

PLYMOUTH RIVER SCHOOL COUNCIL REPORT

2014-2015 SCHOOL YEAR

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by

Charles B. Cormier, Chair

Melissa Smith, Assistant Principal

Caryl Falvey, School Committee Representative

Lisa Thomas, Parent Representative

Nancy Bucey, Teacher

Kelly Jones, Community Representative

Introduction

The School Council focused much of its time designing and implementing the *PRS Poetry Contest*, which correlates to goal one: informational writing. The theme of the poetry contest was science, which was aligned with each grade level's science unit: Grade K – Frogs, Grade 1 – Organisms, Grade 2 – Vertebrates, Grade 3 Sun, Moon, and Stars, Grade 4 – Sound, and Grade 5 – Student Choice. A different genre of poetry was assigned to grade level groups: K/1 – acrostic, 2/3 – cinquain, 4/5 – haiku. A brochure was designed that included rules, an explanation of the theme of the contest, and categories for awards. Categories included the following: Best Overall Poem, Best Artistic Representation of a Poem, Most Creative Poem, and Best Cooperative Poem. Winners of each category had their poems displayed in the front hall and presented their poems at All School Meeting.

Two reading incentive programs were implemented and included a very successful *PRS Summer Reading Program* and this winter Plymouth River School worked to end world hunger by partnering with Heifer International for a 2015 Read-a-thon fundraiser. Both programs correlated to goals two and three.

Heifer International is an organization that helps families around the world, and in the US, by giving gifts of livestock and training. Heifer International trains the receiving families how to care for their animals and how to keep them healthy. Families also learn how to develop businesses to sell the products from their animals and their offspring. The program ran from January 14th- February 3rd. The goals were to promote reading and to help Heifer provide livestock to struggling families who have few resources and need an ongoing source of income. In order to participate, students asked friends and family members to sponsor them as they read. Students and teachers also read books about how the gift of a Heifer animal can change a family and a community.

We were particularly pleased with the 5th grade student participation. The fifth grade students became very involved in learning about the topics of hunger, poverty and sustainable development. As a result, participation in the read-a-thon increased significantly. The fifth grade teachers found their students were excited by how our community can help another community.

In total, Plymouth River School raised an astonishing **\$8,577.96** through this fundraiser.

Goal 1: As a result of the emphasis on expository writing in the Common Core, teachers in grade one and five will instruct students on the essential elements of argumentative and information writing. Teachers are expected to instruct the program with fidelity which includes following a pacing guide and submitting a sample portfolio of student writing.

- The system adopted the program Empowering Writers and provided a one-day training for first and fifth grade teachers last fall. The training included instruction in persuasive, narrative, and expository writing. Through observations, a review of evaluation evidence binders during formative and summative meetings, and team meetings it was evident that teachers taught the program with fidelity and utilized a pacing guide.

- The PRS Poetry Contest focused on science content that related to grade level units allowing students to blend expository writing within the poetry genre.

Goal 2: Because we want to be certain that all students receive support at their instructional level in literacy, students in grade five will be exposed to an RTI model that will require teachers to implement a schedule of differentiated instruction twice in a cycle.

- The fifth grade team redeployed their students into homogeneous groups based on assessments and teacher feedback twice in a six-day cycle.
- Materials were ordered for different skill needs and novels were selected that engaged our students in relevant topics such as mystery, friendship, multiculturalism, separation, and survival. Students read biographies, Greek myths, The Green Glass House with a focus on mystery and friendship, and On Two Feet and Wings, a true story about a boy escaping Iran during the Iran-Iraq War. The Common Core Coach and Storyworks were also used for several groups.
- While not directly connected with this goal, it is important to know that the grade four team increased the number of RTI sessions from two to three per cycle. The team moved to a more collaborative approach with all children being redeployed across the grade level to target specific skills.

Goal 3: Because a small population of at risk readers not on IEP's are not meeting grade level expectations in grades one through four, those students will be targeted to receive Tier 3 support in small group settings.

- Foundational materials from the Wilson program were ordered and para-educators, tutors, and teachers were trained on use of the materials.
- Small group instruction, with a maximum of four students, was scheduled and implemented for thirty minutes three times in a six-day cycle.
- Foundations kits used were one grade below grade level expectations because of low performance on assessments. Students completed one-half of the program and we will determine new starting points for these students at the opening of school in September.
- The literacy team will meet to make improvements on the implementation of Foundations.

Tier 3 Reading Results:

Grade 1: 10 Students Participated

Nine of ten first graders in the Foundations Program had an average increase (Fall to Spring) on the DIBELS Correct Letter Sounds subtest was 53 . (That is 53 more correct sounds made while reading simple nonsense words on the one minute test). The same nine students increased 21 points (words), on average, on the DIBELS Whole Word Read Subtest. This subtest assesses how many nonsense words a student can read in one minute.

Grade 2: 4 Students Participated

All grade 2 students made growth on the Beginning Decoding Survey. Most students made significant growth in Oral reading Accuracy, between 3-6%. One student increased his accuracy by 15%!

Grade 3: 4 Students Participated

All grade 3 students made growth on the Beginning and the Advanced Decoding Survey. One student went on an IEP for Literacy Support. Of the three remaining students, all three are reading above benchmark goals for Oral Reading Fluency and Accuracy!

Grade 4 Students Participated

Four of the five students made growth in the Advanced Decoding Survey.

The students in the grade 4 program also showed great improvement in Oral Reading Accuracy. (See Below)

Student A Fall Accuracy Rate: 97% Spring Accuracy Rate: 99%

Student B Fall Accuracy Rate: 89% Spring Accuracy Rate: 94% * still needs to reach 98% benchmark

Student C Fall Accuracy Rate: 94% Spring Accuracy Rate: 99%

Student D Fall Accuracy Rate: 91% Spring Accuracy Rate: 98%

Student E Fall Accuracy Rate: 96% Spring Accuracy Rate: 99%

Next year we hope to increase student growth by moving from 3/6 to 4/6 sessions per cycle and increase the length of each session to 40 minutes.

Goal 4: Provide small group Tier 3 Targeted Math Support for second grade students who are struggling to meet the grade level mathematics curriculum frameworks.

- Referral forms were completed, but due to staff being directed toward the implementation of RTI in fifth grade, we were unable to provide math support sessions for this population.
- This goal will be implemented next year and will include meetings between the math and reading specialists to organize appropriate staffing.

Goal 5: Establish and electronically manage baseline data for K-2 unit/section mathematics assessments for the Everyday Mathematics program to determine if the results of new assessments accurately reflect students' daily classroom performance.

- Teachers were trained on some elements of the EM4 online resource but the resources were not fully developed and read to be used this year. We will continue with this goal next year.

Summary of MCAS Results and Related Activities

Overall MCAS scores for PRS were quite high with a rating at the 98 percentile and our “high needs subgroup did meet the PPI and CPI Massachusetts targets. As a result, PRS was classified as a Level 1 school. PRS was also one of 42 schools across the Commonwealth that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education recognized as a Commendation School for its high achievement, high progress, and narrowing proficiency gaps. The following is a summary of percentiles at each grade level for students achieving advanced/proficient levels:

Grade 3: ELA 88%, Math 99%

Grade 4: ELA 86%, Math 79%, Long Composition 69% (students scored 16 points or higher out of 20 points, which was a 20% increase over last year)

Grade 5: ELA 96%, Math 85%, Science 84%

Cohorts in ELA and Math showed continuous improvement from third to fifth grade. With these strong scores in mind, we continue to analyze MCAS data to identify classroom trends as well as student growth percentiles by classrooms.

This is the eighth straight year that we have implemented an MCAS preparation course in ELA and Math. Students were selected according to the lowest scores achieved on MCAS, classroom and formative assessments, and their membership in the “high needs” category. Teachers planned and implemented a seven week MCAS preparation course for third, fourth and fifth grade students. Each session was one hour in duration with an average participation rate of twelve students per class at each grade level. A sampling of the topics covered in ELA included genre and theme, words in context, style and language, main idea and support details, myths and traditional stories, plays, poems, cause and effect, nonfiction, and the rules of English. Finding evidence from the text and answering open response items also received attention. Topics in math included graphing and measurement, reasoning, fractions, basic operations, place value, rounding, expressions with variables, geometry, area, volume, perimeter, and responding to open response items.

Special Education teachers Alisa Valley and Christine Rogg provided a Tier 3 time for “high needs” students by providing small group tutoring before school. They invited one first grade student, two second grade students and seven third grade students. Their attendance rate was 90%. The sessions occurred on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 7:30 – 8:05 starting in October and ending in June. Each of the students has an Individual Education Plan. Instruction focused on fact fluency skills and time and money at each student’s instructional level. The para-educator and Christine Rogg assessed and reviewed their progress in order to determine targeted skill instruction as needed. Each student received 30 minutes of skill instruction at their individual level once per cycle. The students met in small groups at the beginning of the school day 8:25-8:55.

