

# DEER HILL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

2014 - 2015



Deer Hill School  
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## **Deer Hill School Vision**

At the Deer Hill School, we strive to prepare our students for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We work to ensure students succeed socially, emotionally, and intellectually. Throughout our instructional program we emphasize critical thinking, creativity, analytical, and technology skills and we incorporate lessons of collaboration and communication across all curricular areas. We are committed to providing a safe, respectful, and academically challenging environment with clearly defined goals and expectations. We strive to develop responsible citizens with an appreciation for diversity, an understanding of global connections, and a passion for lifelong learning.

## **School Council Mission Statement**

Our mission as the School Council is to responsibly assess all factors affecting the educational needs of the children in Deer Hill School. Based upon this assessment, the Deer Hill School Council will review and develop goals annually that address our educational policies that maximize students' academic performance, encourage the talents and creativity of educators, and provide consistency throughout the Cohasset School System. In addition, the School Council assists the principal in the following:

1. Reviewing the annual school budget;
2. Identifying the education, social, and emotional needs of the students;
3. Adopting educational goals for the school;
4. Promoting an awareness of state and local initiatives
5. Developing and formulating a school improvement plan for Deer Hill School.

**Alignment to Cohasset Public Schools Vision & District Goals** Our school improvement plan goals are aligned to the Cohasset Public Schools Strategic Plan district goals and are based upon current performance levels, data analysis, and feedback from staff and parents.

## ***Components of School Excellence***

*Researched and developed by the International Center for Leadership in Education, the following eight components identify the more specific actions that schools must take to achieve rigor, relevance, and relationships. These eight are not sequential, but all must be addressed if schools are to prepare students adequately for their future.*

1. ***Embrace a Common Vision and Goals – Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships for ALL students.*** *Schools, like any organization that seeks to improve, must have a common vision shared by all. Everyone must be committed to shared goals to measure success, and staff must have the same perspective as to what is important in the organization.*
2. ***Inform Decisions Through Data Systems.*** *Whole school/district reform is a continuous process guided by a well-developed data structure based on multiple measures of student learning. Highly successful schools/districts use quality data to make decisions about curriculum, instruction, and assessment.*
3. ***Empower Leadership Teams to Take Action and Innovate.*** *Schools that will be most successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are led by individuals who possess skills and attitudes to take action rather than defend the status quo. Leadership does not reside in a single position, but reflects the attributes, skills, and attitudes of the many staff members who take action and grow professionally through effective learning communities.*
4. ***Clarify Student Learning Expectations.*** *Inconsistent state standards, tests, and community expectations create a wide-ranging and jumbled assortment of curricula, instructional practices, and classroom materials as well as varying expectations for rigor within and across grade levels. When districts take steps to clarify what students are expected to learn, they meet with success in improving student achievement.*
5. ***Adopt Effective Instructional Practices.*** *More than high test scores, successful instructional practices include having a wide range of strategies and tools to meet the needs of diverse learners in all disciplines and grade levels. Success in achieving state standards results from not teaching in routine and prescriptive methods, but from teachers selecting successful instructional practices to meet the needs of all students.*
6. ***Address Organizational Structures.*** *Organizational structure should be determined by instructional needs.*

7. **Monitor Progress/Improve Support Systems.** *Highly successful programs recognize the need to monitor student progress on a regular basis. Successful schools use formative assessments in an organized, deliberate, and ongoing fashion to monitor student progress. Further, they use this data immediately to adjust instructional practices and intervene to meet student needs.*
  
8. **Refine Process on an Ongoing Basis.** *High-performing schools realize that success is a continuing and ever-changing course of action.*

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has joined the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, a national advocacy organization, which provides a framework for preparing students for the future. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) publication, *School Reform in the New Millennium: Preparing All Children for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Success*, offers a vision for our students:

21<sup>st</sup> century students will learn to think both critically and creatively, be skilled at working collaboratively, and understand how to take risks constructively. They will learn and understand their connection to the world around them, use technology to do research and communicate with others, be comfortable working in teams and develop the strength and skill to assume leadership responsibilities. 21<sup>st</sup> century students will receive support and encouragement throughout their education to think about and plan for their future.

The DESE publication also provides the following from the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills to guide us in school improvement initiatives:

- **Core Academic Subjects** include English, reading or language arts, world languages, arts, math, economics, science, geography, history, government and civics.
- **Interdisciplinary Themes** to be woven into each subject include global awareness, financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy, civic literacy and health literacy.
- **Learning and Innovation Skills** to be woven into each subject include creativity, innovation, critical thinking, problem solving, communication and collaboration
- **Information, Media and Technology Skills** required of today's students include information literacy, media literacy, communications and technology literacy.
- **Life and Career Skills** are the so-called "soft-skills" needed to navigate in today's fast-paced, high-technology world. They include flexibility, adaptability, initiative and self direction, social and cross-cultural skills, productivity, accountability, leadership and responsibility.

Modeled after the Learning Criteria to Support 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learners (developed by the International Center for Leadership in Education), our school improvement goals reflect the comprehensive needs of our students. The Learning Criteria is designed to provide a robust, comprehensive, and detailed portrait of school performance that clearly maps out a route for school improvement efforts. The Criteria is arranged in four data categories that schools can use to determine the success of their schools in preparing students for current assessments and future roles and responsibilities:

**Foundation Academic Learning** – Achievement in the core subjects of English Language Arts, Mathematics, History and Social Sciences, and Science and Technology;

**Stretch Learning** – Demonstration of rigorous and relevant learning beyond minimum (foundational) learning requirements; Refers to the application of analysis, synthesis and evaluation to real-world, novel situations;

**Learner Engagement** – the extent to which all learners (1) are motivated and committed to learning, (2) have a sense of belonging and accomplishment, and (3) have relationships with adults, peers and parents that support learning;

**Personal Skill Development** – (1) Measures of personal, social, service, and leadership skills and (2) demonstrations of positive behaviors and attitudes.

## **District Goal: Teaching and Learning**

**School Goal: Strengthen Teaching and Learning at Deer Hill School through updated and coordinated instruction, curriculum, and assessment.** Achieve state benchmarks for Current Performance Index (“CPI”). Create optimal learning opportunities for students whose learning profiles are consistent with Gifted and Talented criteria as well as those who require assistance in areas of academics or social skills. Maintain consistency, equity, and maximized opportunities for time on learning.

### **New Strategies:**

- Create and implement a program of District Determined Measures, consistent with DESE requirements, to provide ongoing evaluative data on programmatic strengths and weaknesses as well as student growth profiles. Include specialist classes in the program.
- Strengthen learner engagement through schoolwide motivational activities, such as a “Deer Hill Reads” program and integrated instruction around a schoolwide theme (such as the Circus.)
- Implement statewide assessments (i.e. PARCC/MCAS), utilize data to determine individual, collective, and programmatic academic strengths and weaknesses;
- Using Atlas/Rubicon, complete on-line curriculum documentation for Science and Social Studies;
- Implement the comprehensive, web based educational technology assessment [Learning.com](#) and utilize results to inform technology/instructional practices;
- Integrate Empowering Writing strategies and lessons with Reading Street Themes and Units.
- Promote the use of an organizational model such as “Daily Five” to structure ELA lessons and ensure continuously balanced literacy.
- Use the “Next Generation” Common Core Standards in Science and Technology to articulate grade level expectations contained within Foss Science Inquiry Kits;

### **Continuing strategies:**

- Continue to work with school schedule to promote Massachusetts Tiered System of Support (MTSS): grade level subject areas “blocked” for teamed teachers and coordinated to facilitate ESP and specialist support;

- Review and revise MTSS processes for efficiency and maximum student benefit within the general education program;
- In its second year of schoolwide programming, examine EnVision Math instructional practices for efficiency and maximum student benefit.
- In its second year of implementation, examine Handwriting Without Tears instructional practices for efficiency and maximum student benefit.
- Provide teachers training and opportunities to supplement and enhance on-line curriculum documentation in ELA and Math with links to resources;
- Develop schoolwide consensus around universal writing instruction strategies, using Empowering Writers as a foundation;
- Strengthen impact of Empowering Writers through professional development/coaching;
- Promote training and schoolwide adoption of strategies (Tier 1) to strengthen executive functioning (Universally Designed Learning).
- Work with Deer Hill School PSO to provide a high quality enrichment program that stretches student learning in the Core Curriculum;
- Utilize formative assessment data throughout the year (i.e. Galileo, DIBELS, Reading Street Comprehension) to inform instruction and curriculum, on a classroom, grade level, and schoolwide level;
- Develop consistent assessment practices in writing by administering the WrAP in grade four and by examining student anchor papers within and across grade levels, consistent with Common Core Standards of persuasive, narrative and expository writing;
- Develop consistent assessment practices for Words Their Way spelling program, grades 3 – 5, using Developmental Stage appropriate student materials;
- Use updated Transition Data Template to monitor school assessment data and inform instructional decision-making year to year;
- Increase schoolwide practice of Quadrant C and Quadrant D lesson planning (Interdisciplinary, project based learning) consistent with elevated Common Core expectations for critical thinking.
- Update faculty in principles of instruction and assessment for accelerated learners.

**Persons Responsible:**

Principal, Director of K-12 Curriculum and Instruction, Deer Hill Instructional, Specialist, and Support Staff

**Indicators of Accomplishment:**

Completion of above action steps  
Massachusetts School/District Report Card  
Assessment data

**District Goal: Human Capital**

**School Goal: To maximize effectiveness of teaching, specialist, and support staff through professional development, supervision, and evaluation.**

**New Strategies:**

- Provide professional development to general education, specialist, and support staff focusing on the implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment consistent with elevated Common Core standards;
- Provide professional development to general education, specialist, and support staff focusing on utilization of updated educational technology.
- Provide job description and training for stipended Assistant Principal position.

**Continuing Strategies:**

- Continue in second year implementation of the new educator evaluation system consistent with DESE guidelines;
- Create vehicles for Student Learning and Professional Practice goal achievement among professional and non-professional staff consistent with DESE guidelines, including use of early release days, study group resources, and on and off-site professional development;
- Create system of peer observation and professional study groups.

**Persons Responsible:**

Principal, Director of K-12 Curriculum and Instruction, Deer Hill Instructional, Specialist and Support Staff

**Indicators of Accomplishment:**

Completion of above action steps  
Massachusetts School/District Report Card  
Baseline Edge Goals, Plans, Reports, and Evidence



**District Goal: Community Engagement**

**School Goal:** To strengthen communication among members of the Deer Hill School Community

**New Strategies:**

- Examine and evaluate technology including web-based resources for use in promoting communication among members of the Deer Hill School community.
- Promote effective classroom communication in a manner consistent with DESE evaluation rubrics regarding professional expectations for community engagement.
- Promote specialist communication through the creation of a Specialist Curriculum Night in addition to Back to School Night.
- Promote student programs, enrichment activity and achievement through web-based publishing resources.
- Participate in town-wide celebration of John Smith’s connection to Cohasset.

**Continuing strategies:**

- Promote participation in PSO meetings and activities through newsletter and email invitations; create monthly agenda that addresses areas of parent interest for Principal Report in addition to “routine” PSO functions.
- Utilize bi-weekly newsletter purposefully to address areas of relative strengths and weakness as measured by School Council Parent and Guardian Survey;
- Publish bi-weekly newsletter and make available in digital form.

**Persons Responsible:**

Principal, Technology Coordinator, Deer Hill Instructional and Support Staff, K – 12 Curriculum Coordinator, Parent and Guardian Community, PSO Leadership

**Indicators of Accomplishment:**

Completion of above action steps  
Parent and Guardian Annual School Council Survey

**District Goal: Provide a safe, respectful, and positive learning environment for students, staff, and the community.**

**School Goal:** Provide a safe, respectful, and positive learning environment for students, staff, and members of the Deer Hill School community. Promote student engagement in the school community and personal development in those areas of shared valued character traits.

**New strategies:**

- Contribute to district-wide effort to research effective and comprehensive systems of positive behavioral schoolwide supports for K – 12 adoption;
- Update School Safety/Crisis Management Plan consistent with Town/School coordinated recommendations;
- Promote increased awareness of mental health and wellness of students through Adjustment Counselor and outside agency presentation at faculty meetings;

**Continuing strategies:**

- Continue to promote schoolwide approach to pro-social skills through training and wellness curriculum;
- Continue to emphasize effective effort as a cornerstone of Deer Hill School through explicit instruction and schoolwide reinforcement;
- Continue schoolwide character education program through schoolwide character adoption (“Character Ed”)
- Implement Steps to Respect Curriculum and promote anti-bullying and intervention plans in accordance with DESE specifications;
- Hold an annual schoolwide assembly to promote a respectful school environment based on Steps to Respect Curriculum and our schoolwide character education program;
- Sustain student recognition programs: “Caught Trying Your Best” (tokens) and Character Education (Character Hall of Fame Bulletin Board).

**Persons Responsible:**

Principal, School Adjustment Counselor, Student Leadership Team, Deer Hill Instructional and Support Staff

**Indicators of Accomplishment:**

Completion of above action steps  
Data surrounding discipline/misconduct  
Parent/Guardian School Council Survey  
Proposal for adoption of Researched Based School Wide Positive Behavior Plan

## **District Goal: Technology**

**School Goal: To meet present and future needs of Deer Hill School student population**

### **New strategies:**

- Provide practice and training for students and staff required for compliance with statewide/PARCC on-line End of the Year and Performance Based Assessment mandates;
- Provide technology and training required for student project collaboration consistent with 21<sup>st</sup> century learning principles and the Deer Hill School Mission.
- Utilize a train-the-trainers model to promote use of instructional technology;

### **Continuing strategies:**

- Provide teachers and students with classroom technology necessary for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: including projection technology, interactive white boards, and classroom-wide online access: provide training (individual and schoolwide) to maximize usage.

### **Persons Responsible:**

Principal, Director of K-12 Curriculum and Instruction, Director of Technology, Deer Hill Instructional and Support Staff, Deer Hill Parent/Student Organization (“PSO”)

### **Indicators of Accomplishment:**

Completion of above action steps  
Massachusetts School/District Report Card