

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

CONWAY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

2014-16

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

The school improvement plan for 2014-2016 continues to reflect a number of fundamental areas the school council and teachers feel are appropriate and necessary to ensure that the school remains a welcoming and vibrant place for learning and community building. We have added new items or enlarged upon existing ones to align more closely with District – wide Goals for the 2014 - 2015 academic year. The two we have selected are Meeting Diverse Needs (Standard 2, A3) and Two –way Communication (Standard 3, C1).

The current improvement plan also incorporates, to a larger extent than previous plans, significant input from teachers. That fact is a result of the many initiatives teachers have taken to achieve the goals of previous improvement plans. Additionally, teachers have led the way in school improvement by presenting new and interesting projects in technology and STEM to name just two. This plan exemplifies the importance of close collaboration among school council members, teachers, and administration.

School Council Members
Katelyna Nields
Kristen Strange
Jeff Rutherford
Jeannie Boyden
Jennifer Wheeler
Jeremy Brunnacioni
Judith Siciliano

1. CREATING COMMUNITY / Two Way Communication

The School Council believes that all members of the greater school community, administration, teachers, staff, families, students and residents of Conway, are vital to the continued excellence of education at the Conway Grammar School. To this end the council supports programs and activities that bring our community together, increase communication between all parties and create opportunities for sharing skills and talents that benefit our children.

We support events such as All School Sing and potluck dinners that bring our community together and give us opportunities to get to know one another. Events that celebrate our students' achievements and talents such as the School Show and Art Exhibit validate the efforts of students and teachers alike. We support school-wide programming and projects that unite us and give everyone a sense of participation and excitement such as Spring Arts Enrichment. Opportunities for students to work across grades, such as Reading Buddies or sharing indoor recess activities, are encouraged.

There are a number of activities directed toward increasing the connection between school and families, some of which we have tried in the past and some for the future. We will continue offering Literacy Night and Math Madness, both well attended. We plan to add Science Night and Lunch and Learn for parents. The latter will focus on curriculum, programs, and teaching techniques. Lunch is provided,

followed by a brief presentation by the teacher. Parents join their children to witness an activity which features the topic of Lunch and Learn.

BOKS and Conway Jumping Beans continue to be important connections between the school and families. We have added a Monthly Fitness Challenge as a school wide event. Teachers challenge students to achieve a fitness goal (500 squats per class) and then gather to celebrate achieving the goal.

We support increased communication, such as letters from the principal, about important events that affect the school community as a whole. Regular newsletters from teachers and the principal are important avenues of communication. We support policies that reflect openness to community input and involvement. Communications between the PTO, School Council, School Committee and the administration is also encouraged. This may take the form of joint meetings or sending representatives to attend meetings to address common concerns. The PTO will sponsor “meet and greet” events during Curriculum Night to connect families with staff members who may not be their child’s teacher.

School administration, teachers, and staff are encouraged to make specific requests when needs arise. Parents are encouraged to volunteer to whatever extent possible. Diverse activities such as reading to an individual child or assisting with counting lunch money or organizing book orders are encouraged. Parents and community members will be engaged to help solve larger problems, such as improving the acoustics in the cafeteria. Classroom newsletters will be important avenues for these requests. Announcements at community meetings and get-togethers will also be a good way to connect skills with unmet needs. We encourage a

project to develop a directory of community members' skills and talents to aid us in identifying people who can contribute to our school.

2. OUTDOOR LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The School council would like the school grounds to be used more by teachers and students. The council would like areas of the playground upgraded to meet the needs of students and teachers. Making more property accessible will create areas where learning can take place. The council supports teachers' interest in using the school grounds to support and enhance curriculum.

Plantings are being added by staff and students, as part of environmental studies. (These include apple trees, perennials in numerous gardens, and plantings in a vegetable garden.) Parent volunteers and students, in coordination with the town DPW, have also begun to develop a wildlife habitat, containing native plants. Our plan is to continue and expand each of these projects.

A committee of parents and staff was formed to develop and execute plans to improve the school grounds. Recent projects include: new sandbox in the coral, new sand pit on the main playground, swing repair, new row hedge, and rock wall to keep balls from reaching the driveway. Long term projects include: a walking path along the perimeter of the school, which will include exercise stations, a hiking trail with informational postings about wildlife and plant identification, and additions to the play structure.

The School Council will work with and support the PTO as it continues to fund and organize "work days" to implement the

long term projects designed to increase the learning environment well beyond the classroom.

3. ART ENRICHMENT AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Conway Grammar recognizes that the arts play an important role in the education of children; the arts enhance the academic curriculum: provide students with diverse avenues for self-expression: and create opportunities for community-building. The School Council will work to support the arts in our school by:

- Supporting teachers and staff in their efforts to enrich curriculum through the arts.
- Supporting current enrichment programs and special events, such as All School Sing and the May Day celebration.
- Exploring opportunities for new enrichment programs, including artists-in-residence, special projects, student exhibits, performances and showcases.
- Ensuring that the arts are included in the annual school budget.
- Seeking grant funding and other financial and volunteer support for arts enrichment programs.

4. SUPPORTING DIVERSITY

Conway Grammar School is committed to ensuring a safe and nurturing environment for all members of the school community regardless of race, religion, national origin, ancestry, age, gender, sexual orientation, or disability (school handbook). The School Council would like to look beyond lack of discrimination to encouraging and teaching

appreciation of differences, both within the school and the wider community. If we are not talking about it, we are not supporting diversity.

The Council encourages teachers and students to support diversity in school in the following ways:

1. Seek gender fairness in all areas including, but not limited to, sports.
2. Monitor inclusion of children with disabilities in all school activities.
3. Appreciate and accept different races, religions, and cultures.
4. Appreciate and accept diverse kinds of families.
5. Educate students about learning differences.
6. Inform and educate parents about learning differences.

The Council further suggests an increase in intra-class activities, such as Reading Buddies. The hope is to increase community building and awareness of diversity within the school community. Integrating older students with younger students for morning recess will increase contact among students across grades.

Students in K-6 are taught elementary Spanish. This program exposes children to games and music designed to increase students' Spanish vocabulary. Increased instruction in conversational Spanish is recommended by the Council and staff.

All School meetings are designed to bring the school community together, to increase the students' exposure to music and poetry and other art forms and to encourage the students' comfort with public speaking. In addition, the All School Sing can be used to celebrate the diversity both within CGS and in the world students' will live in.

Diversity is also about how students learn. The School Council recommends and supports the administration's and teachers' goals of identifying learners in each grade, who show progress well above grade level and who could benefit from materials/programs to enrich their learning experiences. Whenever possible these learning activities should be technologically driven to allow for independence and flexibility for the learner.

The librarian/media specialist will create a list of software programs, websites, etc. which teachers can access for students who are able and would enjoy learning experiences beyond those provided through the regular curriculum. Parents will be contacted and involved in these decisions.

5. PROMOTING FAIRNESS AND BUILDING SAFETY

CGS's anti-bullying program and policies are designed to keep all children safe. The School Council supports and encourages the continuation of all anti-bullying efforts. Curriculum and policies which address issues of prevention of bullying behavior include:

- The Frontier and Union #38 policy to address bullying concerns is posted on the school website and included in the hand book.
- Steps to Respect and Second Step programs are used throughout the school under the supervision of the school psychologist. CGS is committed to these programs and they appear in the district wide anti-bullying policy.
- Connecting the school's approach both to bullying prevention and social skills development to the town athletic program has long been a goal of the council and the school. The council recommends that this connection be made by either meeting with coaches around these

topics and/or sharing written recommendations with the director of the athletic program.

- School safety, especially building based, should be incorporated into a written safety plan for teachers and staff. Working with law enforcement officials, CGS will create a safety plan detailing protocols for lock downs, fire drills, evacuations, shelter in place etc. Administration and a committee of teachers and staff will be responsible for the document.

6. Worksite Wellness

This is a new initiative the school has embraced in an effort to promote teacher and staff wellness. The three aspects of the program are Moving Meditation, Wellness Consultations, and Nutritional Information. The school council supports this effort to reach out to teachers and staff to increase their physical and emotional health and would like to see this effort become a permanent part of the school's overall concern for the welfare of the adults who service the student population.

7. Technology

In the fall of 2014, Conway Grammar will be migrating to a new server using Active X in place of the Novell file system to provide users with better access to files and programs and a more stable environment. Continued improvement to the infrastructure and the connection to Mass Broadband will provide faster and more reliable access to the internet for students and teachers. Kindergarten is adding iPads to enhance math and literacy instruction. We have added Kindles in grades 1, 2, and 3 to access e-books for reading groups and for skill building apps in math, language arts and science in small group learning stations. Grades 4, 5, and 6

will pilot Chromebooks and Google apps for education, better preparing them for the transition to Frontier Regional. Students and faculty will switch to the Gmail platform to take advantage of the increased functionality and productivity available through Google apps.

Union # 38 elementary schools will go live with a more unified web presence. Conway's web page continues to be modified in anticipation of that change.

The council supports the implementation of STEM to support math, science/engineering curriculum of Union # 38 and the MA State Standards. This will happen through Out of School Time programs and will be introduced beginning with the upper grades during the school day. The Lunch and Learn robotics program will continue for Third Grade and the council encourages expanding that program to other grades as appropriate.