Somerville High School
School Improvement Plan
April 3, 2019
Envisioning the Future of SHS

At Somerville High School, students explore their passions, connect with their school, participate in their communities, and engage with the world around them through authentic and equitable learning experiences. Graduates are empowered to achieve their goals and contribute to a more just world.

Areas of Success

- ✓ Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate: 87.9%
- ✓ Dropout Rate: 1.5%
- ✓ Successful Transition to College Rate: TBD
- ✓ 1-2 Year Persistence Rate: 84.3%; State Average 82.4%

Areas to Address

- ➢ Chronic Absenteeism: 22.2% (Econ. Disadvantaged 29.2%)
- ➢ In School Suspension Rate : 6.1% (Econ. Disadvantaged 11.2%, AA/Black 8.7%)
- ➢ Out of School Suspension Rate: 3.2% (AA/Black 6.9%)

Areas for School Wide Improvement

➢ Rising importance of skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and collaboration for success in both college and career

➢ Few student opportunities to demonstrate and apply what they learn in real world ways

➢ Not enough time for teachers to collaborate with one another

➢ Rigid schedule that locks students into a loaded schedule with too many courses and little flexibility

Strategies To Address Specific Concerns

- Student Choice of what interest to pursue & Out of School Learning (OSL)
  - ➢ Decreases class avoidance (discipline and absenteeism)
  - ➢ Provides opportunities to engage in activities that are of interest
  - ➢ Increases investment and ownership of their own education
- Personalization
  - ➢ Community building and healthier sense of belonging increases student investment and ownership of their own education
- Scheduling flexibility
  - ➢ Accommodates work schedules and life demands (absenteeism)

Background

➢ **October 2017:** Awarded $300,000 Barr Foundation Grant

Planning Team was formed, consists of SHS, CCE, and community partners

o *Anytime-anywhere learning* opportunities that enable students to participate in experiential learning and build social capital in the community;

o *Career development* experiences that promote student awareness of their interests and options, and deepen student engagement; and

o *Early college* experiences that expose students to the environment of post-secondary education, and enable students to earn college credits while completing high school.

Planning process included

✓ Staff focus groups & Six PD sessions for SHS staff to provide input and feedback

✓ Many SHS departments held follow-up discussions

✓ A community event was held, along with several other opportunities for parents/guardians to learn about the initiative and provide input

✓ Student forums and student surveys provided feedback and ideas

✓ Subcommittees visited multiple schools to learn about innovative ideas

➢ **January 2018:** Four subcommittees were formed. Staff, students, parents, and community members were invited to join.

Four Subcommittees

√ Out-of-School Learning √ Performance Based Assessment

√ Personalization √ Scheduling

Alignment with School Committee Goals

• Goal 2: Develop and implement social-emotional learning framework that provides students with the skills they need for social and academic success. *(Personalization)*

• Goal 3: Increase engagement with the community to reflect the community in which we live. *(Out-of-School Learning)*

• Goal 4: Continue to develop and implement innovative ways of measuring student academic performance and school quality such as formative assessment, performance-based tasks, and whole quality indicators. *(Performance based assessment)*

Why Out-of-School Learning?

- To provide a significant out-of-school experience to ensure students gain, practice, and apply 21st century skills (the Habits of SHS Graduate) in preparation for post-secondary endeavors

Proposed Recommendations

Phase I	Field trips & speakers (past Somerville experiences) turn into field research and field work experiences for students. Performance-based assessments serve as additional contextualized learning experiences. A student reflection will follow each fieldwork experience and will be assessed by the content teacher.
Phase II	Intensives are three-day experiential learning opportunities—built into the school calendar, and focused on student interests and skills. Students will participate in 1-2 intensives per year. A student reflection will follow each intensive and will be assessed by the intensive project leader.
Phase III	Students will research, develop, and create a proposal for a significant out-of-school learning experience. Students will use a digital portfolio to begin creating a culminating presentation about their experience.
Phase IV	Students will participate in their planned out-of-school learning experience and will complete their digital portfolio in preparation for their Senior "Thesis Committee" presentation.

Why Performance-Based Assessment?

- To increase student engagement, diversify ways for students to demonstrate their skills and knowledge, and allow students to develop the 21st Century skills that will allow them to be successful in their post-secondary plans

Proposed Stages

Stage I **SY20**	-Adoption of the *Habits of the SHS Graduate* -Math, English, Science, Social Studies, World Language, ELE, and Special Education departments design and implement performance-based assessments (PBAs)
Stage II **SY21**	-Student digital portfolios in Grades 9-12 for uploading PBAs and OSL field work and intensive reflections -Grades 9 & 10 portfolio presentations at end of school year
Stage III **SY22**	-Interdisciplinary PBAs in all grades – CTE, Art, Music, Theater, Library & Media, and Health & PE Departments can make curriculum connections with other departments -*Junior Gateway Project*: students propose their senior year OSL experience, and connect to the *Habits of the SHS Graduate* and portfolio
Stage IV **SY23**	-*Senior Exhibition Project*: students reflect on their OSL experience, and connect it to the *Habits of the SHS Graduate* and portfolio

Why Personalization?

- To foster a stronger school culture with greater "connection" through community-building, college & career readiness, mentorships, academic and social/emotional support

Proposed recommendation

- Daily 30-minute block of *Highlander Community Time (HCT)*

- HCT is required* & credit-bearing Pass/Fail course
  - ➲ *Exceptions can be made for students who are working off-site or in an internship senior year.

- All SHS faculty (with the exception of adjustment and school counselors) serve as HCT Mentors.

- 12-15 students per Mentor.

- Grade-Level HCT Coordinators:
  - ➲ Facilitate bi-weekly Professional Development for HCT Mentors.

HCT Sample Schedule

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Highlander Community Building	**Study Hall & Academic Check-Ins**	**Content-based Academic Support**	**Study Hall & Academic Check-Ins**	**Workshops**
-Ice-breaker/community building activity *(teachers would get training on how to facilitate these activities in bi-weekly professional development sessions).*	- One-on-one check-ins with half of their mentees. (Aspen X2, and progress towards performance-based assessments).	- Content area teachers hold academic support sections in consistent parts of the building each week.	- One-on-one check-ins with half of their mentees. (Aspen X2, and progress towards performance-based assessments).	-Staff could voluntarily facilitate any kind of workshop they want *(possible stipend to plan a 4-6 week session. Examples: book club, politics roundtable, dance).*
- Weekend check-in	- HCT Mentors discuss academics goals and who they could contact if they need additional support.	*(Example: All 9th grade social studies teachers are in room __ every Wednesday)*	- HCT Mentors discuss academics goals and who they could contact if they need additional support.	- Community partners and volunteers, with staff support, can facilitate college and career-readiness workshops *(Lets Get Ready, Year Up, Kaplan SAT Prep)*

- Announcements
   - Administrative
   - Sports
   - Clubs
	- Sign up for the following days content-based academic support.	- Provide time for students to catch up on projects or get any content-specific support.	- Sign up for the following days workshop *(study hall is another option).*	

- Classroom Circles *(Restorative Justice Approach – work in partnership with Redirect and Cultural Proficiency Committee)*	- Students have access to social/emotional and College-Career Readiness support	- Students have access to social/emotional and College-Career Readiness support	- Students have access to social/emotional and College-Career Readiness support	- Social Emotional Support *(Teen Connection, Meetings with Guidance)*
	- Coordinating mentees final portfolio presentations.		- Coordinating mentees final portfolio presentations.	***Teachers who do not sign up to facilitate or volunteer in a workshop could monitor a study hall this day.***

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Why Scheduling?

- To design a daily schedule where student & teacher needs are better met, including:
  - ➲ fewer classes/day for students and faculty;
  - ➲ increased flexibility and opportunities for shifts in level;
  - ➲ dedicated time for programs to meet (NGE, 10GE, etc.);
  - ➲ maintaining a consistent schedule to support out-of-school learning and CTE programs

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On March 6th the committee presented to staff

- semester and trimester schedule options
- the pros/cons of semester & trimester schedules
- sample semester & trimester teacher schedules
- a questions and answers document that responds to specific questions that departments asked at the November 6th PD
- after reviewing staff survey results, the committee will move forward with a trimester model

Draft Vision Statement

At Somerville High School, students explore their passions, connect with their school, participate in their communities, *and engage with the world around them through authentic and equitable learning experiences. Graduates are empowered to achieve their goals and contribute to a more just world.*

Draft Tagline

Somerville High School: Learn in, from, and for the World

Upcoming Steps

➢ Using feedback from staff, students, parents, and the community, proposed recommendations will be finalized.

➢ An Implementation Plan will be submitted on April 15, 2019 to the Barr Foundation for $500,000 award.

➢ Final recommendations subject to addressing any contractual issues and School Committee approval.

Questions?