

NHS School Council

November 4, 2025

MEETING SUMMARY

Attendance: Violet Aldrich, Amber Barbere, , Jeanne Coffey, Luna Mutabzi, Thomas Rich, Cady Seaton, Erin Seaton, Andy Wulf

I) High School Updates

- Several fall sports have entered the tournament. Double-header tomorrow night starting with Girls Field Hockey and then Girls Soccer. Boys Soccer won on Monday and Girls Volleyball plays tonight.
- Opening night of the Great Gatsby is Friday. There will be 5 showings with a matinee happening this Saturday to accommodate for the NEF auction.
- Winter Concern will happen Dec 16. Andy Wulf highlighted how last year's concert was excellent and well attended. Last year was the first year Ms. Phillips has led the k-12 performing arts program. She has worked with building principals so that the teachers can be shared across schools. This has helped to build the music program around the teachers' areas of expertise. Parents recommended the schools publicize the concert beyond the public schools as people from the community would enjoy the concert.
- Andy Wulf explained how the high school is looking to apply for career - technical educational (CTE) programming. A team will be visiting Salem High School to learn about their programs and the process to apply for these programs. The school is interested in applying for Early Education and Care and Multi-media Broadcast. Andy Wulf shared how having CTE programming has benefits to the city financially due to reimbursements for students enrolled.

II) School Improvement Plan

- The council reviewed the adjustments made to the improvement plan using the feedback from the October 7th meeting. Below are the changes that have been made.

Updated action item for the Climate and Engagement Goal

Action Steps/Strategic Activities	Person(s) Responsible	Outcome and Measurement Evidence	Timeline
Generate a vision statement that will articulate NHS's faculty beliefs about teaching and learning. Use this to clearly articulate how the POG integrates into teaching and learning.	ILT + Faculty	Vision statement agreed upon by the NHS faculty.	Fall 2025
Implement PD that helps NHS faculty generate a shared understanding of practices that promote powerful learning moments in the classroom.	ILT	Shared definition and best practices for powerful learning.	By Fall 2026

Updated Action Item of Student Learning Goal 1

Develop a marketing structure to help families be more aware of pathways, various opportunities beyond high school, and process students will do to develop their portfolios and post-secondary plans around the Portrait of a Graduate	Pathway Coordinator/College and Career Counselor/Principal	Portfolio of Communications	Develop structure to have a sustainable communication plan (2025-26) Implement Communication Plan (2026-27)
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Update Action Item for Student Learning Goal 2

Implement student attendance procedures and interventions with fidelity. Communicate attendance procedures, expectations to families monthly. Articulate process for reporting extenuating circumstances.	Asst. Principal - Student Support Team	Decreased chronic absenteeism.	On-Going
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In review of the changes to the School Improvement Plan, the council engaged in discussion around the Portrait of a Graduate and its current rollout.

- Students noted that they have been exposed to it in some of their classes, but it is limited. They noted how history classes have been most-notable for having students reflect on a learning experience using the portrait of a graduate.
- Parents did note a difference in their younger students talking about it versus older students.
- The council agreed the program is still in its early stages and that it will take time for it to

be part of the instructional culture of the school.

- Students mentioned how teachers do mention uploading learning products into their portfolio; however, they don't know what portfolio they are talking about.
- Mr. Wulf stated that through Onward Block and eventually their classes, students will learn how to upload learning products into schoolinks. He also mentioned that the school's goal is to have the class of 2027 be the first group of students to present a learning portfolio prior to graduating.
- Mr. Wulf also explained that during today's early release the Instructional Leads ran professional development to help teachers reflect on units to find moments of powerful learning using the competencies of the Portrait of a Graduate. The teachers have also developed a Vision Statement to help align their planning and instruction practices. Mr. Wulf shared the vision statement with the Council.

At Newburyport High School, all members of our community value the Portrait of a Graduate and use it as our North Star to drive positive student outcomes. Together, we **challenge, engage, and connect students in a powerful learning environment** that consistently integrates the POG competencies into every part of their high school experience. We believe that all students can embody the skills and mindsets of the Portrait of a Graduate, both during their time here and when they move ONWARD.

- Noting the inconsistencies of the Portrait of a Graduate (POG) rollout, Mr. Wulf stated the vision statement and the PD that will happen this year will support more consistent instruction that emphasizes the competencies of the POG and provides time for students to reflect on their learning and growth.

Additional discussion centered around the school's goal to improve student attendance.

- Students mentioned the emails reminding students about the policy do have an impact. They noted the messages do come off strong.
- Mr. Wulf reminded the council if there are extenuating circumstances around attendance that parents and students should reach out to their respective assistant principal.

III) Competency Determination (CD)

- Andy Wulf explained the District and school committee are currently in process of finalizing Newburyport's policy regarding how students will demonstrate their competency determination which is mandated by the state.

- He explained there are 2 things students need to accomplish to earn a diploma from a public high school:
 1. Meet the local graduation requirements
 2. Earn the competency determination by satisfactorily completing coursework and showing a mastery of skills in grade 9 + 10 ELA, Algebra, Geometry, one science, and US History
- The team reviewed 2 documents:
 1. [Draft CD Policy](#) by the District and School Committee
 2. A [Summary Presentation of the CD Policy](#) that will be used for parents and students
- Feedback Activity - The Council compared and contrasted the 2 documents with the objective of providing feedback on how well or not well the summary presentation aligned with the District's policy. The feedback offered included:

Overall, the summary serves its purpose to summarize the District's policy. It is easy to understand but there are a few areas to tweak.
On slide 4 combine "satisfactorily complete coursework" with "show mastery of skills" to make one statement.
On slide 3 add "Local" in front of Graduation Requirements
Change the title of the last slide to "School and Community Pride"
Slide 13 explain how the MCAS scores are used for course recommendations

IKF Graduation Requirements and Competency Determination Policy

Draft 10.14.2025

In order to graduate from Newburyport High School with a high school diploma, a student must (I) satisfactorily complete the local graduation requirements and (II) earn the competency determination in English, mathematics, US History and an approved science subject.

I. Local Graduation Requirements

A. Credit Requirement

1. In order to graduate from Newburyport High School, a student must have earned at least 95 credits + 15 elective credits (Total 110 Credits)

B. Course Requirements

1. Course requirements are the following (see also Competency Determination required courses):
 - a) Four years of English
 - b) Three years of Mathematics including completion of Algebra II or an Integrated Math equivalent
 - c) Three years of lab-based Science which may include technology/engineering
 - d) Four years of History/Social Science including US History and World History and Civics & Government
 - e) Two years of World Language
 - f) Four semesters of Physical Education
 - g) Two semesters of the Arts

C. Other

1. Other requirements may be established by the school administration in relation to the particular program, otherwise the additional credits needed for a graduation may be selected from among elective courses. For the total number of credits required, please see the high school program of studies or student handbook.

D. Credit for Foreign Study

1. Students who are away for a term or year to participate in a student exchange program or otherwise study abroad may receive credits toward high school graduation when (1) study plans are approved by the school

administration in advance; and (2) the institution where the study occurred submits a record of the student's work. In these instances, the Principal and student's guidance counselor will evaluate the work and assign credit for it according to standards prevailing in Newburyport High School.

II. Newburyport Public Schools Local Competency Determination Requirements

A. Legal Requirement:

1. All students are required by Massachusetts Education Reform Law of 1993, G.L. c. 69, § 1D to meet a Competency Determination (CD). To earn a competency determination a graduating student must show satisfactory completion of relevant coursework and show a mastery of skills in English language arts, mathematics, US History, and sciences.

B. Competency Determination Coursework Requirements: To meet the competency determination, NHS students must pass (above 65%) coursework aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks that cover the content of the following courses:

1. English (2 years)
 - a) Freshman Composition & Literature (all levels); and
 - b) Sophomore Composition & Literature (all levels)
 - c) ESL1 or ESL2 may substitute for one year of Composition & Literature
2. Mathematics¹ (2-3 years depending on sequence)
 - a) Sequence of Algebra I semester 1 & 2 (all levels) and Geometry semester 1 & 2 (all levels); or
 - b) Sequence of Foundations of Algebra (Semester 1 & 2), Foundations of Geometry (Semester 1 & 2) and Principles of Algebra and Geometry (Semester 1 & 2)
3. Science (1 year)
 - a) Biology Semester 1 & 2 (all levels); or
 - b) Chemistry Semester 1 & 2 (all levels); or
 - c) Physics Semester 1 & 2 (all levels)

¹ Middle school math courses may be certified by the district as meeting the coursework requirement for the mathematics component of the CD. The school district must confirm that the course aligns to the high school Algebra I/Geometry/Integrated Math I/Integrated Math II standards as listed in the 2017 Massachusetts Mathematics Curriculum Framework.

4. US History² (1 year)--there are three required semesters of US history for all students. Students must pass (65 or higher) two semesters.

- a) US History 1, 2, 3 (all levels)

C. Mastery of Skills

1. A student shows mastery of the skills, competencies, and knowledge in by passing (in accordance with the district's grading policy) one of the following for each of the required courses (see II, B above):
 - a) the final assessment for a course; or
 - b) a capstone or portfolio project; or
 - c) an equivalent measure
2. The skills, competencies, and knowledge in ELA, Math, Science and U.S. History are as follows:
 - a) English Language Arts - the skills, competencies and knowledge that a student needs to demonstrate mastery are those identified for 10th grade in the relevant Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy, including the standards for reading literature, reading informational text, writing, speaking and listening.
 - b) Math - the skills, competencies and knowledge that a student needs to demonstrate mastery are those identified in the Algebra I/Geometry/Integrated Math I/Integrated Math II standards as listed in the 2017 Massachusetts Mathematics Curriculum Framework.
 - c) Science - the skills, competencies and knowledge that a student needs to demonstrate mastery are those identified in the relevant Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for the relevant courses identified above.
 - d) U.S. History - the skills, competencies and knowledge that a student needs to demonstrate mastery are those identified in the relevant Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for the relevant courses identified above.

D. Students with Disabilities

1. The Competency Determination requirement does not impact the entitlements that students with disabilities have under IDEA or M.G.L. c.

² This requirement does not apply to the class of 2026

71B. Consistent with federal law, in order to graduate a student with a disability who has been found eligible under the IDEA or M.G.L. c. 71B, the student must meet the local graduate requirements, the competency determination applicable to all students, and satisfy the FAPE requirement.

2. Students with disabilities placed in out-of-district placements must meet the requirements of the CD policy of the placing school district.
3. In meeting this standard, the District will consider any specialized supports, modifications, or alternative demonstration methods consistent with the Individual Education Program (IEP) process.

E. English Learners

1. English learners (EL) are provided an equal opportunity to meet Competency Determination requirements.
2. The District has certified that the following ESL courses as meeting the English Language Arts requirement for the Competency Determination:
 - a) ESL1 or
 - b) ESL2 in conjunction with a grade level English Composition course
3. The District certifies that these courses explicitly integrate grade-appropriate ELA standards with English Language Development (ELD) standards, using instructional scaffolds that are appropriate to students' English proficiency levels.

F. Late Enrolling Students

1. Students who enroll in the District after their ninth-grade year will be afforded the opportunity to earn the CD.
2. The district will conduct a transcript review and may, in limited instances, consider a qualifying MCAS score. Regardless of the mechanism for determining the student's eligibility for the CD, the District will ensure that state requirements related to equivalent course length, relevant coursework, and a demonstration of mastery are met.
3. In the limited circumstance where a district is unable to document a student's prior coursework, the regulations allow for a student to earn the CD by: 1. Attaining a qualifying score of at least "Meeting Expectations" or "Exceeding Expectations" achievement levels on the relevant high school MCAS assessment; or 2. Meeting the standard for a substituted

equivalent that the district certifies satisfies the same academic standards.

G. Appeals Process

1. A student or parent guardian may appeal the Competency Determination to the Superintendent or designee.
2. The appeal process will include a review of the student's transcript and any other relevant information submitted by the appellant, and will determine whether the criteria for competency determination, as set forth in this policy, have been met.
3. The appeals shall be decided within 30 calendar days.

H. Diploma Request Process for Previously Enrolled Students

1. Students who have previously earned a Competency Determination through a regular or retest administration of the MCAS (including the November 2024 retest) or through a DESE appeal process, have earned their CD.
2. The District will offer eligible students in the classes of 2003 through 2024 who did not earn a diploma as a result of failing to meet the state's Competency Determination requirement an opportunity to determine their current eligibility for a diploma pursuant to the district's CD requirements. An eligible student is one who:
 - a) Was previously enrolled in the district; and
 - b) Previously met the criteria for a Certificate of Attainment (i.e., they met local graduation requirements but did not receive a high school diploma because they did not earn a CD); and
 - c) Was not previously reported as a graduate in any district's Student Information Management System (SIMS) submission.
3. Students will meet with a Competency Determination Review Panel made up of subject area experts. Through the review, students will need to demonstrate competency (based on the current CD Policy) in English, math, history and science through relevant, approved coursework.

I. Newburyport High School Related Student Handbook Policies

1. Satisfactorily complete coursework: NHS students must meet the minimum threshold grade for passing as defined in the Newburyport High School Student Handbook Clipper Compass - Section 3.3 - Grading Scale section.

2. Grade Appeal: Please see the Newburyport High School Student Handbook Clipper Compass - Section 3.5 - Grade Contesting for procedures on appealing a course grade.

