

WHITIN MIDDLE SCHOOL

School Improvement Plan

2010-2011

“Based on Breaking Ranks in the Middle”



Whitin Middle School



NELMS Spotlight School

Revised and Updated by
Whitin Middle School Council
2010

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Submitted by: Whitin Middle School Council

Council Members:

- Dr. Ron Farrar- Principal
- Amy Puliafico- Assistant Principal
- Dean Tourangeau- Physical Education Teacher
- Theresa McCallum- Special Education Teacher
- Christine Martellio- Grade 8 Mathematics Teacher
- Nadine Clifford- Special Education Teacher
- Andrea Consoletti- Parent

WHITIN MIDDLE SCHOOL

Mission Statement

The Whitin Middle School is committed to working in partnership with parents to provide a high quality, developmentally responsive curriculum and experientially-based programs which are respectful of the diverse characteristics and needs of pre and early adolescent children. Our mission is to help students become good citizens who are healthy, caring, ethical, physically active, and intellectually reflective individuals who believe that life is enriched by learning.

The Whitin Middle School believes that developmentally responsive middle level schools are characterized by:

- Educators committed to young adolescents
- A shared vision
- High expectations for all
- Adult advocates for students
- Family and community partnerships
- A positive school climate

Therefore, it is the mission of the Whitin Middle School to provide:

- Curriculum that is challenging, integrative, and exploratory
- Varied teaching and learning approaches
- Assessment and evaluation that promotes learning
- Flexible organizational structures
- Programs and policies that foster health, wellness, and safety
- Comprehensive guidance and support services

* Adapted from National Middle School Association. (1995). This We Believe: Developmentally Responsive Middle Level Schools. Columbus, Ohio.

TRANSITION FROM INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL TO MIDDLE SCHOOL

History of the School Improvement Planning

1996: Whitin Middle School Council members drafted a plan to transition their intermediate school to a middle school. This plan proposed a rationale, established specific outcome goals, and set forth a mission to create a middle school of the future which will be designed to respond directly to the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical needs of early adolescent students.

1998: Members of Whitin Middle School Council revised and updated the School Improvement Plan. During the planning process, Council members focused attention on a position paper published by the National Middle School Association entitled This We Believe. This document first identified six characteristics of developmentally responsive middle level schools and then suggested six major program components.

2002: Whitin Middle School Council members spent considerable time reviewing the school improvement changes that were implemented during the past decade. Council members then worked to develop a new School Improvement Plan that reflected concepts contained in Turning Points 2000. The current Whitin Middle School Improvement Plan represents a commitment by the school to implement middle-level best practices that enhance powerful learning for young adolescents.

2004: During the past decade, Whitin Middle School experienced a dynamic and rapidly changing program. The transition from intermediate school to middle school brought about improvements in faculty morale and school climate that opened the door for ongoing implementation of best practices in middle level teaching and learning. The school improvement efforts of the Whitin Middle School Council, which focused on curriculum, instruction, organizational structures, and parent involvement have changed the school's image in both perception and reality.

In May of 2004, Whitin Middle School was chosen to receive the New England League of Middle School's Spotlight School Award. NELMS recognized Whitin Middle School as follows: "Your involvement with teaming, flexible scheduling, standards-based instruction, appropriate grouping practices, interdisciplinary instruction, multiple intelligences, active hands-on classroom learning, and parent and community engagement are but a few of Whitin's outstanding qualities. Your School's environment and culture reflect a deep concern for and understanding of the needs of young adolescent students."

2009: The Whitin Middle School Council met in 2008-2009. The council reviewed the previous school improvement plan, researched current philosophies and school improvement plans from other school systems, and began a refocus and reformat. In doing so, the council formulated six goals using the nine cornerstone strategies adapted from the National Association of Secondary

School Principals “Breaking Ranks in the Middle- Strategies for Leading Middle Level Reform.” Next, the faculty and staff were informed of the progress, given the goals, and asked for input and suggestions. The suggestions and input was reviewed and incorporated where applicable.

WHITIN MIDDLE SCHOOL

Guiding Principles

Breaking Ranks in the Middle: Strategies for Leading Middle Level Reform Executive Summary

A Vision for Improvement: Nine Cornerstone Strategies

- Establish the academically rigorous essential learning that a student is required to master in order to successfully make the transition to high school and align the curriculum and teaching strategies to realize that goal
- Create dynamic teacher teams that are afforded common planning time to help organize and improve the quality and quantity of interactions between teachers and students
- Provide structured planning time for teachers to align the curriculum across grades and schools and to map efforts that address the academic, developmental, social, and personal needs of students, especially at critical transition periods (e.g., elementary to middle grades, middle grades to high school)
- Implement a comprehensive advisory or other program that ensures that each student has frequent and meaningful opportunities to meet with an adult to plan and assess the student’s academic, personal, and social development
- Ensure that teachers assess the individual learning needs of students and tailor instructional strategies and multiple assessments accordingly
- Entrust teachers with the responsibility of implementing schedules that are flexible enough to accommodate teaching strategies consistent with the ways students learn most effectively and that allow for effective teacher teaming, common planning time, and other lesson planning
- Institute structural leadership systems that allow for substantive involvement in decision making by students, teachers, family members, and the community, and that support effective communication among these groups
- Align all programs and structures so that all social, economic, and racial/ethnic groups have open and equal access to challenging activities and learning
- Align the school-wide comprehensive, ongoing professional development program and the Personal Learning Plans (PLPs) of staff members with the requisite knowledge of content, instructional strategies, and student developmental factors

WHITIN MIDDLE SCHOOL

School Improvement Plan

Goals for 2010-2011

- 1. To improve student achievement by integrating best practices in the classroom in an effort to increase Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) scores and attain Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)**
- 2. To support and provide services to staff and students to meet the diverse needs of all learners**
- 3. To nourish the whole student in mind and body through expanding initiatives in music, art, and physical education**
- 4. To uphold a safe and healthy school environment**
- 5. To work together with the community in a collaborative effort to increase parental involvement creating a united environment within the school district**
- 6. To nurture and maintain a staff which fosters a positive school climate by encouraging communication, respect, and collegiality**

Goal #1

To improve student achievement by integrating best practices in the classroom in an effort to increase Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) scores and attain Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

- Use Data Warehouse software to review MCAS test analysis reports and plan for improved achievement.
- Continue to implement First Steps in Math, Story Town reading program, and Keys to Literacy in an effort to align the curriculum with the Massachusetts State Curriculum frameworks, help students understand and learn content information to improve outcomes for all students.
- Continue to use Study Island, a classroom technology program, to provide practice and drill for mastery of content, concepts, and skills. Additionally, explore and develop effective methods to streamline and integrate the study island curriculum into the academic day.

Goal #2

To support and provide services to staff and students to meet the diverse needs of all learners

- Establish a response to intervention (RTI) protocol, which implements strategies that will address the needs of students who struggle with mastery of learning standards.
- Write and monitor individual student success plans (ISSPs) to help students improve performance on annual MCAS tests.
- Promote the Gifted and Talented program goals in an effort to reach those students who are not readily challenged by the current curriculum.
- Offer an intensive eight week MCAS tutoring program during the spring semester.
- Pursue grants for implementation of programs to meet the diverse needs of all learners.

Goal #3

To nourish the whole student in mind and body through expanding initiatives in music, art, and physical education

- Provide a variety of activities such as intramurals, dances and socials which are inclusive and support participation of all students in a safe and structured environment.
- Make available opportunities such as the student faculty basketball game, Celebration of the Arts, concerts, plays, and debate for students to experience.
- Afford the opportunity to experience education outside the classroom by promoting field trips and community enrichment projects.
- Provide opportunities for students to give back to the global community and volunteer through organizations such as Community of Caring and Student Council.

Goal #4

To uphold a safe and healthy school environment

- Implement specific procedures to manage varied crisis situations by supporting the relationship between the Whitin Middle School crisis team and the local community police and fire departments.
- Support the efforts of the district to enforce sign-in procedures for visitors and a badge system for faculty and staff.
- Educate the faculty, staff, and students on bullying. Enforce the district and school policies on bullying, fighting, and disrespect of others within the school community.
- Continue the partnership with the Juvenile Officer and Uxbridge Police Department to implement “GREAT”- Gang Resistance Educations and Training and the Juvenile Diversion Program.
- Support and promote the Community of Caring philosophy which focuses implementing five core values within its environment (caring, respect, family, trust, and responsibility). The program is designed to define leadership characteristics in all students while maintaining a sense of equality throughout our school.
- Offer the **Stay on Track** program implemented by the MA National Guard to our 6th and/or 7th grade students during their health rotation of specials classes.
- Implement a school wide research based Bullying Prevention & Intervention Program

Goal #5

To work together with the community in a collaborative effort to increase parental involvement creating a united environment within the school district

- Increase opportunities for parents to volunteer in the classroom and the school as a whole.
- Promote communication between the school community and the home through the school website, newsletters, e-mail, connect ed, and the school sign.
- Afford opportunities for community members, businesses and programs to work together with faculty and/or staff introducing new and challenging programs for students.
- Promote and support current programs within the school offering community service opportunities.
- Continue partnership with local Karate Instructor to demonstrate and instruct students during Physical Education Classes.

Goal #6

To nurture and maintain a staff which fosters a positive school climate by encouraging communication, respect, and collegiality

- Conduct and encourage walk-through visits to promote professional sharing and growth.
- Continue a teaming approach providing opportunities for staff development and collaboration.
- Continue the new teacher mentoring program and the beginning teacher institute.
- Foster an environment which promotes and encourages mutual respect of staff, teachers, administration and paraprofessionals through training and mentoring so that each individual's duties, responsibilities, and personal goals can be met.
- Develop a volunteer Whitin Advisory Committee which consists of teachers, staff and administration. The purpose of the committee will be to meet periodically to discuss educational matters of concern and the day to day operations of the school.