

**A Vision  
for the Sharon Public Schools  
Dr. Barbara Dunham, Superintendent of Schools  
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Our vision should be a shared statement that guides and challenges our learning community to be what we should be and not just define what we are. Our vision should be connected to a strategic plan that will get us closer to the place we envision. We need to connect our outcomes to our customers and define the essential education necessary to compete in a global economy. Our learning activities should include assessments and tasks that recognize the unique learning style of each student who will also benefit from each teacher's use of a variety of methods and strategies to enhance learning. We will promote a strong and comprehensive educational program and a learning environment that enhances self-esteem, optimizes potential, develops intellectual curiosity and instills a lifelong love of learning. Our educational systems must build personal responsibility, physical well being and accentuate individual respect for diverse cultures.

We need to continue to recognize the importance of families as the primary developmental arena for each child and promote an active collaboration among families, the schools, and the community that will serve to strengthen the effectiveness of the quality education we strive to offer.

At the same time, we must promote a spirit of community, cooperation, and interdependence in which every child's contribution will be recognized, valued, and rewarded. We must be dedicated to encouraging and promoting the professional development of the staff and administrators in order to create and sustain this environment. Our commitment must include the active involvement of a competent staff, shared leadership, the effective management of resources, and a safe and orderly learning environment.

Things that I see to work on going forward:

**More Flexible Curriculum Offerings:** We need to address the need for a less rigid, lockstep curriculum for all students. Standards for graduation can be met in many different ways while still maintaining quality and standards. All our children do not have the same interests and are not headed to Ivy League colleges. Our schools need to be more flexible and teach children to think, to adjust to new situations, to reason, to make decisions and to pursue interests that encourage their passion for learning. They need to discover their artistic and athletic selves and to develop habits that encourage their physical well-being. Our schools need to provide for a global literacy and awareness in order to prepare children for the world they in which they live.

**Instructional Practices** in Math, Science, Technology and Engineering need to be improved and updated as part of the curriculum and standards for the Sharon Public Schools. The district needs to place a greater emphasis on high level thinking and problem-solving that readies the child for change in the world he faces.

**Professional Learning Environment:** In this fast-moving society, our professional staff needs to be able to engage in learning time that allows them to grow and keep abreast of changes and goals of the school department. The current structure of workshops and

scheduling does not allow all teachers the opportunity to learn. Initiatives of the district get mired in limited times for professional development and the need for the teacher to teach. We need to identify ways to allow quality teaching to occur while teachers and other staff are given opportunities to update skills.

**Social Competencies:** We need to address the rising tide of social and emotional needs among school children. There is a current of inter personal and intra personal issues that affect the way our children interact with one another and it impedes their ability to feel good about themselves and to learn effectively in our schools.

**Effective Management of Resources** includes Long Range Budget Planning. This goal needs to include the Town Committees and the community to determine acceptable levels of growth for the Town budget. The Schools have been struggling to maintain levels of services on less than 4.5% budget increases each year. The cost of utilities, tuitions and special education services, staff salaries and building maintenance tend to outstrip the ability of the Town budget to provide even a minimum level of support, requiring the Town to seek overrides every 3 years or so to support level services. The schools are faced with the need to grow and to change by providing needed skills for global literacy. We need to develop a plan that is viable and that works going forward.

My vision for the Sharon Public Schools includes a diverse, academic community where all learn and teach one another in an atmosphere of mutual respect, personal responsibility and the pursuit of excellence. We will engage in a community dialogue, collecting information and thinking carefully about the various ideas and needs expressed by various interest groups in this community. Sharon Schools will be known as having a faculty and staff motivated to excel in their respective fields and who contribute in an active manner within the school community and with a supportive and visible school administration that demonstrates fiscal accountability and transparency.

Our graduates will have distinctive educational and extracurricular skills, the ability to collaborate and demonstrate global competence, and will be sought after by higher education institutions because of their ability to think critically, behave productively and they will exhibit social responsibility and skills as community builders.

Sharon students and personnel will meet critical global 21st century needs which include at a minimum, quality early childhood education, reasonable class sizes in safe and modern facilities and curriculum presented in a manner that meets individual learning needs, always with an eye on the global village in which we live.