McCarthy-Towne School

SCHOOL COUNCIL

Report for 2014-2015
&
School Improvement Plan for 2015-2016

I. Background and Rationale

A. School Council Responsibilities

The McT School Council provides three useful functions:
    a) It increases communication within the school community
    b) It provides a forum for a small group of faculty, parents, and community representatives to discuss issues, thorny problems, and difficult situations
    c) It provides oversight to certain school wide projects.

The job of the School Council is to decide how student, faculty and parent concerns may be handled and to recommend the appropriate group or individual to do so. It serves as a forum to identify and discuss issues and problems and refer them to the appropriate group or decision maker(s) for final determination. The faculty, PTSO Steering Committee, subcommittees and Student Council provide the mechanisms for accomplishing whatever needs to done.

In some Massachusetts communities the School Councils receive funds directly from the School Committee to help finance projects that will improve the learning of students in their schools. The McCarthy-Towne School Council requests that the School Committee set aside $5,000 for each School Council to fund special projects to help each school attain its improvement plan.

B. Current School Council Membership - [All are two year terms except for principal.]

Parent Representatives:		
	Laura Kreiger	2013-2015
	Carol Chytil	2013-2015
	Tracey Estabrook	2013-2016
	Deanna O'Donnell	2014-2016

Community Representatives:	Vanessa Bergmann	2013-2015

Faculty Representatives:	David Krane, Principal	Permanent
	Noreen Cohen	2012-2014
	Cheryl Beaudoin	2014-2016
	Jen Pratt	2012-2014

C. School Council Meetings

The McT School Council schedules five regular meetings during each academic year. These meetings usually occur in October, November or December, January or February, March or April, and May or June. Other meetings may be added if necessary.

One part of each meeting is devoted to hearing concerns from the faculty, the parents, and the Student Council. Another part is to hear how work is progressing on the School Improvement Plan. Each meeting focuses on one or two of the School Council's goals. A third part of each meeting is set aside for discussion of any other issues.

II. School Improvement Plan Goals for 2014-2015

Below is a summary of the School Improvement Plan for 2014-2015, as presented by the McCarthy-Towne School Council.

2014-2015 Goals:

Goal #1

Take a pro-active, educational approach to creating a positive social environment that fosters respect and compassion for all. Set school community-wide expectations and norms that includes both adults and children.

- Schedule, through the PTSO, some parent information forums that specifically address the mechanics and philosophy of the Responsive Classroom
- In fall, 2014, Responsive Classroom training will be made available for all classroom assistants
- Continue to offer summer professional learning opportunities for teachers as presented by Responsive Classroom
- Schedule parent gatherings that would make clear school norms and behavior expectations for all members of the McCarthy-Towne School community, specifically including adults

OUTCOMES: To increase student and adult self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These factors all contribute to stronger community building for educators, students and families.

Goal #2

Focus on advancing the mathematical concepts and skills throughout the grades and across the curriculum. We will:

- Continue implementing and refining the Math Workshop model in Kindergarten through Grade 4
- Refine the alignment of the Mathematics Learning Goals developed by Grade Level Teams
- Participate in professional learning activities in order to improve instruction and support the Common Core curriculum
- Schedule Parent Forums to help educate parents about the Common Core curriculum

OUTCOMES: Teachers will continue to explore and use new methodology to adjust instruction, examine and integrate Common Core instruction, effectively integrate new lessons into the curriculum, and refine lessons to address identified needs.

Goal #3:

Continue to examine literacy concepts and skills across the grades and across the curriculum. The Workshop model, Reading and Writing, teaches deeper strategic thinking across content areas.

- Using the Coaching Teams from Teachers College and other resources to further develop and expand the Reader's Workshop across the grade levels
- Continue to expand the leveled classroom libraries
- Continue to send Grade Level Teams to Teachers College at Columbia University for on-going training at the Reading and Writing Project
- Participate in professional learning activities, both within and outside the district in order to improve instruction and support the Common Core curriculum
- Expand the use of Protocols for Learning to more closely examine teaching and learning

OUTCOMES: Continue to expand the use of the Reader's Workshop to increase specific comprehension and critical thinking instruction across the grade levels, and to encourage and increase professional collaboration and learning around literacy and the Common Core Curriculum. Expand use of the Protocols for Learning as a tool for looking critically at teacher and student learning.

Goal #4

Continue to develop the assessment of skills in a variety of ways to guide instruction and to report student learning and academic growth. We will:

- Refine the alignment of the ELA and Mathematics Learning Goals developed by the District Grade Level teachers to assessments used by the McCarthy-Towne faculty
- Apply Benchmark and interim literacy assessments across the grade levels
- Continue to develop grade-level common assessments for specific content areas
- Refine existing portfolio assessment methodology and determine new classroom-based authentic assessments of student learning (knowledge and skills)
- Expand the use of Protocols for Learning to more closely examine teaching and learning
- Evaluate the piloted End of Year Reporting Instrument, refine, and launch revised document

OUTCOMES: Refine Reporting Document as aligned to assessments and the Common Core curriculum, closely examine current portfolio assessment methods, and continue a collaborative examination of professional practice through a variety of protocols.

III. Assessment of the current year's School Council work:

Goal #1:

We continue to study and implement the ideas of the Responsive Classroom across our school community. This past year, we were able to bring a trainer from Responsive Classroom to deliver an all-day

workshop during the January Professional Learning Day specifically geared to the needs of the support staff in our school. These support staff included Special Education (Inclusion) Assistants, General Education Classroom Assistants, and the Lunch and Recess Assistants. Called The Responsive Classroom Essentials for Support Staff, this workshop "gives support staff an introduction to the *Responsive Classroom* approach and some practice with Interactive Modeling and teacher language." As we continue to bring new teachers into our school community, we continue to send them to the weeklong summer workshop so that they are beginning the new school year understanding the essential elements and, most importantly, the teacher language associated with the program.

Although in the past year we did not educate families to the extent we wished, for the academic year 2015-2016 we will seek to involve the larger parent community to increase awareness and understanding of the Responsive Classroom philosophy and ideas.

Goal#2:

Use of the Workshop in mathematics instruction is occurring in more classrooms during the current academic year. Anecdotal and informal data appears to indicate that greater differentiation of instruction is occurring with this methodology and that students seem to be able to move deeper into some of the concepts. During a recent Professional Learning Thursday afternoon, teachers who are using this approach were part of a Protocol presentation for the rest of the staff. This was an opportunity for us to use the protocol to more critically examine the structure and effectiveness of the Math Workshop and to look at ways to improve it.

We have also been using the Mathematics Curriculum Specialist as a consultant and as a resource as we continue to mesh instruction with the Common Core Standards.

Goal #3

This year, we have organically expanded the Readers Workshop to almost every classroom in the school. Since becoming a Teachers College Reading and Writing Project School last fall, teachers have been able to incorporate direct coaching provided by TC into their practice. This has inspired a deeper investment in the Readers Workshop methodology and philosophy, which has certainly resulted in a more engaged student population. The work that our students and teachers are doing in some classrooms has exceeded expectations. We are at a point in this process that, as a school, students are so accustomed to the model that as they rise into the next grade, they are ready to begin the work because of the familiarity with the model and with teacher expectations. With the direct coaching provided through Teachers College, the Sixth Grade has created lessons around specific content areas in Social Studies and Science that use the model. Additionally, the collaboration among the Team members in creating the lessons has been a large part of how this model is so successful. Within the other grade level teams, too, collaboration around literacy instruction has increased as teachers work more closely together to share strengths and challenges as they continue to grow into this methodology.

Goal #4:

This will always be a goal that requires continual attention and work. All of the classrooms are currently using the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Reading Assessments, and many are using a variety of interim assessments. Because our End of Year Reporting Document is presently summative in function, we depend on Parent-Teacher and Student Led conferences to provide insight into student growth. But, as

reported before, assessment of and for student learning continues to be an area for closer examination. We are continuing to take a closer look at authentic portfolio assessment, how this may show student growth and how best to implement school-wide.

IV. School Improvement Plan Goals for 2015-2016

Goal #1:

We will investigate the effectiveness of homework. This will be a yearlong process of study and exploration of homework, in all its forms. This process will include:

- Parent forums
- Additional surveys
- Investigation of research
- Faculty discussions
- Gathering information for families and staff to consider and discuss
- Communicate our findings to the respective communities

Outcomes: To gather parent and faculty feedback, insight gained from research, to inform all of the McCarthy-Towne school community stakeholders of what homework is and what it is not.

Goal #2:

Extend the workshop model to all classrooms:

      i. Participate in professional learning activities in order to improve teaching and learning to support the Common Core curriculum
      ii. Schedule Parent Forums to help educate parents about the workshop model

2. ELA
    a. Continue to participate as a Project School
    b. Continue to send Faculty Members to Teachers College at Columbia University for on-going training at the Reading and Writing Project
    c. Continue to integrate content instruction during the Workshop time
    d. Adjust classroom and school-wide schedules to support instructional change
3. MATH
    a. Continue to explore and implement the workshop model to advance mathematical concepts and skills across the grades
    b. Explore the use of assistants to better support classroom instruction
    c. Adjust classroom and school-wide schedules to support instructional changes
    d. Allow time for faculty observation of math workshop in action, both in and out of school, and for development of student activities

OUTCOMES: Teachers will continue to explore and use new methodology to adjust instruction, examine and integrate Common Core standards, effectively integrate new lessons into the curriculum, and refine lessons to address identified needs.

<u>**Goal #3:**</u>

Responsive Classroom for the entire school community

Take a pro-active, educational approach to creating a positive social environment that fosters respect and compassion for all. Set school community-wide expectations and norms that includes both adults and children.

- Schedule parent information forums that specifically address the mechanics and philosophy of the Responsive Classroom
- Using the first building-based Professional Learning Day in fall, 2015, to offer a series of workshops and break-out groups on the Responsive Classroom for the entire faculty, including classroom assistants and Special Education assistants
- Continue to offer summer professional learning opportunities for teachers as presented by Responsive Classroom

OUTCOMES: To increase student and adult self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These factors all contribute to stronger community building for educators, students and families.

V. Election of School Council members for 2015-2016

Election of new faculty and parent representatives of the McCarthy-Towne School Council for the coming school year usually takes place in June, before the end of the current school year.

The members of the 2014-2015 McCarthy-Towne School Council submit this School Council Report and School Improvement Plan to the Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee.