

Federal Furnace School Improvement Plan 2017-2019



School Council Members 2016-2017

Trina Camarao – Principal & Co-Chair	Luis Pizano – Parent & Co-Chair
Dan Sylvestre – Vice Principal	Andrea Holmes – Parent
Mariann O’Connell – Teacher	Lindsay McEnroe – Parent
	Amy ten Berge – Parent

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Goal # 1: Provide a Safe and Supportive School Environment

Students need to feel safe at school; they can only access higher level thinking such as those involved in learning when they feel that all of their basic needs have been met. In addition, “Feeling safe at school translates into higher academic achievement, increased student well-being, and greater engagement.” (Article included as an attachment & available at <http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/siteASCD/publications/wholechild/WC-One-Pager.pdf>.)

The 2015-2017 School Improvement Plan’s Goal 1 presented plans to expand the positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) available at the school. That goal was pursued vigorously by a team engaged in a 2-year research study looking at the process established by the Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (TLPI). The Safe and Supportive Schools Committee (S&SSC) has met regularly with consultants from TLPI, creating and implementing a comprehensive plan. The goals of the plan are:

1. **Address the children with the most intense needs** because when their needs are met they will be learning, and so will everyone else.
2. **Expand the school’s “Toolkit”** of trauma sensitive approaches to be used across all settings to support all learners. This will assist the students with the most intense needs, as well as those students whose needs are less well known.
3. **Teamwork:** an approach embracing shared responsibility will be used to support all learners and staff through the implementation of the first two goals.

Data used to evaluate the effectiveness of the first year of the plan was quite favorable class disruptions by students were reduced by more than 50% as measured by a three week comparison period in both April of 2015, and April of 2016. In addition, between October 2015 and April of 2016, the average class disruptions per day was cut in half, going from 4.8 per day to 2.4 per day. These improvements were a result of various interventions ranging from providing a Transitional Learning Space for students experiencing difficulty to improving protocol for supporting students in classrooms sooner, as well as professional development for staff. This past summer, steering committee members wrote a “Toolkit” documenting many of the practices used in the building; the toolkit was included in the Staff Binder for the 2016-2017 School Year. September of 2016 brought the new challenge as we welcomed Full Day Kindergarten for all, creating a spike in class disruptions again. Thankfully, the disruption decreased by 200% between October and January. As recorded in our student data system, ‘Safety Violations’ were reduced from an average of 1.45 per day in October to 0.55 per day for the 4 weeks of school days between December 1st and Jan. 9th.

79% of the over 150 parents responding to the December 2016 School Improvement Plan Survey indicated they agreed or strongly agreed to the following statement, “Federal Furnace provides a positive, emotionally and physically safe environment for students.” Similarly, 81% of respondents indicated that their child felt safe at school. 86% of respondents said their child “Enjoys being a student at Federal Furnace,” and 88% indicated that their child is comfortable bringing a concern to at least one staff member at Federal Furnace. These numbers impressed the consultants working with the school, but there is still room for improvement. Of concern to School Council and the wider school community is the fact that only 71% of respondents indicated their child feels safe on the bus.

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Goal: Provide a Safe and Supportive School Environment by utilizing the TLPI's Flexible Framework model and guiding principles to provide a physically and emotionally safe environment for student learning.

Strategic Plan Alignment: Goal 1 – Enhance student social and emotional growth, health and welfare, and demonstration of civic responsibility.

Principal Goal Alignment: Goal 2: Continue to implement the Safe and Supportive Schools plan with a particular focus on facilitating collaboration, communication and cohesion among staff.

School Council Objectives to Support Goal:

- 1.1. Transition the Safe & Supportive Schools Steering Committee component of the 2015-2017 research study into an Advisory Committee that would help administration to make decisions that promote Safe and Supportive Schools principles.
- 1.2. Use the Advisory Committee to analyze existing practices and propose reforms that could be made more supportive for students, families and staff. These practices include, but are not limited to, operations on the bus, at recess and lunch as well as transitioning students into kindergarten.
- 1.3. Collaborate with the companies Plymouth Public Schools contracts with for transportation services to improve student experiences on the way to and from school.
- 1.4. Provide opportunities for families and the community to learn more about the Safe and Supportive Schools principles and guidelines.

Related Professional Development Objectives:

- 1.5. All staff will have access to ongoing professional development opportunities on the various components of providing a safe and supportive school environment, especially new staff, and staff involved in supervising non-structured times such as lunch and recess.
- 1.6. All staff will have access to professional development regarding the opportunities for students with varying emotional and behavioral needs, as well as protocol for safety, crisis intervention, restorative practices and discipline parameters and procedures.

Success Measures:

- 1.7. Discipline and Crisis Intervention Records
- 1.8. Parent Survey Results

Budget Implications:

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- 1.9. The cost of meeting this goal will be primarily in the form of professional development, especially for part-time paraeducators who don't typically attend in-service days.
- 1.10. The cost may also include recommendations for additional supports made by the Safe and Supportive Advisory Committee.

Mid Cycle Progress: *Please include information (measures) that will indicate progress toward this goal. Please use concrete indicators to support statements. This should be done mid cycle.*

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Goal # 2: Provide an academically rigorous experience for all students

As reported by the Association of Supervision, Curriculum and Development (ASCD), in a conversation with Robyn Jackson, nationally known education author, "Basically, academic rigor is helping kids learn to think for themselves." She also says that academic rigor has four main components: students know how to create their own meaning out of what they learn, they organize information so they create mental models, they integrate individual skills into whole sets of processes, and they apply what they've learned to new or novel situations.

In the 2015-2017 School Improvement Plan, goal 2 proposed, "To foster an increased emphasis on the use of technology to enhance academic achievement of all students at all levels." Goal 3 of that plan was, "To foster the use of diverse assessment methods that inform instruction and provide students with multiple means for expressing what they have learned and teachers with the information they need to provide targeted instruction." These were both efforts towards increasing the rigor of academic experiences for our students.

As was reported at the mid-cycle review of the 2015-2017 plan, assessment methods are becoming increasingly diverse and students are being asked to demonstrate learning in a variety of ways. Images of students using technology were presented at that time, and parent survey results indicate overwhelmingly that, "Technology is being used to enhance my child's learning." 89% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with that statement. Interestingly, though, when asked what priorities staff should pursue over the next 2 years, parents' top pick was technology integration. Though Goal 2 was clearly met, the demand for using technology to achieve educational goals is high. Instead of focusing solely on technology for the sake of technology, this goal is about providing many means to academic rigor, including the use of technology.

Parent perception of a rigorous academic experience is down slightly from the last School Improvement Survey. This past December 77% of respondents indicated that, "Federal Furnace helps students to achieve high levels of learning." On the last survey, 83% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Though school performance on State assessments had been declining in recent years; this past spring the school saw an overall improvement in achievement as measured by the Annual Progress and Performance Indicator (APPI) which was reported as an 85, the highest it has been since 2011. In addition, the school's percentile ranking improved from 35 to 41 between the spring of 2015 to the spring of 2016.

This entire school improvement plan aims to improve academic outcomes, recognizing that this is a complex endeavor involving providing a safe environment, and a collaborative whole child approach to learning. In a whole-child approach to learning, within the safe and supportive schools guidelines, there are 4 domains of development essential to academic success: physical health/well-being, self-regulation, relationships and competence. This goal focuses specifically on the academic instructional components of student success which falls under the category of 'competence'.

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Provide an academically rigorous experience for all students.

Strategic Plan Alignment: Goal 3 – Enhance academic achievement of all students at all levels.

Principal Goal Alignment: Goal 2 - Use whole child thinking and the four domains (relationship building, self-regulation, physical health & wellbeing and competence) to keep our high risk students at school, in classrooms, learning.

School Council Objectives to Support Goal:

- 2.1. Provide opportunities for all students to access rigorous academic instruction by expanding the use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), inclusion and differentiating instruction for all students, including options for advance learners.
- 2.2. Publicly celebrate the academic successes of students through family gatherings, use of digital/social media and the school newsletter.

Related Professional Development Objectives:

- 2.1. Maximize the use of academic coaches and coordinators by inviting them to grade level meetings and planning professional development collaboratively.
- 2.2. Use existing structures such as grade level meetings and in-service opportunities for staff to review the existing resources available to them for providing a rigorous academic experience to all students.
- 2.3. Seek professional development from experts in UDL, inclusion and differentiating instruction.

Success Measures:

- 2.4. Formal Assessment Data
- 2.5. Parent Survey Results

Budget Implications:

- 2.6. Professional development

Mid Cycle Progress: *Please include information (measures) that will indicate progress toward this goal. Please use concrete indicators to support statements. This should be done mid cycle.*

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Goal # 3: Support staff in their complex roles and in the use of innovative methods for addressing the whole child.

These are complex times to be both a student and an educator. There are federal, state and local mandates for what needs to happen in classrooms. Those requirements morph over time and educators need to keep up. Between high stakes testing, changing rules for discipline and the need to provide a safe and supportive learning environment, the expectations on teachers are great. In addition, students are arriving at school with different backgrounds and experiences than they had when most professional staff were raised. Students have diverse family experiences, and many experience significant stressors on their home lives. Even without the stress of family concerns, all of our students are used to living in a digital age where gratification is immediate and choices are infinite. Finally, educators are charged with preparing children for jobs that don't yet exist; the world is changing at an exponential rate, and keeping up with it is essential to motivating students and preparing them for demands of both school and life.

Educators in Plymouth are so fortunate to have the support of a robust Central Office including reputable academic coordinators and experts in all fields. The curriculum and instructional materials available is extensive and is regularly updated to reflect the changes at the state and federal level. Required professional development is embedded into the school calendar, and additional options for continuing education are abundant. Training is available in content areas, meeting the needs of diverse learners, interventions for students with emotional and behavioral needs and working with students from diverse backgrounds. Despite all of this, staff have reported the need for more support.

On surveys administered as part of the Safe and Supportive Schools research study, many reported in the fall of 2015 the need for increased communication and collaboration among staff. The third goal of the Safe and Supportive Schools plan was written in response to this. In the spring of 2016, when class disruptions had been reduced, some staff still reported that improving collaboration, cohesion and staff morale was a priority.

It is well documented that working with, or caring for, individuals with great needs, especially those who have experienced significant adversity, can cause compassion fatigue, also known as vicarious trauma. This affects both individuals and organizations. The Federal Furnace staff has demonstrated some characteristics of compassion fatigue, as reported by some staff being concerned with morale, communication and collaboration. Though these concerns are not expressed by a majority, they are still noteworthy. This is expected in organizations that work closely with children and families; when it is recognized and addressed it can be reversed. Addressing this issue at Federal Furnace began in the early spring of 2016 when the staff was provided with a presentation on the topic. This included privately completing a questionnaire assessing one's compassion fatigue, and recommendations for creating self-care plans. As a result, many individuals and some small groups of staff began working together and taking better care of themselves so they can be at their best to serve our students.

This goal addresses organizational components necessary for supporting staff and celebrating success. This begins with self-care, and from there, extends outward to collaborative efforts that benefit the entire school.

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Support staff in their complex roles and in the use of innovative methods for addressing the whole child.

Strategic Plan Alignment: Goal 4 – Provide strong district and school leadership.

Principal Goal Alignment: Goal 2 -- Continue to implement the Safe and Supportive Schools plan with a particular focus on facilitating collaboration, communication and cohesion among staff.

School Council Objectives to Support Goal:

- 3.1. Encourage innovative efforts by helping to coordinate peer observations and collaborations within the school day.
- 3.2. Highlight innovative efforts by featuring them at staff meetings, in social media, educational workshops and school/district newsletters.
- 3.3. Provide opportunities for staff to work in committees representing a variety of professional roles within the building, developing projects that will benefit students and the school community. Committees may include the investigation of effective homework practices, innovative design of instructional space, technology integration, parent engagement, integrating health and wellbeing into the classroom and outdoor education.

Related Professional Development Objectives:

- 3.4. Continue professional development on the need for self-care, means for effective organizational collaboration & communication.
- 3.5. Send interested staff to workshops, or bring in speakers to help staff implement the methods named in goal 2, and anything identified as effective for meeting the needs of students.

Success Measures:

- 3.6. Staff survey
- 3.7. Outcomes/Projects developed by committees

Budget Implications:

- 3.8. Committees may seek funding from the local budget from relevant lines.
- 3.9. Committees may seek grants for larger projects.

Mid Cycle Progress: *Please include information (measures) that will indicate progress toward this goal. Please use concrete indicators to support statements. This should be done mid cycle.*

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Goal # 4: Expand family and community partnerships to benefit students and their families.

Goal 4 in School Improvement Plans written and completed between 2010 and 2015 was related to communicating with families. For the 2017-2019 plan, this was changed due to the significant growth and success experienced in that area. The School Council wanted to turn in a different direction, and also wanted to see if the parent ratings on communication would vary after two years without it in the plan; the prediction was that it would not. The prediction was correct. Parent reports of satisfaction with communication between school and home stayed high, and parent perception of schools partnering with families and the community actually increased. 81% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that, "Federal Furnace forms effective partnerships with families and the community." Fewer than 5% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. We don't need a goal aimed at improving communication or partnerships. Instead, this goal is aimed at using existing relationships, and forging new ones, to benefit students and their families.

The school currently maintains a number of relationships with community organizations that have brought great benefits to students; these will continue, and other partnerships will be sought.

The school currently partners with South Bay Community Services to provide private counseling services in school to more than 25 students. This partnership began through the district's collaboration with the Attorney General's Office in 2014. The program began as a result of a grant, and has continued, even after the grant's end in the spring of 2016. Identifying the need for counseling, beyond what a school adjustment counselor does, has helped many of our students manage factors that can get in the way of learning and development. Having a counselor in school breaks down many barriers for families including transportation and time that often prevent consistent access to these important services. This partnership also has helped many students and families to access more specialized services such as in-home behaviorists, family partners and therapeutic mentors for students. Supporting children and their families helps to facilitate a more positive educational experience for everyone.

Partnerships with the Plymouth Youth Development Collaborative, Healthy Plymouth and Terra Cura helped to bring the resources and expertise necessary to install community gardens and begin an educational gardening club. In addition, recent partnerships between staff and parents have brought initiatives to the school such as running club, BOKS, outdoor learning through the South Shore Natural Science Center, and problem solving competition through Massachusetts Destination Imagination (MADI).

Moving away from 'communication' as a goal for the 2015-2017 plan made room for the pursuit of the outdoor education goal. As we were not neglecting communication when it was eliminated as a goal for 2015-2017, the outdoor education concept is not disappearing. Outdoor education is embedded in both this goal and goal 3, as it is an innovative technique, and can only be effectively accomplished, along with many other innovative techniques, through effective partnerships.

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Goal # 4: Expand family and community partnerships to benefit students and their families.

Strategic Plan Alignment: Goal 3 – Increase family and community engagement.

Principal Goal Alignment: Goal 2 - Use whole child thinking and the four domains (relationship building, self-regulation, physical health & wellbeing and competence) to keep our high risk students at school, in classrooms, learning.

School Council Objectives to Support Goal:

- 4.1. Provide parents with educational opportunities that help them to understand school goals, partnerships and initiatives.
- 4.2. Recognition and celebrate existing family and community volunteers/organizations.
- 4.3. Provide volunteer training opportunities, and volunteer opportunities as they relate to innovative techniques and programs that would benefit students.
- 4.4. Foster growth in successful existing partnerships and seek opportunities to partner with additional community organizations that will benefit students and families by providing diverse enrichment and/or extracurricular activities.

Related Professional Development Objectives:

- 4.5. Provide ongoing professional development for staff regarding partnering effectively with families and the community as well as opportunities available to students and families.

Success Measures:

- 4.6. Parent Survey Results
- 4.7. Opportunities for students & families & number accessing them.

Budget Implications:

- 4.8. Minimal funds for recognition events and activities.
- 4.9. Grants may be sought to provide extra-curricular or enrichment activities.

Mid Cycle Progress: *Please include information (measures) that will indicate progress toward this goal. Please use concrete indicators to support statements. This should be done mid cycle.*

Attachments: ASCD Article, Safe and Supportive Schools Plan Overview PPT Slides, Principal Goals