aid was reduced by over \$1.3m. This year is the first year since FY02 that the per pupil aid has increased beyond that of FY02, without consideration of inflation. The latest published per pupil expenditures (FY07) show Gloucester spending \$862 per student less than the state average. Since FY03 the district has lost 77 teachers, all of its librarians and library aides in the elementary and middle schools, and six senior management positions. The World Languages program at the middle school has been eliminated, and its Physical Education and Health Education programs merged. Athletics participation fees have increased from \$30 to \$302 per season, and the district now charges 7th and 8th Graders to ride the bus to school. In 2007 we closed our largest elementary school and redistricted approximately 500 students.

The \$2.4m loss in municipal aid consequent upon the establishment of the proposed charter school will have serious consequences. The district will probably have to reduce the number of middle school classes by one third, and combine two of the small neighborhood elementary schools and transfer them to the site which was closed in 2007. The consequences of such further unnecessary large-scale disruption for students, families and staff would be severe.

In the context of Gloucester's recent experience in coping with a budget which a 2007 Educational Management Audit report describes as "lacking the resources necessary to provide adequate educational programs due to budgetary restrictions", the financial uncertainty which faces the nation, the Commonwealth and its municipalities, and the implications of the Governor's Readiness project, the School Committee respectfully requests the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education not to approve the Gloucester Community Arts Charter School application.

Christopher Farmer
January 2008

The Gloucester Public School District's Comments

1. The Structure Of The Report

The report confirms the position of the Gloucester School Committee (Annex I) and addresses the following issues:

- The statement of need for the proposed school and the innovations proposed in the charter application
- The probable impact of the establishment of the charter school on the educational opportunities which will subsequently be available to children attending the Gloucester Public Schools
- The application in the current financial and legislative context
- The evidence of community support for the proposed school
- Other evidence of support for the proposed school
- The extent to which assertions made by the application are based on valid or reliable data

Throughout the report statements made in the charter school application or set out in bold italics, to which a response is made below.

2. The Case For Need And Innovation

2.1 Innovation

"A charter school will bring innovation that the district desperately needs – and has shunned. Attempts by parents, teachers, volunteers and others actively advocating for change have largely fallen on deaf ears." (Page 5)

Response:

1. The proposal does not provide any data to support the assertion that the district has shunned innovation.
2. Over the past several years, and in the context of inadequate funding, the district has introduced new programs in Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Social and Emotional intelligence, and rebuilt or extended Arts programs. This work has been supported by the Gloucester Education and the Gloucester Marine Heritage Center. Examples of these innovations are listed below:

The Arts

- The re-establishment of a high quality Music program at the high school.
- In collaboration with the Gloucester Education Foundation, the establishment of string instrumental instruction and a ballroom dancing program in the elementary schools, and the establishment of an annual event to celebrate student achievement in the visual and performing arts.
- Collaboration with Cape Ann Television in TV photography and editing.

Mathematics

- Introduction of the *Investigations* program in the elementary schools.
- Introduction of a Grade 7 Algebra class in the middle school.
- Introduction of the Interactive Mathematics Program at the high school.

Literacy

- Introduction of the *Foundations* program (an element of the charter school application), and the establishment of a district wide goal that 90% of students will read with comprehension at or above grade level by 2010.
- Leveled book rooms have been introduced K-8.
- Literacy circles and writing workshop approaches are common teaching methodologies.

Assessment

- Diagnostic Assessment in Literacy and Mathematics (DIBELS, GRADE, GMADE) as the basis of differentiated instruction and a three-tier intervention program in literacy.
- Introduction of a standards-based mathematics report card.

Social and Emotional Intelligence

- The Responsive Classroom program (an element of the charter school application) is being introduced across the elementary schools as resources allow. At the present time four of the five schools are involved, and the participation of the fifth is planned.

Science

- Remote weather stations have been established at all schools.
- A collaborative program with the Gloucester Maritime Heritage Center, which provides hand-on maritime studies activities for 3rd and 4th graders, is being extended to all elementary schools this year. We are optimistic that a grant from NOAA will enable the program to be extended across grades 3 through 8.
- With the help of the Gloucester Education Foundation the following programs have been introduced:
 - Robotics – after school and as a regular class at the high school, as an extended day program at the middle school, and in Grade 5 across the elementary schools.]
 - A field study program involving a variety of outdoor learning experiences for all students in Grades 2 through 6.
 - With the support of a \$1m dollar grant a collaborative program with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology is providing professional development for teachers, opportunity to develop hands-on units of study at the middle school based on MIT's Edgerton center initiatives, and a two-week summer program for middle school students based at MIT and the Gloucester Maritime Heritage Center. Recent development topics include digital mapping and navigation, renewable energy and maritime studies.

- An engineering/technology resource center is under development at the middle school.

Student Support And Special Education

- A grant supported program to identify and provide support for students with mental health issues.
- A special education class for students with literacy deficits has been established.

Partnerships

- A recent survey of parents indicates that 85% of respondents report that they are engaged with their child's school.
- The district collaborates with:

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology	Salem State University
The North Shore Community College	Action Inc.
Pathways for Children	The Gloucester Maritime Heritage Center
The Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce	Massachusetts Audubon Society
The Gloucester Education Foundation	The Gloucester School Connection
The Gloucester Fishermen's Athletic Association	

These developments and innovations which have been achieved *despite* the unfavorable financial climate, which is summarized in Section 4 below.

The charter school "will create an engaging teaching and learning environment where young children and adolescents will have the opportunity to explore their own questions, think about and work on contemporary issues and gain skills and knowledge to tackle challenging academic tasks." (Page 5)

Response:

There is little in the educational philosophy of the proposed charter school that does not reflect the district's curriculum policy statement, "Entitlement and Achievement," a relevant extract of which is at Annex II. Notable areas of correspondence are underscored.

"The Gloucester School District has an explicit policy of keeping the curriculum at all elementary schools as similar as possible. While there is merit to this goal in some respects, it comes at the cost of innovation." (Page 5)

Response:

This is factually incorrect, as there is no explicit policy of keeping the curriculum at all elementary schools as similar as possible.

The district has supported schools in aligning the curriculum with state frameworks, as confirmed by the Educational management Audit report of 2007, by providing, in consultation with the schools, research-based programs supported by professional development in Mathematics (*Investigations*), Literacy (*Fundations*) and Science across the elementary schools. The scheduling of the curriculum is the responsibility of the schools, all of which provide Physical Education, Art and Music.

The charter school proposal provides no data to support the assertion that the district's approach has reduced innovation.

It may be argued that the introduction of MCAS and the requirements of the No Child Left Behind legislation has tended to focus attention on the Mathematics, Language Arts and Science in all schools and school districts.

"Schools that incorporate music, art, drama, dance and creative writing into the basic curriculum have found that teaching the arts has a significant effect on overall success in school....."

Response:

Teachers who spoke at the public hearing held in Gloucester on December 11, 2008 provided ample evidence of the integration of the arts into the general curriculum.

2.2 Evidence Of Need

"Many parents in Gloucester have serious concerns about the quality of education in the city. For years O'Maley Middle School has been the focus of their concerns. It is a school that some students often only survive, not where they thrive. In recent years parents have started to have concerns about the elementary grades as well." (Page 3)

Response:

The MCAS data presented in the proposal is outdated, and focuses on *classes* rather than *cohorts*. A picture of progress emerges if cohorts are followed through the elementary and middle schools.

As a former Principal of one of the best middle schools in California, I well understand that it is normal for parents, particularly those who have not previously nurtured children through adolescence, to be anxious about the transfer to middle school.

The current middle school enrollment trend is for *fewer* families to send their children to neighboring districts. At the present time there are 37, 21, and 13 students choiced-out in Grades Eight, Seven and Six respectively.

Fifty per cent of schools across the state are in some form of difficulty with regard to the making of Adequate Yearly Progress as compared with seventy-five percent of middle schools. The disparity has more to do with the way the AYP system is set up, especially as it relates to sub-group performance, than with the performance of the schools.

"Enrollment data reflects the situation as well. Families are opting out of Gloucester Public Schools." (Page 3)

Response:

The statement fails to acknowledge the real nature of School Choice. Gloucester was reducing the net outflow of students until the sharp reduction in state aid in FY03. Over 91% of students who have choiced-out of Gloucester currently attend schools in the neighboring districts of Rockport and Manchester-Essex. As the table below shows, these districts typically spend far more per student than Gloucester is able to do. Parents understand that these higher spending districts are able to provide a wider range of services, and some make their choices according. Two surveys of

families who have chosen to send their children to schools in neighboring districts confirm that one of these their interests is that their children will be educated alongside with others from similar family backgrounds.

Per Pupil Expenditures And School Choice: FY02-FY07

	FY02	FY03	FY04	FY05	All Funds	
					FY06	FY07
Gloucester	7,759	7,420	7,877	9,986	10,351	10,996
Manchester-Essex	9,233	10,513	10,649	11,905	12,436	12,772
Rockport	8,467	8,290	8,572	10,131	11,018	12,099
State	8,005	8,273	8,591	10,626.0	11,209	11,858

Gloucester	Choice Out Net	37	58	67	90	125	137
Man.-Essex	Choice In Net	69	60	89	113	113	113
Rockport	Choice In Net	-18	6	5	14	45	69

Source: DESE

It should be noted that the School Committee revised its elementary school admissions policy twice in recent years with the specific aim of ensuring that intra-district School Choice is available to all Gloucester families insofar as resources allow.

"In 2007, students in every grade chose other school options, with the largest number lost between 5th and 6th Grade...." (Page 30)

Response:

The 2008 data is as follows:

Grade	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
Students	1	9	13	17	10	10	13	21	37	31	17	10	22	211

The number of students choosing-out from the middle school is actually falling, due to changing perceptions of the middle school thanks to the efforts of the new Principal and his staff. The larger numbers in Grades 3 and 2 are attributable to difficulties associated with the closure of the district's largest elementary school in the summer of 2007, and diocesan investment in the St. Ann's School, which allowed the latter to reduce its fees.

One of the aims of the proponents of the proposed charter school as stated in public meetings, is to bring back to Gloucester children who are attending schools in neighboring districts. While that is a worthy aim, during a discussion with the School Committee and the City Council, the proposers did not understand that under the current funding arrangements this would simply compound the financial difficulties created by the establishment of the charter school which are outlined in Section 3 below. If three-quarters of the current Kindergarten through 8th Grade students attending schools in Rockport and Manchester-Essex enrolled at the proposed charter school, the City would lose approximately \$457,000 in municipal aid without losing a single student, or closing a single class.

".....there were over 2,000 kids aged five and under when the 2000 Census was taken, but only 1,700 of them are still in Gloucester according to the 2008 Students Attending School Report." That is a 20% decline." (Page 4)

Response:

The statement is factually incorrect. A drop from 2,000 to 1,700 is a 15% decline, not 20%.

The authors of the charter school proposal provide no analysis to substantiate a causal connection between the census data and the quality of Gloucester's schools. There are other factors, such as the cost of housing in Gloucester, which may explain the disparity. There is a statewide reduction in the number of students.

"Last year, a local parochial school doubled in size as families from Gloucester's schools left the public system." (Page 4)

Response:

The charter school proposal ignores the fact that the district had to close its largest elementary school in the summer of 2007 in order to balance the operating budget. Many of the families who chose to transfer to the parochial school were adversely impacted by redistricting and crowding at Beeman Memorial Elementary School.

The charter school proposal ignores the fact that the Catholic Diocese injected large sums of revenue and capital to St. Ann's School, which made it possible for the school to reduce its fees significantly and plan improved facilities.

2.2 Resources

"Lack of funding is often stated as the reason for the district's poor performance." (Page 4)

Response:

The district's per pupil spending levels are consistently well below the state average. The latest published all expenditures data shows Gloucester spending \$862 below the state average. The Educational Management Audit report of 2007 concluded that, "The district leadership team comprised of central administrators and principals lacked the resources necessary to provide adequate educational programs due to budgetary restrictions."

Gloucester's student body is less resource-intensive than that found in many other districts because it is a comparatively homogenous group...." (Page 4)

This statement is factually incorrect. A review of the percentages of students from low-income families, or who have special needs, or are designated as Limited English Proficient contradicts the assertion.

District	Grades	Schools	% Low Income	% SPED	%LEP	\$/Student
Danvers	Pk-12	7	6.5	15.8	0.7	10,556
Dartmouth	PK-12	5	14.5	14.2	1.5	9,284
Dennis-Yarmouth	PK-12	7	30.6	16.4	3.7	11,726
Dracut	PK-12	7	14.1	11.1	1.6	8,536
Eastham	K-5	1	18.5	15.5	0.4	K-5 district
Falmouth	PK-12	7	18.1	15.9	0.9	12,147
Melrose	PK-12	8	11.5	17.4	1.5	9,932
Stoughton	PK-12	7	22.3	15.4	3.9	10,282
Whitman-Hanson	PK-12	7	11.7	15.4	0.3	9,464
Gloucester	PK-12	7	26.2	21.0	2.1	10,996
Comparator Mean			16.4	15.2	1.6	10,241
Comparator Range			6.5-30.6	11.1-21.0	0.3-3.9	

Comparator districts selection based on grade structure, district wealth, and enrollment (DESE FY07)

3. The Impact Of The Proposed Charter School On Opportunities For The General Population.

At the conclusion of transitional funding arrangements, state aid to the City of Gloucester will reduce by approximately \$2.4m at current prices.

The financial situation over the past seven years is summarized below:

Gloucester School Committee Budget, Chapter 70 Aid, and Per Pupil Expenditure - all data in \$s

FY	School Budget	Per Student	Ch 70 Aid	Per Student	Enrollment
2002	31,691,667	7802	6,554,127	1614	4,062
2003	31,501,000	7396	6,554,127	1539	4,259
2004	30,247,112	7547	5,243,302	1308	4,008
2005	31,551,000	7599	5,243,302	1263	4,152
2006	32,024,411	7927	5,446,302	1348	4,040
2007	33,264,899	8325	5,678,696	1421	3,996
2008	35,071,881	8886	6,019,080	1525	3,947

The sharp fall in Chapter 70 aid and the School Committee's operating budget between FY03 and FY04 has resulted in far reaching reductions in services. These include but are not limited to;

- a district-wide loss of 77 teaching positions and 6 senior administrative positions
- the loss of all librarian and library aide positions in the elementary schools and the middle school

- the closure of the World Languages program and the merger of Health and Physical Education programs at the middle school
- the closure of the Fuller Elementary School and the subsequent redistricting of approximately 500 students in the summer of 2007
- a sharp reduction in per pupil expenditure on "ordinary"
- a tenfold increase in athletics participation fees and the introduction of bus fees for 7th and 8th grade students.

An analysis of the impact of a reduction in the order of \$2.4m indicates that if the proposed charter school established the district would need to:

- reduce the number of classes at the middle school by one third from a planned 12 classes per grade level to 8 classes per grade level; and
- combine two of the smaller neighborhood elementary schools and combine them as a three rather than four class per grade level school on the Fuller Elementary School site; and
- thereby break up the system of small neighborhood schools which the district has been endeavoring to establish under its *Plan For Effective Learning Communities*; and
- make further reductions in administrative support for schools, and the school transport and athletics programs

While the authors of the charter school application have made public claim that they can show how the \$2.4m reduction in state aid without significant impact on the remaining schools, they have yet to do so.

The establishment of a charter school would have non-financial implications for the district's policy of establishing, within the resources available, a system of neighborhood schools. Children living close to the charter school who did not gain admission to the charter school would be forced to travel to an out-of-area school.

Gloucester is only marginally larger than the 30,000 population threshold required for a charter school. It is the view of the district that charter schools do not sit well in small districts, which have neither the infrastructure nor the budget to absorb a charter school under the current funding arrangements. If charter schools are to be centers of innovation and provide school choice for families, they should be located in districts of a size capable of absorbing them and transferring newly identified good practice to other schools.

The district respectfully suggests that charter schools should be funded "off-the-top" of the Chapter 70 budget, thus making all districts responsible in part for the funding of centers of innovation.

4. The Proposed Charter School In The Current Context

The financial difficulties at the national, state, and district level are well known. It is the contention of the district that to support additional charter schools when current funding levels are inadequate would be unreasonable, and harm unnecessarily the educational opportunities of children not attending the charter school. The district respectfully suggests that a moratorium on the establishment of additional charter schools be established until the general financial climate is positive, the funding arrangements for public schools in general and charter schools in particular have been reviewed, and that the relationship between the proposed Readiness Schools and Charter Schools has been clarified.

5. Evidence of Community Support

It was notable that, at the public hearing held in Gloucester on December 11, 2009 few people other than those who are directly involved with the charter school application spoke in its support. The DESE representatives graciously extended the hearing by 90 minutes. Nevertheless many people who were there to express their concerns about the proposed charter school were unable to do so.

Page 30 of the charter school application refers to a petition, which, it is claimed, carried 455 signatures at the time the application was made. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has not been able to provide the district with a copy of the petition as it appears not to have a copy in its possession. It is difficult to understand what credence can be given to a document which is referenced in the application but not available to the district.

6. Other Evidence Of Support

The charter school application includes letters of support from a variety of individuals. Conversations with a number of the individuals makes it clear that their letters of support were generated by an interest in the concept of the charter school without any knowledge of the probably impact of the establishment of the charter school.

Letters of support have subsequently been withdrawn by:

- Councilor Jacqueline Hardy
- James Caviston – President of the Board of Directors of the Society for the Encouragement of the Arts (seARTS)
- Dr. Mario Borunda – Dean of the School of Education, Lesley University

Dr Helena Sturnick – President of Montserrat College of Art is reviewing the college’s position.

Discussion with Gordon Baird and Rick Ciolino, listed as having agreed to serve on the board of trustees of the proposed charter school, and with Will Hunt, Music Director at Blackburn Performing Arts, indicated that none had knowledge of, or given thought to the impact of the charter school on the opportunities available to other children attending Gloucester’s schools.

7. The Validity And Reliability Of The Application’s Data

The district regrets that the charter school application includes many statements which are without foundation or misconstrue data to support its argument. The application misrepresents the approach of the district to innovation, misrepresents MCAS data and the status of the middle school. It also misrepresents the School Choice issue, the diversity of the student body, the resources available to our schools and the creativity of our teachers

8. Conclusion

The Gloucester School Committee respectfully requests that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education not approve the Gloucester Community Arts Charter School application. We further ask that the Board establish a moratorium on the approval of new charter schools until the general financial climate has improved, and the funding of charter schools and their relationship to the proposed Readiness Schools have been reviewed.

School Committee Resolution: November 11, 2008

Proposed Gloucester Community Arts Charter School

Upon a motion by Mayor Kirk, seconded by Ms. Teixeira, it was VOTED unanimously to move that the school committee:

- (a) supports thoughtful, research-based innovation and parental choice, but is not able to support the proposed Gloucester Arts Charter School under the current funding arrangements;
- (b) requests the Board of Education to institute a statewide review of the effectiveness of charter schools;
- (c) requests the governor to impose a moratorium on new charter schools until the local aid picture is clearer and until such time as the education funding review, which is part of the Readiness Project, is complete;
- (d) requests that the governor clarify the relationship between charter schools and the proposed Readiness Schools; and
- (e) requests that the Governor mandates his education finance commission to consider funding charter schools by taking the costs out of the Chapter 70 foundation budget as a whole, and thus apportioning costs among all districts.

Confirmed at the meeting of the School Committee held on December 3, 2008

THE GLOUCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Gloucester, Massachusetts

Entitlement and Achievement
A Policy for the School Curriculum

Adopted by the School Committee; June 15, 2006

*Our mission is for all students in the
Gloucester Public Schools to be successful, engaged, lifelong learners.*

Extracts Relevant To The Charter School Application

Entitlement and Achievement

A Policy for the School Curriculum

3. Curriculum Principles

3.1 The School Committee believes that all students are entitled to a curriculum which is characterized by breadth, balance, coherence, relevance, rigor, differentiation, and progression. These terms are commonly used in descriptions of a desirable curriculum. Their meanings, however, are not universally agreed. The School Committee will attach the following meanings to these terms:

3.1.1 Breadth

A broad curriculum will bring pupils into contact with the elements of learning (knowledge, concepts, skills, and attitudes) and the areas of learning and experience (aesthetic/creative, human and social, linguistic and literary, mathematical, moral, physical, scientific, and technological).

3.1.2 Balance

A balanced curriculum will ensure that each area of learning and experience will be given appropriate attention in relation to the others and to the curriculum as a whole.

3.1.3 Coherence

A coherent curriculum will be planned as a whole and will embrace the different areas of learning and experience, so that these do not appear as discrete and unconnected, but as contributing to overall progress and achievement.

3.1.4 Relevance

A relevant curriculum will take account of the previous learning of pupils, their readiness for new experience, and relate to the daily lives of students and their community.

3.1.5 Differentiation

The curriculum has to satisfy two seemingly contrary requirements. On the one hand, it has to reflect the broad aims of education which hold good for all children, whatever their capabilities, and whatever the schools they attend. On the other hand, it has to allow for differences between children, even of the same age and within the same class. Differentiation involves

matching tasks to pupils, balancing challenge with likelihood of success for each pupil across the ability range. It implies a need for purposeful flexibility in teaching approaches, classroom organization, and assessment methods.

Differentiated instruction also recognizes that there are several forms of intelligence, that students have different learning styles, and may need alternative ways of demonstrating what they know, understand and can do.

3.1.6 Rigor

The curriculum should provide an appropriately challenging curriculum for all students, with close attention paid to the development of critical thinking and problem solving skills, and students' personal accountability for their work.

3.1.7 Progression

This is achieved if the curriculum is organized so that pupils' skills, knowledge, and concepts are extended in a systemic way without unnecessary repetition or sharp changes in the levels of achievement expected of them.

3.2 Clearly, the weighting of the above characteristics in the curriculum will need to vary with the age, needs, abilities, and aptitudes of individual children.

3.3 The School Committee believes that all students, including those with special educational needs, should be entitled to experience a curriculum which over the period of compulsory education develops the knowledge, competencies and qualities needed by an individual who will be successful contributor to their family, their place of work, and their community.

The knowledge, competencies and qualities summarized below reflect essential and transferable "academic" knowledge, interpersonal skills, and work habits.

3.3.1 to speak, read, write, and communicate effectively in the English language;

3.3.2 to have an understanding of a modern language other than English and the culture associated with it;

3.3.3 to understand number, calculate accurately, and use the language and apply the concepts of mathematics;

3.3.4 to understand and use methods of scientific inquiry;

- 3.3.5 to be aware of the applications and implications of science and technology for the individual, society, and the environment;
- 3.3.6 to demonstrate an understanding of the major influences on the development of our culture and society, and the place of the individual within it including our local community.
- 3.3.7 to demonstrate an awareness and understanding of the variety of life, physical environments and resources, and humankind's role in their development and conservation;
- 3.3.8 to demonstrate aesthetic awareness, and creative and artistic skills;
- 3.3.9 to develop physical fitness and wellness skills, and enjoy opportunities offered by recreation and leisure to pursue a healthy and active lifestyle;
- 3.3.10 to be able to use information technology and understand its role in our lives;
- 3.3.11 to apply knowledge and skills in the planning, execution, and evaluation of tasks and activities;
- 3.3.12 to be enterprising and self-sufficient, and take responsibility for ones own actions;
- 3.3.13 to be able to apply the knowledge and skills of social and emotional intelligence that form the basis of effective personal, social, and working relationships;
- 3.3.14 to have acquired the study habits and research skills to be able to become an independent life-long learner, and pursue educational and career opportunities beyond school;
- 3.3.15 to have an informed perspective about the role of the individual in the community, society, and the world of work, sufficient to be able to contribute to the development of society and participate in it.
- 3.3.16 to have a basis from which to make informed and realistic choices and decisions at all stages;
- 3.3.17 to exhibit a set of personal values based on honesty and trust, tolerance, understanding, caring, and respect for others ;
- 3.3.18 to have an appreciation of the spiritual dimension of human existence in its broadest non-religious sense, including transcendent, transfigurative and transformative experiences which deepen our understanding of ourselves and the world about us;
- 3.3.19 to appreciate and value the plural, multi-cultural, and multi-faith nature of society;

3.3.20 to appreciate the need to advocate the basic rights of others, particularly those who are not well placed to promote their own needs;

3.3.21 to understand the causes of inequality of opportunity and treatment afforded to many people on account of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social class or disability, and the need to remove such discrimination; and

4. Teaching and Learning

The processes of teaching and learning are as significant as curriculum content in determining students' progress and achievement. With this in mind the School Committee has the following expectations with regard to the development of instruction with the aim that *all* students will reach their fullest potential in terms of their academic, physical, social and emotional development.

The School Committee expects that schools and their staff will work towards the following dimensions of good practice in teaching and learning.

4.1 Culture:

The Gloucester school community, consisting of students, staff, parents and community members establish, encourage and maintain a safe, collaborative and inclusive culture.

Key Indicators:

- Members work collaboratively towards the shared vision of best practice.
- Educators are directly involved with building strong relationships with students and their families, and schools are organized to support these relationships.

4.2 Learning Communities:

Learning communities enhance the capacity of schools to improve student achievement. They are characterized by shared purpose, collaborative activity and collective responsibility.

Key Indicators:

- Regular opportunities for collaboration within and between subject areas and for job-embedded professional development are actively supported within each school.
- Distributive leadership is practiced in order to build capacity for

creating and sustaining a learning community in which all voices are heard and every member feels valued, respected and safe in contributing their ideas, knowledge and experience.

- Leadership focuses on improving student achievement and provides the guiding principles for continuous adult constructivist learning and decision-making. There is a collective responsibility to recognize the successes and to confront the challenges in support of the mission of the School.

4.3 Curriculum:

Curriculum is broad, balanced, relevant, rigorous and differentiated, and consistently addresses essential and enduring knowledge, concepts, and skills.

Key Indicators:

- Each grade level and/or course level unit of study in each curriculum area is aligned across the district with state and national learning standards, and clearly specifies what students should know and be able to do.
- Learning standards are defined and communicated in ways that are accessible to students, parents and the community.
- In keeping with the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), factors that contribute to learning are valued and taught as part of the curriculum. These factors include study skills and habits, thinking, reasoning, problem-solving, communication and leadership skills.

4.4 Instruction:

Effective instruction actively engages students, focuses on deeper conceptual understanding and addresses the individual needs and learning styles of the students.

Key Indicators:

- The purpose of each unit of instruction is understood by students and made relevant to their lives.
- Teachers regularly employ reflective questions to develop higher order thinking.
- Multiple instructional strategies are used to engage students actively.
- Specific skills are taught that support a student's ability to think

critically, to work collaboratively, to develop effective problem solving and communication skills, to make informed decisions, and to utilize appropriate study strategies.

- Appropriate instructional accommodations and modifications are implemented to meet the individual needs of the students.
- Learning and instructional data and other relevant data (both qualitative and quantitative) are used: (a) diagnostically to assess student learning; and (b) to make decisions regarding the use of proven teaching and learning practices and procedures. This data is used to enhance student achievement.

4.5 Assessment:

Assessment is used to inform instruction, to monitor and report on student progress, and to actively engage students in their own learning through reflection and goal setting.

Key Indicators:

- All assessments are based on clearly defined criteria/performance standards that are aligned with units of study and grade level standards.
- Formative and summative assessments are an integral part of the learning process and provide opportunities for teachers to give students specific feedback, to assess student growth over time, to adjust their instructional practices, and support student led goal setting.
- Performance criteria/standards are described through rubrics/scoring guides, modeled through samples of student work, and are understood by students. Students take an active role in the assessment process through self-assessment, peer review and teacher review, as well as reflection and collaborative goal setting that is directly modeled.
- A variety of opportunities exist for students to demonstrate independently what they know and are able to do through multiple assessment measures such as demonstrations, portfolios of work, investigations, presentations, exhibitions, projects, performances, standardized tests, paper and pencil tests and other performance-based work.
- Student progress is communicated in a meaningful way and is supported by evidence/data of student work.

4.6 Professional Development:

Professional development is informed by the changing needs of the

student, the educator, the organization, the community and the state. It is focused on the mission and goals of the district.

Key Indicators:

- Professional development opportunities support the implementation of diverse and research-based instructional strategies, and the collaborative work within each school's learning community. These opportunities support collaborative learning within each school and are routinely embedded within day-to-day practice.
- On-site professional development provides equitable access to professional development opportunities.
- Goal setting that improves teaching and learning is the focus of the district's Professional Growth Cycle and is aligned with district and school goals.
- Instructional supervision is on-going, focuses on improving teaching and learning and informs the direction of the district's professional development planning.
- Opportunities for coaching and mentoring are included as part of the district's professional development planning and encourage opportunities for teachers to share their knowledge and skills and experience with others.
- Staff are involved in the development of programs.
