

Raymond J. Grey Junior High School
School Improvement Plan
2015 – 2016

Raymond J. Grey Junior High School
16 Charter Road
Acton, Massachusetts
Principal: Andrew Shen

Goal 1: Continue to develop and enhance the Junior High curriculum with an emphasis on supporting literacy in all subjects.

Background: Consistent with the District's priorities, the Junior High is committed to the notion that addressing literacy is fundamental to students successfully engaging with content knowledge, and that content is essential to assisting students develop key literacy skills in the areas reading, writing, speaking, listening, and critical thinking. This work would be important and valuable regardless of the attention it has received from the Common Core state standards. That it is such an integral aspect of the Common Core is, nevertheless, an additional factor to consider as we proceed with this work. Since this initiative is continuous and an ongoing multi-year endeavor, it is necessary that professional training, learning materials, and institutional commitments continue to be provided within and throughout the upcoming school year.

Alignment with District Long Range Strategic Plan: This goal relates directly to **Goal 2**, "Prepare students by providing them with the knowledge, and intellectual and reflective skills they will need to thrive in an increasingly complex world", and **Goal 4**, "Create a teaching and learning environment in which all students use information, technology, and communication tools in sophisticated ways to enhance learning."

Strategies:

- Continue the JH's *Disciplinary Literacy* initiative, entering Year 3 of this work that emphasizes professional development and curricular development. Provide staffing support, learning material support, necessary release time, and outside consultation as needed.
- Continue to support the first cohort of staff involved in the *Disciplinary Literacy* initiative
- Launch work with 2nd cohort of staff accepted into the *Disciplinary Literacy* initiative.
- Work with evaluators to identify key aspects of literacy work that should be incorporated into educator evaluation observations and discussions.
- Offer a new 7th grade Exploratory course that focuses on digital literacy skills and competencies (aptly named "Digital Literacy 7"), replacing the Study Skills course. Provide ongoing professional development support, curricular support, and materials needed for the establishment and growth of this new course.
- Continue to support department-based curricular development that addresses alignment of course units with items emphasized within the Common Core and the upcoming PARCC assessments.

Outcomes:

- Implementation of new *Digital Literacy* course during the 15-16 school year
- Evidence of continued and expanded implementation of effective literacy strategies throughout JH classrooms, including but not limited to those involved in the *Disciplinary Literacy* initiative
- Evaluations of educators will include observations and commentary on his/her implementation of instructional strategies that directly addresses our school's literacy goals

Timeline:

- Identify participants in second cohort of *Disciplinary Literacy* initiative by Spring, 2015
- Schedule and plan meetings, trainings, and projects associated with second cohort of *Disciplinary Literacy* initiative by Summer, 2015; implementation ongoing for 2015-2016 school year
- Develop *Digital Literacy 7* curriculum scope and sequence during Summer, 2015
- Begin *Digital Literacy 7* course in September, 2015
- Identify key literacy concepts and strategies that will be emphasized within the educator evaluation process, by Fall, 2015

- Schedule staff meeting discussions regarding homework for Fall, 2015
- Administer the PARCC assessment in Spring, 2016; review curricular scope and sequence based on initial exposure to PARCC assessment questions

Responsible Parties:

- Andrew Shen, Principal
- Jim Marcotte and Allison Warren, Assistant Principals
- JH Department Leaders
- Deb Bookis, Director of Curriculum and Assessment

Evaluation:

- Review of educator evaluations for evidence of discussion and observation focused on implementation of literacy-focused strategies
- Review of Digital Literacy scope and sequence, including student feedback and teacher reflection on effectiveness and appropriateness of each unit
- Review portfolio of work developed by 2nd cohort staff involved with Disciplinary Literacy, and identify the degree to which new strategies were incorporated into their instruction

Goal 2: Continue to enhance and develop academic supports for students within our “High Needs Population” who would benefit from additional intervention and/or adult engagement in order to experience academic success (continuation from 12-13, 13-14, and 14-15).

Background: As a school, and by many different measures, we continue to provide an educational experience that supports a high level of academic achievement reached by many of our students. To be sure, it is crucial that we continue to preserve aspects of RJ Grey that support this level of academic achievement. In addition, we feel an obligation to pay increased and sustained attention to the needs of RJ Grey students who continue to struggle academically and/or whose personal and educational circumstances calls for specialized instruction. There will always be students who may not experience immediate academic success at RJ Grey, and we are committed to expanding the number and scope of interventions that we provide for them. This has recently included a growing population of general education students who join our school district with significant learning gaps and varying degrees of preparation for grade-level instruction. We also continue to have students who experience serious interruptions to their academic work and would benefit from additional supports. Some examples of “interruptions” include the increased frequency of students diagnosed with concussions, long-term illnesses, and struggles with anxiety and school refusal.

Additionally, our population within the Special Education and ELL cohorts is increasing in both size and complexity of needs. As we shared during the most recent budget process, our projections indicate that we are on the precipice of a significant increase in our Special Education population (30% increase over the next three years). In anticipation of these shifts, we were fortunate to receive additional staffing in both our Academic Support programs, and in the form of an Educational Team Leader & Transition Coordinator to assist with planning and coordination of services for this population. Efforts next year related to the 2016-2017 school year will involve developing a plan and proposal for the addition of additional Special Education staffing.

Alignment with District Long Range Strategic Plan: This particular goal addresses the District’s *mission* to prepare all students to attain their full potential, and supports our work related to **Goal 2** of the Long Range Strategic Plan, which focuses on providing students with the knowledge, and intellectual and reflective skills needed to be successful in their academic work and beyond.

Strategies:

- Implementation of new model for expanding ASC supports and general education (and special education) reading services
- Utilization of new Educational Team Leader position to provide increased coordination of services for Special Education students, including transition from elementary schools to the Junior High
- New structure to provide Fundamentals Math and English instruction for Special Education students
- Include professional learning on instructional strategies and support for our High Needs population
- Planning for 2016-2017 SPED population increase, developing budget and program proposals to increase and align staffing to properly anticipate needs for the following school year
- Development of modified and accessible curricula in the different content areas, including but not limited to, 7th grade Math, English, Social Studies and Science that can be used to support students in our LLP and Connections (special education) programs where there is an increasing cohort of students who require substantial modifications and adjustments to the curriculum
- Continue working with teams to develop team-based strategies for intervention and “catching” students who are struggling; continue to emphasize classroom-specific modifications and supports that can and should be offered to individual students.

Outcomes:

- Increased Reading services to students in our general and special education populations
- Increased collaboration and dialogue between support programs and classroom teachers on various strategies and interventions that can be implemented within the classroom and for various assignments that can benefit struggling students
- Improved coordination and development of Fundamentals Math and English curricula
- Continued identification of successful strategies and interventions for students struggling in 7th grade Math
- Successful proposal for funding and implementation of additional Special Education staffing for the 2016-2017 school year, including identification of space to house additional programs
- An improvement in our ability to provide case management support to students within our ASC population who require more global support and intervention

Timeline:

- Addition of new positions (ETL and Reading/Academic Support) will be in place July 1, 2015
- Adaptation and adjustments to Standard Math curriculum will begin in Summer, 2015, and will continue as needed for specific cohorts of students
- Proposal for additional learning center will be crafted by November, 2015; presented during upcoming budget process

Responsible Parties:

- Principal, Andrew Shen
- Assistant Principals Allison Warren and James Marcotte
- Director of Special Education

Evaluation:

- Feedback from students and families about impact of supports on their academic success
- Successful oversight of Special Education transition process from 6th to 7th grade
- Administrative review of “case manager” students and our success in supporting their needs
- Reviewing with Math teachers the strategies that were most effective in supporting student struggles in Standard Math
- Academic growth and development of long-term student skills of students who are part of the cohorts within this overall population of students
- Review of performance of students in Fundamentals English and Math classes on various formative and end-of-year assessments

Goal 3: Continue to attend to efforts that address the social and emotional health of our students, including expansion of extra- and co-curricular programming, and professional learning for staff on critical aspects of student well-being and safety.

Background: The social and emotional health of our students has been highlighted as a priority within our District for several years. This issue covers a wide range of issues and concerns, ranging from ensuring that a broad range of student extracurricular interest is met and supported, to the emergence of stress-related problems and challenges within our student population. As populations in our two communities continues to shift and change, there is reason to believe that some of our offerings and strategies for engagement and support may need to be adjusted to reflect these changes. Additionally, the Superintendent's recent *Entry Report* highlighted a number of topics that fall within this realm (school start times, stress, extracurricular and co-curricular programming) and merit some attention.

Alignment with District Long Range Strategic Plan: Goal 1, "Meet the diverse needs of all students by promoting social emotional learning and physical well-being through increased student-adult and student-student interactions."

Strategies:

- Implement a structured and formal program at the JH that encourages students to participate in community services activities, and recognizes them for their involvement in those activities.
- Offer a school trip to Washington, DC for interested students, that would take place during the April Vacation.
- Continue to support the development of new student-initiated clubs and activities that generate appropriate levels of student interest
- Provide professional learning for staff on crisis response situations that address aspects of grief counseling and supporting students who experience traumatic experiences and loss
- Continue to evaluate and assess the structure of our anti-bullying and teasing program, and identify possible additions or modifications
- Support the work of our performing arts staff at the JH and HS, as they implement a new schedule for each school's respective musicals and theatrical performances
- Engage staff, families, and students in continued study and dialogue about sleep, extracurricular commitments, as part of the District's examination of school schedules and start times.
- As part of our discussion about homework, examine that topic through the lens of student health and wellness
- Adoption of new school lockdown/threat response protocol (i.e. ALICE Training as a possibility), and initial training associated with that protocol

Outcome:

- Continued support and expansion of student clubs and activities
- A safe, informative, and enjoyable school trip to DC that could potentially emerge as an RJ Grey tradition
- Completion of the first year of the JH Community Service recognition program
- Staff will be trained and more prepared to respond to crisis situations that involve our school community, including new threat response protocol
- Successful implementation of new musical/performing arts schedule
- Active participation by members of the JH school community on District efforts to educate and discuss issues pertaining to adolescent sleep, school start times, and extracurricular commitments

Timeline:

- Washington, DC trip completed in April, 2016; planning begins in Spring 2015
- Community Service recognition program introduced in Fall, 2015, and launched by Thanksgiving
- Crisis Response training scheduled for Fall, 2015 (some time between September and November)
- New musical schedule implemented in Fall, 2015
- Participation in District efforts regarding sleep and school start times will align with District's efforts

Responsible Parties:

- Andrew Shen, Principal
- Jim Marcotte and Allison Warren, Assistant Principals
- Kate Murray, JH Community Liaison
- JH Performing Arts Staff
- Marc Lewis, 7th Grade Social Studies/DC Trip Organizer

Evaluation:

- Survey and feedback from participants of the Washington, DC trip
- Level of participation and membership in new student clubs and activities
- Level of participation in Community Service recognition program
- Review and assessment of school and staff readiness for particular crisis situations, and participation in possible simulations/trainings