

NHS School Council

May 12, 2026

MEETING SUMMARY

Member Attendance: Amber Barbere, Chris Cain Jeanne Coffey, Luna Mutabzi, Rich Pace, Thomas Rich, Erin Seaton, Katie Seaton, Mike Testa, Andy Wulf

I) High School Updates

- **Celebrations**

- **Academic Honors Night**

Andy Wulf and Mike Testa shared how the Academic Honors Night has diversified beyond honor roll to include valedictorian, salutatorian, Bresnahan Scholar Athlete, the Newburyport Scholar Artist, Abigail Adams Scholars, North Shore Scholars, and Global Citizenship, Seal of Biliteracy, and Pathways program completions.

Andy Wulf noted that it was excited to have 2 English Language Learner students earning the Seal of Biliteracy for the first time, demonstrating proficiency in both English (including ELA MCAS) and their native language. Alongside these students 9 others also earned a Seal.

The event successfully celebrated a broad range of student achievements across multiple programs and pathways.

- **Upcoming End of Year Events**

Senior Scholarship Night is in two weeks, with \$600,000 in non-renewable scholarships and close to \$1 million including renewables.

Senior Week follows, then underclassmen awards(June 10) the week after seniors graduate.

- **AP Exams and College Board Recognition**

Not on the agenda, but a discussion took place around AP testing.

- Andy Wulf shared that the school earned a Silver level designation on the College Board Honor Roll for increasing the percentage of students taking at least one AP exam and earning qualifying scores.

- Erin Seaton mentioned how one draw-back of AP courses is that it can restrict a teacher to teaching to the test.
- Student participants commented that some AP courses (e.g., AP Language) focus more on critical thinking and reading than test preparation, while content-heavy courses like history require more test-specific preparation.

- **Career Technical Education (CTE)**

Andy Wulf provided a detailed update on plans to expand CTE programming and a major grant application.

- A \$3.5 million Capital Skills Annex Grant application has been submitted; a determination is expected in June.
- The grant would fund build-out of basement spaces for advanced manufacturing and health assisting programs.
- Nancy Caswell, president of the Newburyport Greater Region Chamber of Commerce, is part of the steering committee and has connected manufacturing businesses in the business park as potential supporters.
- The College and Career Center would be converted into a mock hospital room for health assisting practical training.
- If the grant is not awarded, the plan is to apply for Chapter 74 designation for Multimedia Broadcast and Early Education and Care programs, as those spaces are already built out.
- A five-year CTE expansion plan has been developed by Erin Hobbs. This plan will be reviewed by the CTE Steering Team on Friday, May 15.

[DRAFT 5 YR Plan](#)

- The NEF previously funded the video lab, demonstrating the impact of state-of-the-art equipment on program quality. This has been the catalyst to create more programming connected to career areas.

- **AI High School Working Group – First Meeting Update**

Mr. Testa and Mr. Pace reported on the first meeting of the school's AI Working Group, which took place earlier that day.

- The committee includes six teachers: Katie Mitchko and Rich (English), Megan Marlar (History), Glenn Farrell (Math), Aaron Hobbs (Science), and Aaron Roboto-Smith (College and Career Counselor). A visual/performing arts teacher will be invited to join.
- The group identified a need for guiding principles, common language across the building, and standardized syllabus language around AI use.
- The current staff mindset leans toward caution rather than full embrace of AI; most teachers want to maintain ownership over how AI is addressed in their individual classrooms.
- The existing AI policy (strike 1, 2, 3 format)

Highlights from the ensuing discussion are below. Council members:

- Noted that many students are using AI as a crutch rather than a tool, bypassing skill development.
- Suggested that AI misuse may reflect a lack of perceived relevance or meaning in assignments, connecting to earlier school culture survey data.
- Discussed the idea of reframing AI misuse as a skill deficit rather than purely a punitive matter, especially for younger students.
- Noted AI is frequently misused as a search engine, leading to fabricated information.
- Shared that outreach to Cape Ann League schools revealed most have no explicit AI policy; Amesbury uses a rubric-style continuum of use
- Suggested an anonymous student survey on AI use, a community dialogue (similar to the cell phone policy dialogue), and inclusion of non-educators and students in policy development.

Andy Wulf wrapped up the discussion by noting there is a district-level team (including educators, parents, industry professionals, and city officials) who is working on this; Superintendent Gallagher may have a community dialogue, likely in a future school year. This would run similar to the District's cell phone dialogue.

- **Budget Update**

Andy Wulf summarized the outcome of the recent school committee budget presentation.

- Superintendent Gallagher and Ethan Manning presented the budget; the school committee voted to approve a 3.88% city allocation.
- Personnel restructuring includes changes to special education oversight, the dean role, a long-term sub position in special education (reduced to an instructional assistant), and the technology integrator position.
- The two remaining district technology integrators will be restructured to cover 6–12 and K–5 focuses respectively.
- The city has not yet confirmed it can support the 3.88% allocation; a city vote is expected in early June.
- The school committee recognized the Pathways program as a significant potential funding asset for the city and school system in the future.

II) SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT REVIEW

Andy Wulf walked the council through a written summary of progress on the School Improvement Plan for the current year.

[School Improvement Plan Summary - May 2026](#)

- School Climate and Engagement Goal – Best practices developed by the instructional leadership team were shared; departments began discussing implementation in their areas during last Wednesday's meetings.
- Student Learning Goal 1 (Post-Secondary Planning and Portfolios) – Progress has been made but the Onward Block culture is still developing; Dr. Hobbs will lead a student focus group to improve the program for next year.
- Pathways enrollment reached 51 students across three pathways (environmental, healthcare and social assistance, manufacturing), exceeding expectations.
- Participants: Raised the question of capacity limits for pathways; Andy confirmed that caps may eventually be needed but are not yet required.
- Many science teachers are approved as adjunct professors through Southern New Hampshire University, enabling dual enrollment credit in courses such as Anatomy and Physiology and Field Studies.
- Student Learning Goal 2 (Academic Achievement) – Data from English, math, and biology assessments is still being collected and will be added once complete.
- Attendance data shows slightly higher absence rates compared to last year's ending rate.