

**Fisher Hill School Council**  
**School Improvement Plan 2009-2010**  
**Report for August School Committee**  
Submitted by Jennifer Haggerty

Members:	Jennifer Haggerty	Principal, Chair
	Carol Hawley	Teacher, Co-chair
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**INTRODUCTION**

The Fisher Hill School Council recognizes the importance of school services for children. The teachers and service providers at Fisher Hill School offer instruction and activities that are integrated across the curriculum. This instruction is consistent with the development of knowledge and skills as presented and identified in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. The Council strives to support the Orange Elementary School District's belief that all students should be educated in a safe and challenging environment, which will allow them to meet the responsibilities of a rapidly changing and diverse world. We believe that education must begin at an early age and provide an intensive, broad educational program for all learners. This program should emphasize personal adaptability, critical thinking, individual and team problem-solving, a wide range of communication skills, and global understanding and responsibility. We believe that we must educate for democracy and build for the future. The best way to educate for democracy and to achieve academic excellence at the same time is to fully integrate the teaching of social and academic skills at every grade level, in every subject area. We support the use of interdisciplinary, experiential learning activities and technological resources to enlist and engage each child's multiple intelligences. In all curriculum areas, we encourage children to trace, analyze, infer, evaluate, formulate, describe, support, explain, summarize, compare, contrast and predict. We believe that teaching these skills to children at a young age expands their ability to meet their education goals as they move through school, and more importantly, reach their full potential. Above all else, we recognize that every child is deserving of equal opportunities to maximize that potential and we encourage our students in their pursuit of excellence.

Our School Council's plan is consistent with our mission statement that (1) all children **can and will be successful**, (2) all our programs and activities must be designed with **best practices for children** in mind, and (3) we must maintain **unconditional respect and acceptance of all children**.

There is a description of the services provided and the curriculum of Fisher Hill in the Appendix.

## **SIP 2009-2010**

A school council is a representative, school building-based committee composed of the principal, parents, teachers and community members. Teachers, parents and community members can become more committed to improving the schools and more supportive of the public school system when they enjoy the opportunity to serve or be represented on a school council that has a role in shaping the policies and programs of the school. The council improves student outcomes by uniting, in responsible participation, those closest to the teaching-learning relationship; the council creates, through the development of a shared vision and planning, a school environment which unites all members of the school community in a sense of belonging, commitment and growth.

Our School Improvement Plan for 2009-2010 is comprised of eight major goals. These goals focus on creating such an environment, one which fosters academic and social growth in our students; a sense of community with all stake-holders; and a commitment to learning.

We are committed to maintaining low student-teacher ratios as best we can.

As we wrote our School Improvement Plan for the 2009-2010 school year, we kept the words of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in mind:

**WE CANNOT ALWAYS BUILD THE FUTURE FOR OUR YOUTH, BUT WE CAN BUILD OUR YOUTH FOR THE FUTURE.**

Goal 1: To provide a challenging and inclusive learning environment for all students at Fisher Hill, while continuing to focus on aligning our curriculum with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

Goal 2: To continue to monitor the safety of our students.

Goal 3: To continue to maintain class size as necessary to maximize student achievement.

Goal 4: To continue to work as an extended school community including school, parents and the community at large to develop and maintain positive and productive relationships to benefit our students.

Goal 5: To continue to provide high levels of professional development for all staff in order to meet state and district expectations for children.

Goal 6: To continue to utilize technology in effective ways and to provide working and dependable computers for all classrooms to enhance student learning and to maximize our ability to utilize data in more efficient ways.

Goal 7: To develop school and program evaluation tools to provide data and feedback regarding the specific goals in order to improve teaching and learning.

**Goal 8:** To provide enrichment programs from resources outside the budget, i.e. grants, volunteer programs and community offerings, to benefit all students.

**Goal 1:** *To provide a challenging and inclusive learning environment for all students at Fisher Hill School while continuing to focus on aligning our curriculum with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.*

- This year we will continue with our major literacy initiative, partnering with the Bay State Reading Institute (BSRI). Our major literacy focus will be writing for the 2009-2010 school year. We will continue to improve our reading instruction as well.
- Our Investigations mathematics program, in conjunction with supplemental materials, continues to be an effective method of teaching mathematics to our students. We will continue to add/supplement areas in the Curriculum frameworks that are not covered in the program.
- Our Kindergarten programs will continue to reflect the standards set forth by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). We are now an accredited program through NAEYC.
- We will continue to explore the Responsive Classroom approach both on a classroom and school-wide level. The Responsive Classroom approach is built around six central components that integrate teaching, learning and caring in the daily program. These components are set in the context of commonly shared values and implemented through the development and strengthening of social skills, as well as setting a context for academic accountability. A clear social curriculum can help build a classroom or school into a learning community where high social and academic goals are both attained.
- Fisher Hill maintains inclusion classrooms that offer students the services they need while still affording them the least restrictive learning environment. In our single-model inclusion classrooms, an instructional aide supports a special education teacher in all areas of responsibility. We also offer a resource room that provides children the services they need in a smaller classroom setting.

**Goal 2:** *To continue to monitor the safety and security of the students at Fisher Hill.*

- This will always remain a top priority at Fisher Hill School. The students' ability to learn is diminished when physical or emotional safety needs are not fully met. For 2009-2010, we will continue to take a number of steps to monitor safety and security. All entrances of the building are kept locked and secure and a video monitor of the building's main entrance is viewed regularly throughout the day. Visitors can only enter after they have been "buzzed" in by office staff. All visitors are expected to sign in at the office and to take a visitor's pass to wear

while they are in the building. When leaving, visitors are required to sign out. People who are unfamiliar to the staff and arrive to pick up a student are asked to show a license or picture ID to ensure they are the person designated to pick up the student. We keep careful track of restraining orders and other legal documentation put in place to keep children safe. Additionally, CORI checks are done and continue to be done on all staff, volunteers, chaperones and outside student teachers or co-op students every year.

- We instituted a sign-out routine for parents (or designee) of children who are picked up at dismissal. We will continue this practice for the 2009-2010 school year as well. We also revamped our bus configurations to ensure the safety of all children at dismissal time.
- We will continue with the daily cleaning and sanitizing schedules in every classroom that were implemented as a result of the NAEYC re-accreditation process.
- We will continue, as a staff, to explore the Responsive Classroom approach as another undertaking regarding safety and security. The Responsive Classroom is an educational approach that uses developmentally appropriate teaching and classroom practices along with other techniques to integrate social and academic learning within the classroom and school community. The social component is critical in providing students with a sense of security and safety at the social/emotional level, which enhances and strengthens academic growth and performance.

**Goal 3:** *To continue to maintain class size as necessary to maximize student achievement.*

- We plan to maintain class size at 20 or less, as best we can with budget deficits.
- In regular education classes, in order to maximize student achievement we propose that we try to maintain class size at a maximum of 18 students per classroom. We fully realize the budget situation for the district affects these ratios, but wanted the Superintendent and School Committee to continue their strong support for small class sizes, especially in the primary grades.
- For Kindergarten regular education classes, class size should be limited so as not to exceed a ratio of 9:1. This ratio for Kindergarten is based on the fact that each classroom will have one fully licensed teacher and one paraprofessional, and enables us to keep our ratios within the guidelines recommended by NAEYC.

- For first grade regular education classes, class size should be limited so as not to exceed a ratio of 18:1. For second grade regular education classes, class size should be limited so as not to exceed a ratio of 18:1.
- For special education classes, we believe that the individual needs of children must be considered in each case. We will examine the needs of each class on a case-by-case basis with a strong focus on the individual needs of the students.
- We are now entering Orange's seventh year of participation in school choice. We have accepted some school choice students here at Fisher Hill.
- Our partners at BSRI continue to offer support in the area of literacy in order for us to maximize student growth and achievement and to assist us in utilizing support personnel in the most efficient ways possible. They continue to help us examine our current practices and intervention services for children as well as supporting teachers. Services that support literacy development and achievement continue to be a high priority.

**Goal 4:** *To work as an extended school community including school, parents and the community at large to maintain positive and productive relationships.*

- We would like to continue with Curriculum Nights across the grade levels and subject areas in the fall of the school year.
- We will continue with Bingo for Books.
- We will continue with our All-School Sing assembly. This weekly assembly includes all grades and staff members and promotes community through songs and themes and also includes mini-lessons on a variety of topics.
- We will also continue to have our Citizen of the Week program (held during All-School Sing). The children at Fisher Hill strive to be respectful and responsible role models in order to achieve this weekly goal. Each classroom's daily routine is built around the concepts of respecting self, others, and the school environment. This fits in with our Responsive Classroom practices as well. The children are encouraged to handle conflicts using discussions and peaceful resolutions. Good manners are constantly reinforced throughout the school. Stories are read to the children which exemplify the Golden Rule and positive characteristics are exemplified in the characters. The children are guided in the process of making good choices and thinking ethically and understanding consequences when unwise choices are made.
- We will continue our Word of the Month program for the 2009-2010 school year. These words focus on positive character traits that we want our students to have.

The traits are discussed and modeled on both a classroom and school-wide level. RESPECTFUL, COMPASSION, KINDNESS and SPORTSMANSHIP are some of the traits reflected in this program. Each month a trait is chosen by a class and examples are illustrated and displayed prominently on our bulletin board in the upper hallway.

- We will continue with our grade level walking trips to key services in our community.
- Our PTO is very active as it organizes many events throughout the school year: Craft Fair, Spaghetti Supper, and Scholastic Book Fair to name a few. They also support field trips and performances that enhance the curriculum.
- We will again have Walk Your Child to School Day and hold the Red Wagon Brigade Food-a-thon, as well as our Fisher Hill Memorial Day Program. We will continue to hold our annual Community Reader Day. Members of the community come into the school and read a book to students in each of the classrooms. It continues to be a positive event. All of these activities help to forge positive relationships and integrate the school and the larger community to which we belong.
- In the 2008-2009 school year we participated in a school-wide/nation-wide shared reading event. We will again participate as a school for this coming school year.
- We will again survey families using the climate survey we developed. This survey looked at parents' perceptions of relationships between school and home, positives that we have achieved and ways we can improve our relationships with families. Results will be collected, tabulated and shared with the families.

**Goal 5:** *To continue to provide high levels of professional development for all staff in order to meet state and local expectations for children.*

- On-going professional development is a key to providing a challenging and inclusive learning environment that meets the needs of all learners.
- We will continue to revisit professional development needs for the 2009-2010 school year.
- We will continue with professional development including all areas of instruction and need.
- We will continue our partnership with the Bay State Reading Institute.

- We will begin/continue with professional development in the area of writing and writing instruction.
- We will continue to participate in professional development in the area of the Responsive Classroom.
- We have many skilled teachers and staff in different areas of the curriculum who are willing to share their expertise with colleagues. We hope to utilize the many strengths at Fisher Hill in order to spread the wealth of professional knowledge from teacher to teacher, staff member to staff member.

**Goal 6:** *To continue to use technology in effective ways and to provide working and dependable computers for all classrooms to enhance student learning and to maximize our ability to use data in more efficient ways.*

- In recent years the district has spent a great deal of time analyzing MCAS data in an effort to identify areas of strengths and areas of concern in order to improve instruction. While Fisher Hill students do not take the MCAS, we realize the critical role we play in building the foundation for learning in all areas as well as the role we play in the success of our students in the Orange Elementary School District.
- We will continue to utilize DIBELS data and the database to track student progress in the fall, winter and spring benchmarking periods.
- We will continue to progress monitor our students for whom we are concerned with the DIBELS and other assessments.
- We will utilize the ScanTron machine in order to quickly score and generate reports of the GRADE assessment across grades K-6.
- We will continue to implement the Lexia computer program. Lexia Reading is a computerized reading program that provides phonics instruction and gives students independent practice in reading while monitoring their progress. The software tracks student responses and automatically provides additional practice when needed.
- We will continue to utilize the Leapsters in the classrooms in order to reinforce skills taught in the general curriculum. This handheld, screen-based technology provides multi-sensory instruction and an individualized learning experience. The cartridges adapt to students' skill levels and rates of progress.
- Designated staff members will attend training in Education Data Warehouse. It is a collaborative effort of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and

Secondary Education and localized school districts to centralize performance data into one state coordinated repository.

**Goal 7:** *To develop program and school evaluation tools to provide data and feedback on performance.*

- We will continue to utilize the “Planning and Evaluation Tool,” or PET, to gather data from teachers on the current status of our reading program and to reflect and determine goals.
- All of our reading assessments can be used as program evaluation tools, as we learn to use data to identify gaps in our curriculum as well as identify strengths and weaknesses.
- We will continue to use the climate survey that we developed to assess our performance as a school and perceptions of our school to families and to look at ways we can improve our relationship as a school community with parents and families.

**Goal 8:** *To provide enrichment programs from resources outside the school budget, i.e. grants, volunteer programs, and community offerings, to benefit our students.*

- We will continue to search for grant opportunities and funding to bring in performances and enrichment to enhance the education of the whole child.
- We will look to the community to provide enrichment activities and offerings that will enhance our students learning in a variety of ways.
- We would like to look to volunteers to enhance the school community of Fisher Hill in a variety of ways.
- We hope to participate in Orange’s upcoming bicentennial celebration.

## **APPENDIX**

Fisher Hill School services all children in grades K-2 in the Orange Elementary School District. We have approximately 300 students in our school. Our hours are 8:20 am to 2:50 pm. Each class has a 45-minute lunch/recess break per day. There is a working

snack each morning. We continue to offer services from full-time music, physical education and health teachers. Our computer lab is fully equipped and our library has literature from all genres for the children to read and explore.

Students are provided with services from the full-time speech pathologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist and counseling services. The district employs a full time home-to-school liaison who provides much needed services to children and families. Members of the school district are also proficient grant writers, bringing additional financial resources to the schools. We have a grant funded after school program that provides enrichment activities, homework help and tutorial services to our students.

School community continues to play a part in the make-up of Fisher Hill. We include character-building and social skill instruction as part of our curriculum through our Word of the Month, Citizen of the Week, and various activities using the Responsive Classroom approach. We build community as a school through our weekly All School Sing. We recognize the importance of teaching our children to work cooperatively with others at the same time they are focusing on academics, knowing that much cognitive growth comes from social interaction. Various enrichment activities and performances also help to build community as a school.

Houghton-Mifflin Reading: The Nation's Choice Edition continues to be our reading series. Various supplemental programs are utilized to enhance or improve reading skills: Talian Letters, Read Naturally, Project Read, Early Reading Intervention. We continue to use the Houghton-Mifflin reading assessments, as well as the DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment), GRADE and DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy). DIBELS is a method of assessment that is used to effectively assess children's fluency in reading skills and to drive our instruction and monitor the students' progress. The teachers continue to spend time studying the reading program and data from various sources (including the DIBELS) at both grade level and cross grade meetings to coordinate reading instruction and assessment. Use of these assessments at the benchmark times of the school year (fall, winter and spring) to establish reading levels for the present and upcoming year will continue. Houghton-Mifflin still achieves one of its main goals: Developing consistency throughout the grades of how reading is taught. Our partnership with BSRI will continue to enable us to examine current practices and make appropriate changes to improve reading instruction and meet the needs of our students.

We will continue to expand our work with mathematics and the impact that MCAS has on teaching mathematics to children in grades K-2. We will continue to utilize our math series and supplemental activities and lessons that correlate with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks to foster growth in mathematics in our students.

We continue to strengthen our history/social studies program through our association with the Old Deerfield Teaching American History program, with technology opportunities, with the Picturing America materials received through a grant last year,

and with community resources available to us as well as other supplemental activities and resources.

We will continue to explore ways/methods to instruct our students in science. Although we do not use a commercial science series, we base our instruction on the standards found in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

We will continue with our school-wide recycling initiative, “Orange Going Green”. This initiative is our effort to teach our students about environmental issues and how to take better care of our environment on both a local and global level. We will continue to recycle paper, plastic, and metal products as well as cell phones, ink cartridges, CD and DVD discs. We will also continue with our TerraCycle recycling project, recycling yogurt containers, drink pouches and cookie wrappers. This effort reduces waste and earns our school money as well. We will also continue to look for more programs and local community resources to enhance this effort.

This document represents our belief that “You can teach a student a lesson for a day; but if you can teach him to learn by creating curiosity, he will continue the learning process as long as he lives,” (Clay P. Bedford). As a school council, it is our earnest hope that our School Improvement Plan is the beginning of this life-long educational journey for our students.

*All of us do not have equal talent, but all of us should have an equal opportunity to develop our talent.*

--John F. Kennedy