

**Lincoln School**

**SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2016-2017**



**School Council Members**

Cindy DeChristofaro – 5-8 Parent

John Lynch – 5-8 Parent

Audrey Kalmus – K-4 Parent

Cathie Bitter – K-4 Parent

Melissa Webster – K-4 Teacher

Claudia Fox Tree/Jaime Moody – 5-8 Teachers

Gina Halsted – Community Member

Shrah Collmer – Principal K-4

Sharon Hobbs – Principal 5-8

### **Assessment of School Focus**

The goals presented in this School Improvement Plan are extensions of last year's work. We seek to strengthen our capacity to respond consistently to students' social, emotional and academic needs through increased awareness of cultural backgrounds, social emotional competencies, academic strengths and areas for growth. These goals support the teachers in their deepening understanding of collaborative practices that carry across teams and disciplines to benefit student learning.

In addition to the goals in this plan, the members of the School Council chose to take on a review of our homework policy and practices, which had not been reviewed since 2008. The School Council members read articles, talked about homework from a teacher and parent perspective, looked at several surveys and created one for our school. Two hundred and fifteen parents responded to the survey with fairly equal distribution across the grade levels. In the next several weeks, the members of the School Council will look more closely at the data and make recommendations for further work to be done by the group next year.

<b>Rubric for School Improvement Plan Level of Achievement (Status)</b>	
<b>CODE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTOR</b>
NOT YET	Strategies in this category are not yet initiated.
INITIATED	Strategies in this goal are in the beginning stages of implementation. This may include some completed professional development, pilot initiatives planned, plans for next steps in process.
DEVELOPING	Strategies in this category are in the developing stages. This may include basic professional development, continuing professional development planned, initial data collected, pilot projects initiated, teams functioning effectively.
ESTABLISHED	Strategies in the category have been established. This may include an on-going professional development plan, completed cycle of data collection, documented growth in areas of academic achievement.
REFINING	Strategies in this category are in the refining stage. This may include completed School Improvement Plan goal, expansion of successful practices to other grade levels or subjects, more comprehensive or advanced professional development.

## District Strategic Plan: Strategic Objectives

Instruction is student centered and focused on the engagement, achievement, and development of all learners.

## District Strategic Plan: Strategic Priorities Addressed by School Based Goals

C1. Develop and deepen instructional practices and models for differentiating instruction to meet the individual needs of all students.

### School Based Goal 1

K-4 Faculty will implement school wide expectations and develop a shared understanding of the skills, strategies and supports that meet the social emotional needs of each student.

### **Goal 1: What's been done?**

This year's work on school-wide expectations and tiered interventions and supports has focused on responding to student needs. Two teams, Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) and Student Support Team (SST), furthered the development of supports and practices for responding to students who need social, emotional, and/or behavioral support.

The Faculty Advisory Committee meets monthly and is made up of classroom teachers, special educators, the behaviorist, specialists and building administrators. The group planned faculty meeting work around consequences for misbehavior. We started by developing a shared understanding of principles of behavior such as the belief that students do well if they can, and that behavior increases or decreases because of its consequence. The full faculty provided input on their current practices around consequences for problematic behavior. FAC then reviewed the faculty input and developed a "Guidelines for Consequences" document that gives examples of misbehavior (non-examples of CARES) and a range of logical consequences. The FAC will be presenting at the May faculty meeting to review this work.

The Student Support Team meets weekly and includes the Principal, METCO Director, Student Services Coordinator, School Nurse, Social Workers, Lincoln Police Liaison, and the classroom teacher who is presenting a social, emotional and/or behavioral concern about a student. This year, 14 teachers from all K-4 grade levels participated in SST. The team examined patterns of behavior and developed action plans including the implementation of specific strategies, behavior plans, and data collection. This format provides a collaborative approach to supporting students and their teachers, and communicating with families. We have been able to capitalize on the expertise of our faculty to respond to student needs. As a result of these collaborative meetings a range of supports were put in place including matching a student with a mentor, or check-ins with the Social Worker, Principal and/or METCO Director. In some cases, consultation with the BCBA (Board Certified Behavior Analyst) resulted in specific strategies or behavior plans to address problematic behavior. SST also made referrals for Special Education Evaluation.

### **What's next?**

FAC and SST have been able to accomplish a great deal this year. The School Improvement Plan goal encompassed a much broader range of work, which, in retrospect, was unrealistic. It will be important to prioritize next steps, both in scope and process, taking into consideration how to balance this work with other initiatives. The CARES Team is ready to share, and the faculty eager to implement the CARES lessons. We believe that the recognition of student success in showing the CARES values will empower students to feel more confident and strengthen positive feelings about school, and so this is an important next step.

Activities	Output & Measures	Status	Possible Next Steps
Implement School Wide Expectations - Lincoln School CARES	Materials for recognition system  CARES lessons	Not Yet	Implement CARES lessons and develop recognition system.
Define supports and interventions	Manual of supports and interventions for Tier I ( <i>Universal</i> ), Tier II ( <i>Targeted</i> ), Tier III ( <i>Intensive</i> )	Developing	Continue refining the Student Support Team (SST) system of identifying student needs and matching support strategies (Tier II).  Based on the work of SST and FAC, draft a manual to formalize current practices
Develop data collection and analysis	Documents for incidents and behavior concerns  System for recording behavior data  Survey to determine if classroom and school climate, and academic and behavioral outcomes were positively impacted by this work	Developing	Continue refining data systems for classroom, lunch/recess monitors, and school.
Professional Development workshop <b>Allies, Achievers and Risk-takers</b>	Anecdotal information about “check-in” strategy  Teacher reflections  Student survey	Established	Incorporate strategies from this workshop into Tier 1 Interventions and Supports including: continuing to purposefully include relationship and community building activities into classroom routines; and activities that celebrate diversity.
Report out to Families and School Community	Family Updates Newsletter Principal’s Forum Classroom Newsletters, blogs, notes	Established	Ongoing communication with families is already in place, however, it can be strengthened by adding opportunities for families to provide more input. This can be accomplished by establishing a communication plan that includes more follow up and/or check in with the family; and by dedicating Principal Forum time to hear family perspectives on this work, how it is carried out and its impact on students attitudes about school.

## District Strategic Plan: Strategic Objectives

Instruction is student centered and focused on the engagement, achievement, and development of all learners.

### District Strategic Plan: Strategic Priorities Addressed by School Based Goals

#### **C1. Develop and deepen instructional practices and models for differentiating instruction to meet the individual needs of all students.**

##### School Based Goal 2a: K-4

K-4 Faculty will implement an instruction block for targeted instruction for all students.

#### **Goal 2a: What's been done?**

Two 45-minute blocks of time were added as “Intervention Blocks” in kindergarten through grade 4 schedules with the hope of optimizing support and services from Special Educators and Interventionists (Math and Reading Specialists and Tutors). The goals were to decrease fragmented instructional time for students, increase instructional momentum, and provide targeted instruction for all students. We anticipated that scheduling would be tricky - where would the time come from given the recommended instruction time per subject area? There are also several faculty members who have responsibilities in multiple schools in the district. Throughout the year the Team Leaders reported out and examined the implementation of Intervention Blocks. These discussions led us to the essential question, “Do the benefits outweigh the limitations?”

Grade level teams approached Intervention Block in a variety of ways and each method presented pros and cons. The most successful model came from the combination of this initiative with the Collaborative Practices time provided by the district. Teachers reviewed a common assessment, determined student groupings based on common needs, and designed targeted instruction. This method allowed teachers to be highly focused in their planning and instruction, and provided appropriate challenge for all students leading to positive learning experiences and outcomes. Several grade level teams embarked on approaches that maintained classroom-based groupings and utilized the Reading and Math Specialists and Classroom Assistants to provide small group instruction, still based on student assessment data. As a result, students were able to work at their level, many with the support of an adult, and again the learning experiences and outcomes were positive.

The most salient concern, shared by the majority of teachers, is the impact on planning and instruction time. For many, the potential of having “all hands on deck” did not become a reality; teams displaced regular Common Planning Time work in order to develop Intervention Block instruction; and the complexity of the specialists’ schedules and the flow of daily schedules prohibited some teams from being able to implement both Intervention Blocks. It is important to note that prior to the Intervention Block work, targeted instruction and small group instruction were in place, as were instructional partnerships amongst the Classroom Teachers, Content Specialists and Special Educators. However, the consensus is that most models of Intervention Block did not substantially increase our ability to provide targeted, small group instruction.

#### **What's Next?**

The Team Leaders generated some guiding questions that will help us make decisions about next steps. The formation of a review committee would enable us to examine the intersection of instructional needs and resources, and scheduling

constraints. The committee would use data and reflections to analyze the efficacy of intervention block, factors that impacted its success; and think strategically about how challenges could be mitigated. Ultimately, we want to answer the question, “How can we capitalize on the resources (time, personnel) to most effectively impact student learning”?

Activities	Output & Measures	Status	Possible Next Steps
Intervention Block Planning and Implementation	Descriptions of intervention block plans including student groupings, materials, and staffing	Established	Review the 2016-17 implementation of Intervention Block to identify successful elements and areas that would need to be addressed to increase the success
Reflection / Refine	Student data Observational data Professional reflection	Established	The review committee can use reflections and data to inform next steps.
Review and Next Steps	Survey Executive report	Initiated	Include feedback from Team Leaders to be considered by the review committee.

School Based Goal 2b: Grades 5-8
To know our learners, deeply and through a cultural lens, so that we can better differentiate instruction.

**Goal 2b: What’s been done?**

In grades 5-8, we have done systematic teaching and reflection that has guided our culturally responsive teaching work this year. Teachers were asked, at the beginning of the year, to identify four people who would push their thinking and with whom they felt safe learning about race and gender. The principal then created what we referred to as Diversity Working Groups (DWG). In the course of our meeting time, some learning was done in the larger group and other was done in DWG groups. This included reading articles, watching video, and having conversations that pushed all of our thinking around the topic of race and gender. Teachers wrote a mid-fall reflection about their learning. Teachers were asked for three things they had learned, two things they were still wondering about, and one thing they needed to move forward in our work together. Here are some comments about impact on teachers:

- The difference between inequality and inequity. I learned a different perspective on these terms.
- I love being able to have these conversations because the “trickle down” to kids is so important to their identity, safety, and willingness be engaged, trust, and learn from us.
- I also want to do more work around our language when talking about students. For example, what do we mean or think when we say a kid is lazy? I also hear a lot of assumptions and statements made about kids based on their gender. I wonder about the effect of this.
- Honestly, I enjoy my DWG group. I wasn’t picky about who I wanted to work with and who I didn’t care to choose; yet, I like the perspective of the others, in my group, regarding the topics we have addressed so far and feel comfortable sharing.

- The readings and conversations have definitely heightened my awareness of the language I use and assumptions/habits/etc. that show up in the classroom.
- I think the most important thing that I have become more aware of is that students need to feel safe in order to learn, and that some students do not always feel safe.
- I learned that difficult conversations ARE possible at our school as a whole faculty.

The depth of our conversations and learning is impacting conversations that teachers have with students about their learning and the content of literature or social studies lessons. Faculty will also do a reflection this spring that will create our path for learning next school year.

At key points in the year, staff were asked to share their personal stories with each other as they related to family culture and behavioral growth. We looked at how our nuclear families created our lens on the world. We also looked at our own adolescent behaviors and how they would be interpreted through a current behavioral lens, as well as how they impact how we interact with the students in front of us. We thought about rituals and relationships and how we build connections with students who are like us and who are quite different. We researched common stereotypes about different ethnicities and religions and shared them with each other so that everyone had the opportunity to be a teacher and a learner within the group.

Three teachers took this work and brought it to the larger community and to students. The Community Book Talk in March about the book “Between the World and Me” was well attended (over 40 people signed up and 36 came) and the conversation left the community eager for more. Our METCO academic advisor also helped students to have an affinity group to talk about their experiences of race in the building. On Wednesday, April 26, students hosted faculty at their meeting and invited the faculty to engage in conversation and activities designed to allow everyone to share their experiences of race and privilege in large and small groups. The students did a survey with teachers at the end of the afternoon to assess the teacher climate relative to race in the building.

The impact of this work has been varied. As a staff, we are much more conscious of our language. By raising our awareness, we are thinking about our use of gender-based pronouns differently, we are looking at the ways that we teach events in history and how we ensure that we are not spotlighting students of color and asking them to represent their entire race. Teachers are talking with each other differently now. It is not unusual to walk into a room and have teachers discussing an article or piece of student work with a lens toward the cultural background of the student. In English class, this led to name poems students wrote that surfaced stereotypes or hidden information about who they were as people. This spring, the same 8th graders are writing six word memoirs that came directly from a “Rethinking Schools” article about a project in Philadelphia. Teachers are actively talking about implicit biases they might hold and how those are influencing how they see their students.

**What’s next?** At our final meeting in May, teachers will be asked to share their thinking about the work thus far and to help the group of teachers who will meet this summer to plan our next year’s worth of meetings.

Activities	Outputs and Measures	Status	Possible Next Steps
Faculty meetings designed to build skills in differentiation and culturally responsive teaching	Agendas, faculty reflection	Initiated	A larger group of teachers and the principal have been awarded the opportunity to complete summer work to continue planning.

Small Group work that will build faculty trust and capacity	Faculty reflections, evidence of classroom work (student work, team meeting notes)	Initiated	The use of the small groups has been a wonderful experience for many. Teachers have spoken often of the impact of storytelling and of the conversation in the DWG groups. This has pushed people to be more vulnerable and to be willing to question their own thinking.
---	--	-----------	--

## District Strategic Plan: Strategic Objectives

Educator Growth and Innovation: Educators demonstrate continual growth and professional collaboration built on a shared vision of effective teaching.

### District Strategic Plan: Strategic Priorities Addressed by School Based Goals

A1. Continue to develop, demonstrate, and expand team-based collaborative practices, Facilitative Leadership, and coaching capacity.

### School Based Goal 3: K-8

To support teachers as they implement the collaborative practices that will create professional learning communities focused on student learning.

### Goal 3: What's been done?

This first year of collaborative practices led to varied and interesting work across grade levels. There were 20 collaborative practice groups in the K-8 that spanned from work between 2 colleagues from different disciplines to a K-8 group of colleagues who looked at how changing their practice influenced student work. Many collaborative practice groups worked on curriculum, either developing new or refining existing units, which resulted in changes to instruction in Math, Writing, Physical Education, Reading, Science, Music and Art. All groups began by creating norms and goals for their work during the year. Many were able to implement different parts of their work, look at student work together, and revise for a second round of instruction.

A few examples of impact on student learning include:

- A collaboration between wellness and occupational and physical therapists that created consistent strategies for students with physical needs allowing them to participate fully in all activities.
- Collaboration between K-8 colleagues that structured conversations about behavior, connection with all students, and thinking about meeting the needs of everyone in a diverse classroom setting that had teachers re-thinking their environment and changing their routines.
- Teaching students how to write claims with evidence and clear conclusions across disciplines. A sixth grade science final lab used all of this work and created a collaboration with our English Language Arts content specialist to model for students the impact of good, clear writing.
- Across discipline work in art and music that allowed students to see that visual and aural arts support and complement each other and to create tone paintings to match music that they wrote.
- Fifth grade reading collaboration that created interesting arguments between fifth grade teachers about reading instruction and talking with students about books and ideas; impacting their instruction and thus student learning.



- Targeted instruction provided to all students at a grade level by forming homogenous groupings and sharing students across a grade level.
- Increase in small group instruction by including Reading and Math Specialists in classroom instruction.
- Engagement in new or refined curriculum in Science, Integrated Science and Social Studies, Music, and Writing

**What's Next?**

When talking about the plan for next year's strategic priorities, many teachers identified continuing the work with collaborative practice as a high priority. Teachers are seeing the value of talking with each other about student work, and would like to have more time dedicated to this PLC work.

Activities	Outputs and Measures	Status	Possible Next Steps
Assist teachers as they form their collaborative practices groups and goals	Formal group lists, student learning goals	Established	Continuation of some groups with opportunities for others to form. Ideally, people will see all of the groups they're in as collaborative practice groups and will begin to work in that format in departments, teams, and during the collaborative practice time.  Provide time for teachers to start planning goals and forming groups before the end of 2016-17 school year.
Coach groups as they work toward improving student learning outcomes	Meeting summaries, curriculum units, common assessments, student data and student work samples	Initiated	We will continue to monitor groups by attending PLC meetings and providing feedback on meeting notes and summaries.