

Acton-Boxborough Regional School District

Merriam School

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

Acton-Boxborough Regional School District

Merriam School

Part One: Background and Rationale

Members of the Merriam School Council

Ed Kaufman	Principal	
Juliana Schneider	Assistant Principal	
Christy Nealon	Teacher	1st of 3-year-term
Michele Pruett	Teacher	1st of 3-year-term
Karen Sonner	Teacher	3rd of 3-year-term
Cara Morgan	Parent	3rd of 3-year-term
Chuck Pollak	Parent	1st of 3-year-term
Kristin Warren	Parent	3rd of 3-year-term

Merriam School Council Meeting Dates 2014-2015

October 14, 2014	February 10, 2015
November 18, 2014	March 10, 2015
December 9, 2014	April 14, 2015
January 20, 2014	May 5, 2015

After reviewing the role of the School Council, the Merriam School Council began the 2014-2015 school year organizing the plans/strategies for the School Improvement Plan and developing global plans for the school year. The teachers, parent representatives and principal on the School Council reported progress on the work toward meeting the goals at each meeting. Along with ongoing work on School Improvement Goals, the School Council worked to maintain a strong connection with the PTO (including co-sponsoring several community events) and discussed long-range goals for Merriam School.

This spring, the School Council reviewed, reflected on and discussed the 2015-2016 goals.

Part Two:

Evaluation of Current School Improvement Plan 2014-2015

Goal One: Revitalize project work and portfolio assessment at Merriam and connect them with current educational and global issues.

Strategies:

1. A small task force will plan larger staff meetings on these topics.
2. Staff will review the major tenets of project work and portfolio assessment.
3. Staff will think together about how these structures integrate with important current trends in education and with service learning and global concerns.
4. Grade levels will work on new curriculum maps (integrating projects) over the course of the year.
5. Grade levels will prepare new “descriptions of portfolio contents” over the course of the year.
6. We will look for professional development and consultant opportunities around these topics for our staff.
7. Communication to parents around this goal will take place with the format to be discussed with the School Council.

Responsible parties: Principal, Merriam Faculty, School Council

Outcome: New curriculum maps and portfolio descriptions will be created, demonstrating a revitalized and updated commitment in these areas.

Target Date: May, 2015

Assessment:

The administrators have planned a number of staff meetings throughout the course of the year that address Project Based Learning. Additionally, the administrators have set up a seminar that has met monthly in order for teachers to get feedback on project work as well as get ideas and input for further work. The administrators have developed new guidelines for project work as well as for curriculum mapping and staff have begun to work on revising old projects and developing new ones, as well as developing new curriculum maps in order to meet these guidelines. The curriculum map model includes the three types of writing required by common core. Consultant, Steven Levy has worked with the Merriam School teachers around the areas of project development, learning targets and assessment in both the large group and grade level teams. The administrators also met with grade level teams in May to determine a realistic timeline to finish this work. This goal will be carried over into the 2015-2016 school year.

Goal Two: Review information on math programs being piloted at Merriam and other math programs to make a decision on a new program by the end of the year.

Strategies:

1. The principal will set up a clear procedure for decision-making and will convey it to the staff.
2. A task force will be set up that will collect data and bring information back to the rest of the staff at intervals during the year.
3. The three groups piloting three programs will be brought together at least twice during the year to share the pros and cons of the programs with the task force.
4. Updates about this process will be conveyed to parents during the course of the year.
5. The district math specialist will be brought in to help with the collection and organization of data, and with the final decision-making process.
6. When a decision about a new program has been made, it will be conveyed in a thoughtful and timely manner to the parent community.

Responsible parties: Principal, Merriam Faculty, School Council

Outcome: A new, Common Core aligned math program will be selected to be used in grades K-6 at Merriam School beginning in the fall of 2015.

Target Date: May, 2015

Assessment:

This year, teachers have piloted, reviewed and observed curriculum being taught in four different programs. Teachers visited classrooms, observed programs in action and spoke to teachers about their experience teaching programs in both Acton and in several other districts. A task force was set up, a criteria was established for evaluating programs and a survey was developed based on the criteria set to be completed by staff. Our district math specialist consulted with us, helped set-up site visits and helped coordinate obtaining the necessary materials for our teachers to make informed decisions about the programs. The task force went through an intensive process in order to review all of the data about the programs and collectively reached a decision about which program(s) the school will adopt. Ed sent out a newsletter to our parent community in order to provide them with the information about the program as well as opportunities for them to learn more in the fall when the program is implemented.

Goal Three: Provide opportunities to promote health and wellness activities and discussions at Merriam School.

Strategies:

1. “Health and Wellness” will be the theme for the 2014-15 school year.
2. The physical education teacher and school nurse will be invited to take part in planning activities focused on this theme.
3. The School Council will sponsor at least one event related to this topic.
4. This topic will be the subject of all-school meeting presentations and performances.
5. Outside of the school day activities, such as “Walk to School”, or other enrichment activities, will be encouraged.
6. Food Services will be contacted to work with us on nutritional education.
7. Communication (such as newsletter articles) will be sent out to parents.

Responsible parties: Principal, Merriam Faculty, School Council

Outcome: Members of the Merriam community will have a greater awareness of the importance of health and wellness, and will have opportunities to put that awareness into practice.

Target Date: May, 2015

Assessment: Health and Wellness was Merriam’s theme for the 2014-2015 school year. Merriam’s Theme Day activities were directly related to health and wellness. The school nurse consulted and provided ideas for nutrition related educational activities for our theme days. Our physical education teacher communicated in a variety of ways as well as maintained bulletin boards and newsletters. Members of our PTO coordinated an assembly connected with physical activity. Our school psychologist and our school counselor were trained in the Social Thinking curriculum and continue to integrate self-regulation strategies in the classroom and within small groups, promoting emotional well-being. Teachers continue to use the Open Circle curriculum in order to support children with problem solving skills, as well as social and emotional skills. They also continue to integrate literature into their classrooms focusing on social thinking and Open Circle themes.

Goal Four: Continue literacy work with staff and students to make the quality of instruction even stronger.

Strategies:

1. Eight teachers will attend the “Literacy Institute” at Lesley College.
2. Numerous additional teachers will attend the Teachers College professional learning opportunities in reading and writing.
3. All teachers will create one evaluation goal this year connected with literacy.
4. The School Council will sponsor one event related to this topic.
5. Our reading specialist will offer coaching opportunities for professional staff.
6. We will pilot and evaluate a new benchmark reading assessment.
7. Staff meeting presentations will be delivered by Merriam staff to their colleagues on important topics related to literacy.

Responsible parties: Principal, Merriam Faculty, School Council

Outcome: Merriam staff members will increase the repertoire of tools and structures connected to literacy that they utilize with students.

Target Date: May, 2015

Assessment: Eight teachers attended the “Literacy Institute” at Lesley University. Additionally, many teachers have participated in professional development opportunities including Teachers College and our district literacy specialist’s seminars. All teachers created at least one evaluative goal in the area of literacy and participated in two professional days, as well as multiple faculty meetings that focused on literacy. Six teachers piloted a new benchmark reading assessment and teachers chose to adopt this reading assessment tool as our school wide assessment moving forward. Piloting teachers have met several times to support one another in using this tool in order to think about how it is related to reading instruction. The School Council sponsored a Literacy Night for the entire Merriam Community.

Part Three: School Improvement Plan 2015-2016

Goal One: Implement a new math program(s) for all grade levels.

Strategies:

1. Administrators will coordinate professional training from the publishing company before school begins in order for teachers to navigate the program and build a connection with our publisher representative for future questions and support.
2. The district math specialist will provide unit previews for teachers before they begin teaching a unit at each grade level.
3. Administrators, teachers and the district math specialist will present information about the new program to parents at one of the PTO Community Conversations.
4. Administrators will provide grade-level time in order for teachers to share student work and talk about teaching and learning within the new program.
5. Teachers will use faculty meeting time in order to support one another and determine if additional professional development is needed.
6. Teachers will participate in grade-level triads in order to support one another and share teaching methods.

Responsible Parties: Administrators, Teachers, District Math Specialist

Outcome: Students will receive comprehensive math instruction to become critical thinkers and problem solvers. Teachers will be supported in implementing the new math program.

Target Date: May 2016

Goal Two: Continue to work on linking literacy assessment to our instruction. Teachers will adopt a new assessment tool, the Fountas and Pinnell BAS and use the information in order to develop comprehensive literacy instruction for all students.

Strategies:

1. Teachers will be supported with literacy instruction by participating in literacy coaching cycles.
2. Teachers will be trained using the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment. Training will be provided during grade level times in September and will continue through coaching support from literacy coaches.
3. Teachers will meet with the literacy coaches upon administering assessments in order to determine instructional plans, as well as flexible groups and areas of focus for the class.
4. Teachers will meet with literacy coaches multiple times a year in order to monitor progress of students and make necessary adjustments for instruction.

5. Teachers will participate in grade-level triads in order to support one another and in order to share teaching methods.
6. Teachers will work with an outside consultant continuing work for individual students.

Responsible Parties: Administrators, Merriam School Literacy Specialist, District Literacy Specialist, Teachers

Outcome: Merriam staff members will increase their understanding of using assessments to drive instruction that is differentiated to meet the needs of every student.

Target Date: May 2016

Goal Three: Merriam will continue to develop projects that integrate narrative, persuasive and informational writing and will begin working on integrating content area reading material at individual student levels in order to support project work.

Strategies:

1. Teachers will continue to develop curriculum maps that will reflect literacy instruction (reading and writing), as well as projects.
2. General educators and special educators will continue to collaborate in order to provide similar instruction to both general and special education students.
3. Teachers will continue to use content area reading at different levels in order to support children at their reading level.
4. Classroom teachers and specialist teachers will continue to work on integrating literacy curriculum into projects.
5. Literacy coaches will support teachers in finding texts that connect to content area instruction.
6. Teachers will work on choosing mentor texts for grade-level writing units specific to project work.
7. Administrators will provide money to each grade level team to purchase reading materials.
8. The literacy specialist and the assistant principal will teach a summer workshop that will support the integration of project work with literacy instruction.
9. An outside consultant will continue to work with teachers in order to develop projects that have student learning goals within the area of literacy.

Responsible Parties: School Administrators, Literacy Specialist, Teachers

Outcome: Students will have authentic learning experiences that integrate literacy instruction into project work. Teachers will complete curriculum maps that reflect this integration.

Target Date: May 2016

Goal Four: Implement the school theme “Building Group Skills Across the Community.”

Strategies:

1. Consultants will support work with staff in this area.
2. Administrators will model ways for teacher groups to work together at faculty meetings, for the purpose of teachers applying new strategies within their classrooms.
3. Teachers will build capacity in facilitating effective group work in their classrooms.
4. Faculty meeting and professional time will be used for the purpose of building the following skills used in collaboration: listening, compromising, giving and receiving feedback, decision making, etc.
5. Administrators will create opportunities for co-teaching within classrooms in order to utilize these skills.
6. Teachers will participate in grade-level triads in order to support one another and share teaching methods.
7. Teachers will continue to incorporate “group skills” as learning goals into projects.
8. Theme Days will incorporate activities into them that not only provide children the opportunity to work in groups, but also allow them to reflect on a skill necessary for successful group work dynamics.
9. School Council or PTO will sponsor an event that promotes this theme in the larger community.

Responsible Parties: Administrators, School Psychologist, School Councilor, Teachers

Outcome: Teachers will build capacity, continue to practice and apply teaching methods to build group skills and collaboration for students.

Target Date: May 2016