



Acton-Boxborough Regional School District

16 Charter Road

Acton, MA 01720

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Douglas School
School Improvement Plan for
2016-17 School Year

School Council Membership

Name	Role	Year of Term
Amy Park	Parent	Year 2
Ben Smith	Parent	Year 1
Danxia Kong	Parent	Year 1
Laura Schmidt	Parent	Year 1
Sharen Metzger	Parent	Year 2
Karen Jarskey	Community Rep	Year 1
Melissa Hubbell	Teacher	Year 1
Debbie Kay	Teacher	Year 2
Christopher Whitbeck	Principal	Ad hoc
Jenna Larennaga	Assistant Principal	Ad hoc

Goal 1: Pilot and Adopt a Mathematics Curriculum Aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks

Background and Rationale:

The current edition of math curriculum, Everyday Math (EM) is not aligned with the Common Core. The State model for testing in Mathematics has been decided and we can be sure that the curriculum we choose will prepare students well for any standardized test and not require additional “teaching to the test” or supplemental materials to meet state recommendations. Common “Math Practices” have been established and a new curriculum will help our teachers to teach these.

Strategies:

1. Create a Piloting Feedback tool - Working with our Math Specialist, Heather Haines, the teachers of Douglas School will identify the math pedagogical values that they hold most important. These will be combined with a piloting tool adapted from NCSM Curriculum analysis tool to create a piloting feedback tool for Douglas Teachers.
2. Using information from EdReports, a math committee made up of grade level representative teachers, Heather Haines and the administration will select three to five curricula to pilot.
3. Teachers at each grade level will pilot and provide feedback on the variety of curricula.
4. After the math committee analyzes piloting feedback and teacher input, it will then choose one math curriculum for K-6.

Outcomes:

1. In September of 2016, volunteer classroom teachers at different grade levels will begin to pilot math curricula.
2. In March of 2017, teachers will rate curricula using the piloting tool and the teaching community at Douglas will select one of the curricula for implementation the following year.

Goal 2: Continue to Grow Exhibitionary Learning Model

Adapt and continue to implement pedagogy that supports our school vision and promotes the skills associated with creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication. An ongoing focus on increased differentiation for students will deepen our work this year.

Background and Rationale:

One focus of our school system district wide is on equitable access to education for students. This implies an understanding that all students do not learn at the same rate or using the same approach. We believe that differentiation of instruction is one way to increase equitable access for education.

Strategies:

1. Professional development focused on the creation of specific lessons and strategies for teachers to increase differentiation of instruction. Specific, targeted work for teachers during collaborative time to use student data and feedback on specific lessons or project designs, to improve opportunities for differentiation.

Outcomes:

1. Two Exhibitionary projects with elements of differentiated products and instruction throughout.
2. Possible differentiated homework assignments.
3. Examples of differentiated instruction throughout each classroom.

Goal 3: Responsive Classroom

Explore the adoption of Responsive Classroom approach as an evidence-based social and emotional learning program to improve school climate.

Background and Rationale:

The Acton Boxborough Public Schools work to improve the social and emotional learning of all students. Douglas began work on this last year and looks forward to continued study and implementation of a school wide program designed to improve the social and emotional learning of our students.

Strategies:

1. Two to four professional staff attend a summer training by Responsive Classroom (RC).
2. Expand our Professional Development dedicated to familiarize the entire staff with additional specific RC approaches. These will include use of: Interactive Modeling, Positive Teacher Language, Logical Consequences, Guided Discovery and Academic Choice.

Outcomes:

1. Increase of RC trained staff.
2. We will reach a decision as to whether or not to completely commit to the RC model.

Assessment of Previous Year's School Improvement Plan

Goal 1: Growth of Exhibitionary Learning Model

Adapt and continue to implement pedagogy that supports our school vision and promotes the skills associated with creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship.

Background and Rationale:

The driver of the model that we are working to develop is that the fundamental task of school is to facilitate learning. The challenge is to create and sustain conditions and experiences in school where students will want and be able to learn. The problem facing us is not that students can not learn, but how they are required to learn. We are working to move away from a model in which students sit passively while the teacher instructs, explains, and sets assignments. In this model, inevitably, students grasp some material more quickly than others, but the class is intended to get through the material at the same rate and over the same amount of time. We are trying to move away from the narrow confines of conformity to systems that are personalized to the real abilities of every student. We need to increase the opportunities for teachers to take account of student differences in how they teach different students. As Ken Robinson suggests, "Raising individual achievement in schools means engaging students as individuals and not prescribing a standard steeplechase for everyone to compete at the same time in the same way."¹ In this second year of work, we will focus professional development and teacher learning on differentiation and personalization for student instruction within the model of Problem Based Learning and exhibitions of student work.

Outcomes/evidence and means by which they were assessed:

1. Clearly communicate pedagogical approach to community through a series of forums, classroom communication, newsletters, surveys, and re-design of progress reporting system. Based on parent surveys, we have reason to believe that our community clearly understands the Douglas School pedagogical approach. We will continue to expand this communication in coming years.
2. Design and implement three Problem Based Instruction projects for each classroom that include elements of differentiation and personalization. The staff and administration decided that two larger units of instruction were more

¹ Robinson, K., & Aronica, L. (2015). Natural Born Leaders. In Creative schools: The grassroots revolution that's transforming education (p. 90). New York, NY: Viking.

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appropriate and worked to look for opportunities of differentiation and personalization. Professional development for teachers explored the meaning of Differentiation and Personalization and concluded that at this point in time, differentiation was more practical than personalization, especially at the elementary level. Much work remains to ensure that teachers are comfortable with the level of differentiation that we have studied.

3. Work with the Special Educators to provide increased in class instruction. This is a two pronged strategy: 1) To improve the skills of special education students so that they are ready to receive in class instruction and, 2) Begin a dialog and work with classroom teachers and special educators to prepare the proper supports and accommodations in class. We have started all of these conversations with plans to implement two co-teaching models (a special educator teaching with a regular ed teacher) next year in regular education classrooms.

4. Implement an increased level of personalized instruction using technology solutions. The use of STMath was the closest that we came to implementing a personalized learning opportunity. As we have explored and learned about the true level of student choice required in a model of personalized learning, we have decided not to explore that option further at the Douglas School.

6. Implement electronic portfolio accessible to students and parents that will allow weekly updates of information and communication, this may replace or enhance our current report card system. We have redesigned our progress reporting system with a great deal of parent feedback. A portfolio system was the least popular of options. At this point we are quite comfortable making the decision not to implement a school wide electronic portfolio. Neither the staff level of comfort nor a robust technology exists to implement such a plan. We look forward to exploring the use of Google docs with our 3rd through 6th grade students as a means for sharing work and teacher comment on regular assignments.

Goal 2: Responsive Classroom

Explore the adoption of *Responsive Classroom* approach as an evidence-based social and emotional learning program to improve school climate.

Background and Rationale:

Over the past ten years, the Douglas School has approached improved social and emotional learning through a variety of curricula, school designed programs and activities. We are looking for a unified approach that will be used throughout the school year, will utilize common language throughout the school, will engage teachers and students, and compliment the pedagogical changes that we have begun. The *Responsive Classroom* approach is a promising way of teaching that emphasizes social, emotional, and academic growth while building a strong and safe school community.

From their website, The *Responsive Classroom* approach is described as “A general approach to teaching, rather than a program designed to address a specific school issue. It is based on the premise that children learn best when they have both academic and social-emotional skills. The *Responsive Classroom* approach consists of a set of practices that build academic and social-emotional competencies and that can be used along with many other programs.”

These classroom practices are:

- **Morning Meeting**—gathering as a whole class each morning to greet one another, share news, and warm up for the day ahead
- **Rule Creation**—helping students create classroom rules to ensure an environment that allows all class members to meet their learning goals
- **Interactive Modeling**—teaching children to notice and internalize expected behaviors through a unique modeling technique
- **Positive Teacher Language**—using words and tone as a tool to promote children's active learning, sense of community, and self-discipline
- **Logical Consequences**—responding to misbehavior in a way that allows children to fix and learn from their mistakes while preserving their dignity

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- **Guided Discovery**—introducing classroom materials using a format that encourages independence, creativity, and responsibility
- **Academic Choice**—increasing student learning by allowing students teacher-structured choices in their work
- **Classroom Organization**—setting up the physical room in ways that encourage students' independence, cooperation, and productivity
- **Working with Families**—creating avenues for hearing parents' insights and helping them understand the school's teaching approaches
- **Collaborative Problem Solving**—using conferencing, role playing, and other strategies to resolve problems with students

Outcomes/evidence and means by which they were assessed:

1. Use of Morning Meeting, Rule Creation, Interactive Modeling, and Positive Teacher Language in each classroom
2. School staff meetings to share and discuss the approach
3. Identification of further aspects to implement and further trainings that would benefit the Douglas Community

Evidence:

1. Four professional staff attended a summer training by *Responsive Classroom* (RC). They studied the philosophy and the practices listed above at a two day training.
2. A year long Professional Development program, Professional Development days, and two staff meetings were dedicated to familiarize the entire staff with specific RC approaches. These included use of Morning Meeting, Rule Creation, Interactive Modeling, and Positive Teacher Language in each classroom.
3. After a review of the the approaches with all staff, how they are working and what aspects have positive effects, all staff Implement approaches in the classroom and have agreed to continue the exploration of the program in the upcoming year. with further training and implementation over the course of several years.