



# Natick Public Schools

## TECHNOLOGY PLAN SCHOOL YEARS 2011 - 2014

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NATICK PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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# Contents

<b>Document Control</b> .....	<b>2</b>
Change Record .....	2
Reviewers.....	2
Distribution .....	2
<b>Contents</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Technology Vision</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Technology Foundation</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Technology Planning Framework</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>2011 – 2012 School Year Improvements</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Technology Fundraising Summary</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Technology Funding Summary</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>Current Environment and Challenges</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>Making the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Environment a Reality!</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>High School 1 to1 Costs</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>Plan for 2011 – 2012 School Year</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>Plan for 2012 – 2013 School Year</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>Plan for 2013 – 2014 School Year</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>Summary</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>Appendix A – Technology Staffing Plan</b> .....	<b>23</b>

# Technology Vision

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Our vision for the Natick Public Schools is to create the best educational environment for our students; one that creates opportunities and allows our students to excel in today's ever changing world.

The world today is a much different place than a mere generation ago. It is a much smaller planet, as students regularly compete on a global basis for entry into college. Our workforce is also much more competitive as outsourcing strategies are often used in the business world to keep labor costs down which shifts many jobs overseas.

Technology has played a role in this global shift as transportation systems have improved; worldwide travel has increased, as it is now faster and more affordable. Through the use of technology participation in the global economy is also much easier and global travel is often not needed; a mere internet connection anywhere in the world can now give you a global storefront if you have an idea or product to sell.

In the midst of all of these changes, how has our public school system changed over this same period of time? Is our public school system keeping pace to meet these new trends and competitive environments?

The reality is that much more needs to be done; especially if our students are going to compete and thrive in this new global economy. We need to do more.

Our students need to be problem solvers, critical thinkers, and collaborative workers; able to work from anywhere, anytime, anyway. Our students must be able to manage projects and deadlines, qualify valid sources of information, prioritize, organize and disseminate information, analyze data and identify trends, reach conclusions, make decisions and take action, and be able to shape the direction of our world by leading effectively.

Students today are digital natives; they use technology constantly to communicate amongst themselves and expect immediate access to information. Students today want to create and express themselves; they don't want to sit and be lectured to. Most importantly students want to be engaged and not told to "power down" when they come to school. All of these challenge the traditional school model and create missed opportunities.

To transform the educational system in Natick and help our students develop 21<sup>st</sup> century skills; those skills needed to be successful in our world today, we need to embrace change. Our school system needs to embrace the use of technology. Technology can be both an accelerator of the learning process and help streamline administrative functions of a school district if implemented and used effectively.

In the learning environment, technology can help improve student engagement as most digital natives are just waiting for school districts to get it right and encourage use of technology in our schools. Technology can also be used to create easier access to information through on-line classrooms or portals; which extend the learning process beyond the four walls of the classroom and beyond the restrictions of a single block of time for each subject. Use of technology also

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creates an opportunity to personalize the learning experience, we know not all students are alike and learn differently.

Effective technology use in our schools changes everything! It challenges teachers to rethink how to best use classroom time; maybe spending more time on group projects and collaboration while viewing lectures at home via podcasts; or participation in an on-line forum to discuss a topic are just a few examples that break the traditional stand and lecture model.

The administrative burdens of running a school district are also becoming much more demanding and complex and require the same level of automation and streamlining that the business world has realized. Increasing levels of mandatory federal and state reporting will overwhelm school districts that realize this trend too late and could jeopardize alternative sources of funds through eligible grants or E-Rate programs.

All in all technology plays a key role in today's educational environment and is no longer something we can live without. It is an expectation that needs to be in place and given careful and thoughtful planning and execution.

Effective technology in our schools does change everything, and it will not come easy. It will require dedicated individuals who want to make a difference and work hard to change the ways our schools operate and the way our classrooms function. But what's at stake is our student's future and in the end that's why we are here in public education.

It's all about our students!!!

# Technology Foundation

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In order to have an effective and reliable technology presence in our school district, it requires a solid foundation to build upon. This means leveraging our existing investments and making sure our technology house is in order. The four corners of this foundation are:

- Technology Staffing
- Infrastructure & Emerging Technologies
- Applications & Classroom Technologies
- Professional Development

In order to progress forward and realize this vision, periodically a rebuilding process needs to take place, a process very similar to that of renovating or rebuilding a house. We cannot tear down the structure since it is used daily as the renovation takes place. An assessment conducted before construction begins will allow for careful planning and execution.

As in any project, planning is the key to success. Before constructing the walls or roof of a house, the foundation must be solid to support the structure above it.

## **Technology Staffing**

In the case of the Natick Public Schools, the first and most vital corner of our technology foundation is the technology staffing. By far, people are the most important element when it comes to technology. If people do not have the proper training, the proper skill sets, or are not comfortable or cannot rely on the technology, then we will not succeed.

We rely on people to evaluate, implement, train and use technology, so it is vital we get the right people in the right jobs. We need people who view technology as a tool to get things done and come each day with an open mind to achieving success.

It is important that we have defined roles and responsibilities for all technology positions. This will allow us to recognize staffing gaps and formulate staff development programs. Part of the success of building an effective team is not just defining the right positions and completing the recruitment process but what is done after they are on the job to inspire and develop each member to their fullest potential.

## **Infrastructure & Emerging Technologies**

The infrastructure should be flexible and reliable giving us options to grow. Our vision for technology should be an open one, that embraces all forms of technology and we need to be aware of emerging technologies and their future impact. We should not limit ourselves to a single vendor's solution or marry ourselves to one technology, as it would only back us into a corner that we would need to deal with later on.

We need to consider the convergence of voice, video and data. Technologies such as wireless, interactive whiteboards, on-line learning environments and data repositories, RFID, biometrics, VOIP and various hand-held devices all offer tremendous possibilities.

### **Applications & Classroom Technologies**

As a school district, we should take a serious look at open source and web based software. Open source is software developed by a community of users and freely distributed throughout the world. Many open source products meet if not exceed many of our needs and may help keep our software license costs down. Web based products today offer robust functionality, usually for a modest annual investment, rapid deployment and allow students and teachers the flexibility of using in school or from home. Before making purchase decisions on traditional commercial software packages these options will be considered.

In the classroom, we need to define the tools needed to aide students and teachers to excel with teaching and learning. Technology is both a tool to get things done but also a way to engage and make learning fun. Technologies such as on-line learning environments, interactive white boards and laptop computers and other wireless devices for students and teachers need further exploration.

### **Professional Development**

The final corner in our foundation is professional development. As we progress on the other three corners, our focus needs to shift toward getting the maximum value from all our investments. That will only occur by offering both our technology staff and faculty the proper amount of training and development opportunities along the way. For each dollar spent on technology we need to invest in educating our people in how to use it. We also need to keep in mind, training and development is an on-going process, not just when new systems are deployed and implemented. As our plans develop and evolve much more attention and focus will occur in this area.

As the following plans indicate it will be an iterative rebuilding process. As the technology team and infrastructure matures more strategic discussions on applications and professional development opportunities will emerge. But what makes our technology plan unique from most other school districts is that our plan begins and ends with people.

# Technology Planning Framework

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Since July of 2005, the Natick Public School has been using the following framework for Technology Planning. It is an iterative process and sometimes takes years to complete a full cycle. The framework has been extremely helpful in guiding and gauging our progress:

## **Technology Planning Framework**

1. Assessment
2. Team Building
3. Invest in the Back End Solutions
4. Invest in the Front End Solutions
5. Invest in Training and Support
6. Collaborate on new Technologies and Expectations

### **Assessment**

The Technology Director conducts regular audits and assessments of our technology environment and frequently includes findings in our annual technology plans. These audits undercover a variety of issues and potential risks. It documents recommendations made, action taken and results achieved. It is these audits that still guide much of our technology planning today.

### **Team Building**

In order to address concerns discovered in any audit, and ensure the proper resources are in place to manage the technology environment in both the short and long term, a technology staffing plan was defined and is included as Appendix A in this year's plan. A process of restructuring and recruiting is sometimes necessary to ensure we have a team of talented individuals in place, ready, willing and able to continue moving our technology efforts forward.

### **Invest in the Back End Solutions**

Before we can address the needs of students and teachers directly in the classroom regarding technology we need to have a solid foundation on which to build on. Sometimes audit concerns require changes to our backend infrastructure to support the goals and initiatives we want to achieve in the classroom.

### **Invest in the Front End Solutions**

Investing in the front end is simply investing in the teachers and the students. It means investing in the classroom, in the things we all see and touch. It is the most visible area of our technology environment and it is the most widespread. The front end encompasses all the computers and software used by students, faculty and administrators. It includes all the physical devices we see such as laptops, tablets, netbooks, printers, scanners, digital and video cameras, projectors and also the more progressive technology we have been piloting such as interactive white boards.

Since these front-end technologies include so many touch points, it is also the most expensive and dynamic. It will require a significant amount of planning, funding and a review of all technology resources. It will require collaboration with students, parents, teachers, administrators and members of the community.

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It will require an expansion of the technology planning process that doesn't exist today so that all these groups have a voice toward our future direction.

**Invest in Training and Support**

As the building blocks are put into place, the faculty and staff need to be given frequent opportunities to master their technology skills so that they can effectively use them in the classroom. The faculty need to feel confident that the district will fully support technology before we will see its use expanded into the curriculum. As our technology staffing plan indicates (Appendix A), a dedicated resource has now been allocated to this function, as it has become a standard practice within the Natick Public Schools.

**Collaborate on new Technologies and Expectations**

As we meet objectives previously identified, our needs and expectations as a community will continue to rise. On a regular basis, we need to look beyond our daily activities and seek out what are the next rounds of challenges we need to face. As we do this, the framework begins a repetitive process as we need to re-assess where we are, identify we have the proper staff to get to the job done, make back end adjustments as we consider and implement new front end technologies, ensure people have the opportunity and training to master the technology and then look outside the box for the next wave of expectations.

# 2011 – 2012 School Year Improvements

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## Completed Initiatives Summer and Fall of 2011:

1. **District Wide Wireless Infrastructure**  
A new wireless infrastructure has been completely implemented district wide. Now all elementary schools and both middle schools have a wireless environment that supports learning. In addition, outside of the school day the wireless network is available to members of the public through the use of a guest access at all of our schools.
2. **One to One Learning Environment**  
A pilot of our 1 to 1 learning environment was deployed this fall to all 8<sup>th</sup> grade students at both middle schools.
3. **Current High School Learning Environment**  
Modular classrooms were deployed this summer at the High School to support the construction of the new High School and wireless access was also deployed there to support the learning environment and set the stage for expanding the 1 to 1 initiative at the new High School.
4. **Plans for the New High School Learning Environment**  
Plans and designs for the new High School technology needs were made and work will continue up to the start of next school year. Plans include not only opening a new state of the art High School building but also moving the district wide data center from the current High School to the new High School and expanding our 1 to 1 learning environment to all High School students when the new High School opens in the fall of 2012.

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# Technology Fundraising Summary

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During the 2008 - 2009 school year through collective efforts of school district administrators, members of the Parent Coordinating Council, the Natick Education Foundation, parents and many local businesses, fund raising efforts were put in place to further fund the needs of technology within the Natick Public Schools.

Due to the state of the economy no official fund raising activities were conducted during the 2010 - 2011 school year. However one local business Cognex had made a multi-year donation during the 2008 - 2009 school year of \$10,000 a year for the next five years.

Based on this \$10,000 donation from Cognex, we were able to continue with the "Taste for Technology" mission and applied these funds to award more grants to teachers wishing to use technology in the classroom through the Natick Education Foundation annual grant program.

# Technology Funding Summary

<b>Technology Replacement Funding 2011 – 2012 School Year as of 01/31/2012</b>				
	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Results Achieved</b>	<b>Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Actual Cost</b>
1.	Complete District Wide Wireless Deployment	Both Middle Schools and all Elementary Schools district wide are now wireless learning environments.	\$250,000	\$188,000
2.	Wiring Closet Work to Support the Wireless Deployment	All wiring closets district wide are equipped to support our wireless learning environment.	\$150,044	\$107,000
3.	Additional solutions needed to support 1 to 1 devices and district wide mobile devices.	A mobile device management software solution is now in place as well as a GPS tracking solution to track all mobile devices.	\$0	\$34,500
<b>Funding Summary</b>				
	Sub Totals		\$400,044	\$329,500
	Balance of Funds			\$70,544

The Natick Public Schools also files for E-rate reimbursement funds each year. These funds are used to address areas of the technology plan that would otherwise go unfunded.

# Current Environment and Challenges

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## TECHNOLOGY STAFFING

Our Technology team manages the technology needs of the entire school district, serving approximately 700 faculty and staff and over 4600 students. The team today consists of individuals whose jobs focus in the following areas:

- Help Desk
- Network Administration
- Training
- Data Base Administration and Reporting
- Web and Internet Technologies

Over the last seven years, the Technology Team has worked on and accomplished many district wide objectives by working closely and collaboratively with faculty, staff, administrators, parents, students, and many other members of the Natick Community. Our goal is to provide daily support and solutions that enhance and enrich our educational mission. A current technology staffing organizational chart is provided in Appendix A.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In the area of Professional Development we conducted our third annual Technology Day on December 5, 2011. This year's event was again hosted in-district at our Wilson Middle School, which was made possible by our investment in implementing a robust wireless infrastructure. All school district employees attended this all-day event, which offered opportunities to enhance technology and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

The success of this day, the courses offered and all the people involved can be seen by watching a brief 4 minute video via the link below:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDLXOM\\_O9yU&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDLXOM_O9yU&feature=player_embedded)

The greatest achievement we've realized from our annual Technology Day is the internal capacity we're building within our faculty and staff. The last two years we've had over 90% of the workshops taught by our own people. It is a tribute to the internal talent we have within our district. The amount of collaboration, excitement and confidence this one event creates among the faculty and staff continues to build momentum that inspires teachers to incorporate technology into their teaching and learning.

## TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE

As of the 2011 - 2012 school year, the district maintains a fleet of approximately 2900 computers, roughly 2/3 of these devices are laptop computers. We anticipate next year (2012 - 2013 school year) this number will increase to 3800 computers district wide, 75% of these will be laptop computers as we expand our successful student 1 to 1 program with the opening of our new High School.

In addition to the thousands of computer devices, the technology team also continues to support hundreds of networked printers and numerous other computing devices located within 9 buildings; one high school, two middle schools, five elementary schools and central office staff within the Town Hall.

All school and town buildings are interconnected by a fiber based network that enables us to provide centrally managed services, such as robust internet access, to all school district employees and students from the High School where the technology team is based. This strategy has allowed us to implement solutions once and provide them throughout the district without having to re-invent the wheel at each school.

This year we implemented a district wide wireless network at both our middle schools and all elementary schools. This is the same wireless solution that will be in place when we open our new High School in the fall of 2012.

Our backend infrastructure is constantly changing and evolving to adapt to the growing needs of the school district. Virtualization technologies and cloud based solutions are being introduced to help add redundancy, maximize utilization and scalability, provide greater access and keep our costs down while the demands for technology services continues to accelerate. Our infrastructure is based on well known industry standards utilizing solutions from Microsoft, Apple, Aruba Networks, Dell, Cisco, HP and Sonicwall to name a few.

# Making the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Environment a Reality!

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## **STATUS OF OUR 1 to 1 PILOT - FALL 2011**

During the 2011 - 2012 school year the Natick Public Schools launched a 1 to 1 pilot with all 8<sup>th</sup> grade students.

This pilot has been extremely helpful in preparing for the even larger 1 to 1 initiative planned for the beginning of the 2012 - 2013 school year with the opening of our new High School. At that time all high school students will be added to the 1 to 1 program.

Our 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers have proven that we are ready and our high school teachers have been preparing just as hard. As our district's Technology Director, I've never seen a group of teachers so proud of their students and the learning environment that we've created together. Our 8<sup>th</sup> grade teaching staff has fully embraced the 1 to 1 model and it can simply be seen by their passion and enthusiasm when we conducted parent feedback sessions or hosted other districts to come visit and see what we've created. I have every confidence we'll achieve similar results at our new High School.

## **EXPANDING 1 to 1 TO STUDENTS IN GRADES 8 thru 12 - FALL 2012**

The learning environment for the High School 1 to 1 is based on the successful 8<sup>th</sup> grade model. We'll be using all the same technologies and best practices learned from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade experience.

This past spring we met with all high school and middle students and parents and held information sessions to educate everyone on the details of the program. Slides from these presentations are also available on our website.

All students in grades 8-12 will receive a district issued laptop, charger, backup device and protective bag to transport the laptop. All High School students will receive their laptops prior to the first day of school on a schedule determined by the High School principal. All 8<sup>th</sup> grade students will receive their laptops in their homerooms during the first week of school. All students participating in the 1 to 1 initiative will be allowed and encouraged to bring the laptop home to complete assignments.

At the end of each school year all students participating in the 1 to 1 initiative will return their laptops by the last day of school so updated software can be installed and any necessary hardware repairs can be conducted over the summer. Student laptops will then be redistributed in the fall for the following school year.

High School students will receive the same laptop each year until they graduate.

**HOW THE NEW HIGH SCHOOL WILL ENHANCE THE 1 to 1 INITIATIVE**

In a traditional school model, you go to the technology. This is usually a lab of computers that are hard wired and they don't move. It's a restrictive model as teachers and students don't have regular access to the technology and it limits access to resources.

Since the new high school was designed around the 1 to 1 model you'll see very few desktop computers or traditional labs. It will have building wide wireless access that will support the entire High School teacher and student population.

Internet access is provided centrally through the high school to all schools and will jump from a 100MB circuit today to 250MB for the 2012 - 2013 school year.

Within each classroom will be an interactive short throw projector. These projectors will also be integrated into a new IP TV and sound system that teachers will be able to control directly from their laptops.

Printing and scanning capabilities will be available to teachers and students using networked multi-function copiers located throughout the building. When you request to print, your job will go to a print queue and waits in the queue until you identify yourself at any networked copier. Then and only then, will a job be committed to paper. This will keep confidential content private and also reduce printing costs since your output will only print if you go to a copier. To further reduce costs, all copiers will also have integration to Google Docs which so they can be used as high volume scanners to send documents directly to Google and share out without having to use paper.

**THE BACKEND - THE PART THAT MAKES IT ALL WORK!**

Most people just see what's in the teacher or the student's hands and they don't see what happens behind the scenes where all the technology comes together and simply works if it's done correctly. The technology infrastructure in the Natick Public Schools is robust and complex as it supports thousands of users on a daily basis. Many who have seen it say it rivals some mid to large size companies, which is a reflection of the commitment of the team that supports it.

As all these plans unfold, we are also relocating and rebuilding a new district wide data center at the new High School, which will be fully operational for the 2012 - 2013 school year.

So our real challenge is managing all these initiatives at the same time and making sure they all stay on track, as they are all dependent on one another.

## THE CHALLENGE

The challenge next school year will be allocating our technical resources among all schools to adequately cover the demands for:

- Supporting the 8<sup>th</sup> grade 1 to 1 initiative at both middle schools - Wilson and Kennedy.
- Supporting the expansion of the 1 to 1 initiative to all high school students.
- Completing the new High School Building to support the 1 to 1 initiative.
- Designing, building and cutting over a new district wide Data Center to continue to support the entire school district.
- Continue providing daily support of all five elementary schools.

# High School 1 to 1 Costs

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<b>Funding Required for High School 1 to 1 - Phase One</b>				
	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Recommended Action</b>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>Actual</b>
1.	High School student and faculty devices	Charge to High School project as these devices will all stay with High School.	\$800,000	\$755,321
	<b>Total</b>		<b>\$800,000</b>	<b>\$755,321</b>

<b>Funding Required for High School 1 to 1 - Phase Two</b>				
	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Recommended Action</b>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>Actual</b>
1.	High School student and faculty devices	Charge to High School project as these devices will all stay with High School.	\$1,200,000	\$1,198,857
	<b>Total</b>		<b>\$1,200,000</b>	<b>\$1,198,857*</b>

# Plan for 2011 – 2012 School Year

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<b>Technology Operating Budget</b>				
	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Recommended Action</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Estimate</b>
1.	Introduce Managed Wireless Solution	Introduce managed wireless solution at the Elementary level. (Ben-Hem, Brown, Johnson, Memorial and Lilja)	Provide students and teachers a true 21 <sup>st</sup> century learning environment.	\$150,000
2.	Expand Managed Wireless Solution	Expand wireless solution at the Middle School level (Wilson & Kennedy).	Add additional capacity to prepare for 1 to 1 initiative at 8 <sup>th</sup> grade level.	\$100,000
3.	Wiring Closet Upgrades	Needed at Brown, Lilja and Wilson to support wireless deployments.	These are the schools still in need of closet work.	\$150,044
	<b>Total</b>			<b>\$400,044</b>

# Plan for 2012 – 2013 School Year

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<b>Technology Operating Budget</b>				
	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Recommended Action</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Estimate</b>
1.	Laptops for 8 <sup>th</sup> grade students and faculty	Year 2 of 3 year lease payment for these devices.	Provides students and teachers a true 21 <sup>st</sup> century learning environment.	\$254,138
	Total			<b>\$254,138</b>

# Plan for 2013 – 2014 School Year

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<b>Technology Operating Budget</b>				
	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Recommended Action</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Estimate</b>
1.	Laptops for 8 <sup>th</sup> grade students and faculty	Year 3 of 3 year lease payment for these devices.	Provides students and teachers a true 21 <sup>st</sup> century learning environment.	\$254,138
	Total			<b>\$254,138</b>

# Summary

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It's no secret; the key to a successful educational system is having dedicated individuals that want to make a difference and strong support from the community in which we work. Here in Natick we have very strong support for all that we do and we thank each and every one of you for your continued support, feedback and collaboration.

Technology continues to change and we need to continue to find ways to accelerate, to raise the standards and expectations of the Natick educational system.

As we continue with our digital conversion over the next few years you will continue to see a focus on Professional Development, Infrastructure and Tools and Technology for the Classrooms. We will continue to focus on making the most significant district wide impact so that all students benefit.

Over the next couple of years there will be a lot of attention given to the new High School but our focus is much broader than a single building or any single initiative. Our entire educational system is being rethought.

I would like to continue to encourage those of you in the community to contact me directly if there is anything you see that interests you or if you simply want to help move our schools forward.

Some of our best ideas come from those we serve.

Sincerely,

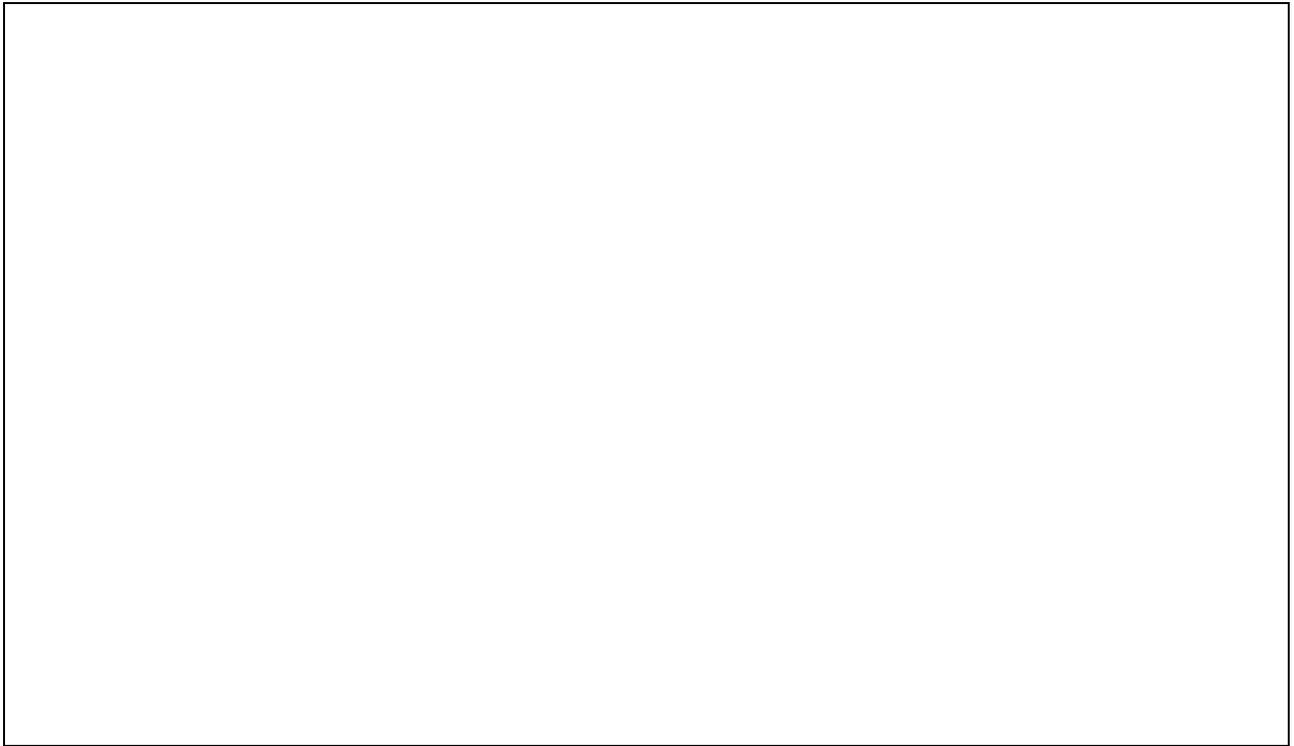
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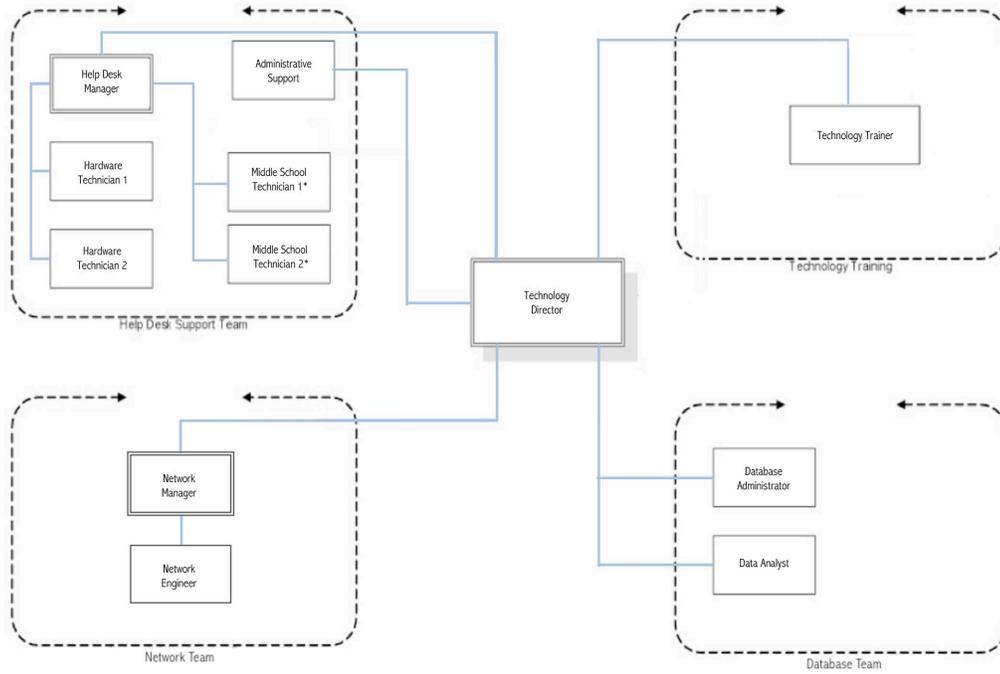
# Appendix A – Technology Staffing Plan

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**Natick Public Schools  
Long Range  
Technology Staffing Plan**



## Natick Public Schools Current Technology Staff 2011 – 2012 School Year



\* Middle School Technicians are school year only positions.