

PLYMOUTH RIVER SCHOOL COUNCIL REPORT

2015-2016 SCHOOL YEAR

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by

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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.

One School Council meeting included a presentation by our reading specialist, Kati Osterman, on the progress of two reading pilots, *Wonders* and *Journeys*. She provided a thorough overview of each program addressing their similarities and differences and their alignment with the Massachusetts Common Core State Standards. First grade teacher and School Council member, Nancy Bucey, offered her perspective on the receptivity of the program by students and the quality of lessons and literature.

Two incentive programs promoted reading this year. As usual, we had the *PRS Summer Reading Program* in which students kept logs of summer reading and are recognized for participation at an All School Meeting in the fall. Overall, we had a good turn-out, but we did see a dip in participation from fifth graders.

This year the reading specialist worked collaboratively with other specialists in the building to promote an *After School Screen Free Challenge* that ran from March 14 - 18. A flyer (attached) that went home with students included ideas of various screen free activities. We included music, physical education, math and field science as well as reading. Students filled out a log noting screen free activities they did each day. This was a huge hit with positive feedback from parents and students.

The 1,000 Book Club continues to engage pre-school students and kindergartners, which lays the foundation for future readers. *The Breakfast Book Club*, available to students in grades four and five engages children in reading novels often focused on social and global issues. *Mad About Science*, for students in grades 2-4, provides opportunities to read expository text in science on environmental issues and the physical, life and earth and space sciences.

Goal 1: As a result of our need to align ELA instruction with the Common Core, teachers in grades K-4 will pilot new Common Core Reading Programs with the Common Core. Data will be gathered to inform the district wide ELA adoption process.

Teachers piloting the two reading programs, *Wonders* and *Journeys* attended full day workshops in June, which allowed them to collaborate over the summer with their grade level teams to plan lessons and pacing. At least three meetings were conducted during the school year with the Reading Specialist, Principal, and Assistant Principal to be updated on progress toward implementation and hear about the pros and cons of each program. Our staff meeting in January

was devoted to this goal as teachers piloting at each grade level provided presentations on the strengths and weakness of each reading series. The pacing of lessons, difficulty in covering the quantity of material suggested in the pacing guide, and the overly long assessments were the issues that were raised.

Our pilot teachers also received professional development throughout the school year and had opportunities to discuss challenges with the Principal and Reading Specialist as needed. Visits to Marshfield and Brewster to observe the teaching of Wonders and Journeys respectively occurred in December.

Goal 2: As a result of an emphasis on STEM and STEAM in the draft of the Massachusetts Science and Technology Framework and NGSS, a STEAM school theme will be implemented that will engage students in hands-on activities during the year and culminating with a full day of STEAM activities on a Saturday. *Goal (abbreviated statement and revised): A STEAM school theme will be implemented that will engage students in hands-on activities during the year and culminate with a week of STEAM activities.*

A STEAM Committee was formed and met during the summer to explore different ideas and strategies that included content, activities, and logistics. Several meetings were held with the committee during the school year to develop a brochure of activities, review proposed activities, locate and secure materials, and plan afterschool events. A decision was made to implement a STEAM Week that would allow all students participate during the week of May 31 – June 3.

Grade level teams were assigned the task of developing four grade level activities to be implemented during STEAM Week. Our art teacher secured a muralist through an HEF Grant who worked with students to represent the activities that were implemented during the week. The culmination of STEAM WEEK was a presentation by the artist Bren Bataclan to the entire school on Tuesday, June 7th. He taught students how to draw the figures that represent his art. Once he finished, the fifth graders remained for a short drawing workshop with Mr. Bataclan. For the remainder of the week, Bren painted a STEAM related mural that was mounted in the cafeteria.

The Pincipal planned activities to be implemented at grades one through five that were in addition to the four lessons for each grade level team. These activities occurred during the day and afterschool. Activities focused on chemistry (measuring an exothermic reaction), engineering, and design (geodesic dome and using ramps to study potential and kinetic energy). Our specialists also developed activities that were implemented during specialists' blocks. Please see attachments for the details of STEAM Week.

Goal 3: Because we want to be certain that all students receive support at their instructional level, students in grade two, who are struggling to meet the grade level mathematics curriculum frameworks, will be provided with Tier 3, small group Targeted Math Support.

After initially creating the program with our Principal, Math Specialist, and the Literacy Para-educator (retired special education teacher) began to take responsibility for the implementation of the program. Observations of his teaching and meetings occurred regularly with a number of modifications made to the program. The following recommendations and comments are offered to improve the program:

- The original curriculum was a computer program, Frontrow.com. However, feedback indicated that it moved too quickly with math concepts and students plateaued very quickly.
- Math manipulatives, paper and pencil tasks, and different computer programs were used once we moved away from Frontrow.com. This variety of instruction strategies made it easier to meet the needs of all students.
- Implement additional assessments including i-Ready Diagnostic and Instruction; EDM assessments, and teacher referrals to target students for entrance into the program.
- Instruction occurred in the computer lab with two para-educators. This format should be continued but the development of lessons should come from teachers or provide the lead para-educator planning time to develop a program. It was suggested that each para-educator each takes a group of students with different needs on the same strand.
- The program is meeting for three days in a cycle from 8:30 - 9:00, which should continue.
- The program needs to have a better alignment with the classroom curriculum and needs of each student. This would likely occur with additional meetings with classroom teachers and assessments.
- Membership in the program included special education and regular education students. The original design did not include special needs students with math goals because they are already receiving targeted instruction to meet their goals by special education teachers and para-educators. We believe that for the program to be more effective we need to limit membership to struggling regular education students.
- Attendance became a problem when classroom teachers felt that early morning activities such as spelling tests took preference because of an inability to schedule activities at other times during the day. A stricter enforcement of attendance is necessary if the program is to be successful. The program started with fourteen second graders with several third graders being added. Some students were dropped from the program and others ended giving us a year-end total of twelve students.
- We will be exploring a variety of math websites to improve activities including IXL Math, EdHelper, Math Fact Café and Common Core worksheets.
- Overall, the program was highly successfully with students showing growth on their assessments.

Goal 4: 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.

After a review of the EDM electronic baseline data program, the math specialist felt that it did not serve our needs and found its implementation to be complicated and time consuming. Therefore, the goal was discontinued.

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 recognized as a 2015 Commendation School for high achievement and high progress by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education recognized. The following is a summary of percentiles at each grade level for students achieving advanced/proficient levels:

Grade 3: ELA 79%, Math 89%

Grade 4: ELA 91%, Math 89%, Long Composition 68% (students scoring 16 points or higher out of 20 points, which was a loss of one percentage point over last year)

Grade 5: ELA 92%, Math 85%, Science 87%

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 ninth 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 four second grade students and five third grade students. Their attendance rate was 90%. The sessions occurred on Mondays and Tuesdays 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. In addition, three third grade students and ten second grade students were identified as needing more remediation in math skills. These students were assessed and targeted skill instruction was provide as needed. Each student received thirty minutes of skill instruction at the individual level three times per cycle (instruction was received through SIP Goal 3). The students met in small groups at the beginning of the school day.

