

Conant School Council

School Improvement Plan for the 2008 – 2009 School Year

**Luther B. Conant School
Acton, Massachusetts**

Principal: Christine G. Price, Ph.D.

June 12, 2008

Table of Contents

I.	Background and Rationale	
	A. About the School Council	3
	B. School Council Membership	3
II.	Evaluation of Current School Year Improvement Plan	
	A. School Council Goal One:	4
	School Evaluation	
	B. School Council Goal Two:	5
	Safety and Respect	
	C. School Council Goal Three:	5
	Community Service	
	D. School Council Goal Four:	6
	Academic Goal: Math and Science	
	E. School Council Goal Five	7
	Technology	
	F. School Council Goal Six	8
	Reading and Spelling	
III.	Plans for the 2008-2009 Academic Year	
	A. School Council Goal One:.....	9
	School Evaluation	
	B. School Council Goal Two:.....	9
	Respect, Safety, Health, and Diversity	
	C. School Council Goal Three:	10
	Community Service Learning	
	D. School Council Goal Four:	10
	Academic Goal: Math and Science	
	E. School Council Goal Five:	11
	Technology	

I. Background and Rationale

A. About the School Council:

In the past, the Conant School Council generally met on the second Wednesday of each month except for December. Procedurally, decisions are made by consensus. Task forces, consisting of at least one school council member and Conant parents and staff, are used to research and make recommendations to the Council on specific school improvement goals that are established each year. The task forces, which are not standing committees, report to the Council. This line of communication helps to provide direction and determines when a task force has completed its assigned task. Subcommittees of Council members meet as needed to accomplish tasks, such as the preparation of the School Improvement Plan. The work of subcommittees, like that of task forces, is submitted to the Council as a whole for approval or review.

Meetings focus on monitoring the progress made toward accomplishing the Council's goals and discussing school policy issues which parents, students, or staff have requested be considered and which are not being addressed elsewhere by other groups in the school. In this latter capacity, the Council acts as a sounding board and advisor to the principal.

The Conant School Council, as a state-mandated and elected body representing parents and staff, views itself, in relation to the School Committee, as the appropriate vehicle for communicating the concerns and opinions of the Conant community. It would like the School Committee to continue to seek input from the Councils in each of the elementary schools.

A. 2007 – 2008 Conant School Council Membership:

The School Council Membership during the 2007-2008 school year experienced a period of transition: the term of every member on the 2006-2007 School Council expired in June of 2007, and, owing to the transition in administration, no election process was in place to ensure continuity. Therefore, election of new staff members was not able to occur until late fall 2007. Additionally, transitions in the PTO administration delayed the recruitment of new parent Council members to complete the new slate of volunteers for 2008 to 2009 and beyond. (In our first meeting this fall, we will determine who is willing to commit to a two or three year term.)

Happily, all elections and appointments were completed this spring, and the Council is looking forward to a return to regular meetings and steady membership in the coming school year. Our membership is:

Conant School Council		Length of Term
Principal:	Christine Price	
Parents:	Maureen O'Brien	2008 - 2009
	Terese Hardy	2008 - 2009
	Kristin Grip	2008 - 2009
Staff:	Mary Cole	2008 - 2009
	Melissa Hayes	2008 - 2009
	Janet Kennedy	2008 - 2009
	Jana Patten	2008 - 2009
Community:	Keith Campbell	2008 - 2009

II. Evaluation of Current Year School Improvement Plan

During this year's period of transition, goals set by the 2006-2007 School Council for the 2007-2008 School Improvement plan were used as guiding principles, even though the members who created the plan had finished their terms of service. Progress on those goals was as follows:

A. Goal One: Review of School Evaluation Surveys

Objective:

Develop a survey for all professional staff that attempted to quantify areas of strength and areas of concern in the day to day operations of the school. This was done by Mr. Benincasa, the results tabulated and the information presented to Dr. Price.

Develop a survey for all parents that attempted to quantify their perceptions of the various strengths of the school and areas that needed attention. Again, this was created by Mr. Benincasa and the results of over one hundred and fifty responses tabulated and shared with the in-coming principal.

Responsible Parties: Mr. Benincasa

Assessment of Progress: Dr. Price found the survey information to be very helpful as she began her work at Conant School. It helped clarify the perceptions and expectations of parents and staff, and established areas of common ground as well as those areas of difference in opinion. Dr. Price also surveyed the staff to get a sense of individual priorities and concerns.

Outcome: Evaluations provided baseline data to begin long-range planning, as well as a more immediate context for shorter-term changes.

B. Goal Two: Respect, Safety, Health, and Diversity

Introduction: The School Council has recommended returning safety as a part of this goal and adding health in order to begin to implement the district wellness policy.

Objective:

Continue to foster respect, safety, health, and appreciation of our diverse school community at Conant.

Responsible Parties: Administration, staff, parents

Assessment of Progress:

- Continued the implementation of *Responsive Classroom* strategies such as “Morning Meeting” at all grades and provided staff development opportunities to learn about more ideas for becoming a *Responsive Classroom* school from our staff who attended summer training.
- Continued to work with the Student Council to plan and run All School Meetings seven times a year and to identify the thought of the month as a theme for the ASM’s.
- Increased participation in diversity related events, such as the Festival of Cultures, through increased communication about the events, incentives for attendance and scheduling the event at a more accessible time.
- Continued to work with the Student Council on inviting students to share cultural traditions such as music and dance at our All School Meetings
- Continued support for cultural sharing in all classrooms
- Visit by Mr. Wu, a Chinese school principal as part of a cross-cultural exchange brought increased awareness and celebration of our Asian community
- Working with our youth officer, presentation for sixth grade students on Internet safety and preventing cyberbullying.
- Working with our youth officer and Student Council, development of an All School Meeting on bicycle safety.
- Continued implementation of Second Step anti-bullying program

Outcome: Increased participation in respect and diversity events and more awareness of health and safety issues on the part of the students.

C. Goal Three: Community Service Learning

Objective: Continue to involve students more directly in community service learning activities through the development of school/grade level/classroom sponsored service programs that utilize and enhance grade level curriculum.

Assessment of Progress:

- Continued the Community Service Learning (CSL) task force of Conant teachers and parents to identify community and other service opportunities.
- Organized and facilitated a variety of school-wide CSL activities, including:
 - Our second annual Turkey Trot run collected funds for Acton Community Supper
 - Our food collection for the Acton Food Pantry collected cupboard staples for hungry families
 - Cards and letters were sent to servicemen and women in honor of Valentine's Day and Memorial Day
 - Continued paper recycling efforts in conjunction with the PTO
 - New book donation program (GotBooks) in conjunction with the PTO
 - Our school-wide Book drive collected two carloads of books for Read Boston
 - Our Pennies for Pediatrics project collected \$921 for Emerson Hospital
- Worked with members of Chinese community to raise funds for earthquake relief following the May earthquake in China
- A new initiative, the School Sign Project, worked with some Community Service Committee members to raise funds for a Conant School sign
- Encouraged staff to contribute service project ideas and successes to the K-12 Service Learning folder, which is located under NEWS in email.

Outcome: Conant will continue to demonstrate successful community service learning programs, as measured by participation on the part of students.

Responsible Parties: Ann Burbank and the Conant Community Service Learning Task Force

D. Goal Four: Math and Science**Math Objective:**

Continue assessment and implementation of best practices in mathematics instruction, through program enhancement and professional development.

Assessment of Progress:

- Implement grade level pre- and post-testing.
- Introduction of new manipulative, Digi-Blocks, to enhance instruction of place value and math operations in grades K-3

- Supported teachers in professional development, including Kathy Richardson math assessment training
- Dedicated two twelve hour assistants to help provide differentiated instruction in math.

Responsible Parties: Dr. Price, Judy Hause, staff

Outcome: Math instruction was provided in a manner accessible to all students and enables them to build a firm foundation in mathematical skills and thinking

Science Objective: To begin a two-year review of the science program, focusing this year on instruction in the areas of physics and engineering

Assessment of Progress:

- Teachers reviewed grade level curricula, identifying strand areas taught and areas across the school missing from current instruction.
- Teachers reviewed physics and engineering curricula and identified opportunities for additional physics/engineering experiences
- Teachers reviewed focusing questions in science at each grade level
- Supported participation in two science teaching book groups, *Doing What Scientists Do* and *Active Assessment for Active Science*

Outcome: Teachers are prepared for on-going science curriculum review and innovation in the 2008-2009 school year.

Responsible Parties: Dr. Price, Judy Hause, staff

E. Goal Five: Technology

Objective:

Conant staff and the TRC will work to resolve technological impediments to the full use of programs and applications that assist in the integration of technology into the curriculum.

Assessment of Progress:

- Worked with the TRC to implement Tech Request procedures, and to follow up on tech requests in a timely manner
- Identified a point person for Conant to consult on Tech Requests and to act as the first line “go to” person.

Outcome: Teachers found the Tech Request process less daunting with the help of a point person. They demonstrated increased confidence, comfort and creativity in their application of technological resources to their teaching repertoire.

Responsible Parties: Dr. Price, Conant Technology Committee

F. Goal Six: Reading and Spelling

Objective:

Conant’s balanced literacy program will reflect recent research in instructional strategies and updated materials.

Assessment of Progress:

- Provided professional development opportunity to enhance instruction of reading comprehension skills based on book, *Strategies That Work*.
- Grade levels completed spelling program guides for yearly spelling work
- Monthly primary and intermediate meetings and grade level meetings included discussion of the school’s reading materials and spelling materials.

Outcome: The Reading and Spelling program review is now complete. Conant’s reading and spelling programs will be updated and further aligned with the Massachusetts English Language Arts Curriculum Frameworks as the ELA standards are revised.

Responsible Parties: Judy Hause, Dr. Price, staff

IV. Plans for the 2008-2009 Academic Year

As of this printing, plans for the 2008-2009 school year will be finalized and outcomes and strategies determined at the first meeting of the year. A revised plan will be submitted at that time. At this writing, the proposed areas of focus will be:

A. Goal One: Ongoing Evaluation: Parents and Staff

Introduction: As part of the transition to a new administration at Conant School, the interim principal gathered information from staff and parents about their perceptions of the Conant School and its strengths and challenges going into the future. This initial data was very helpful to Dr. Price, our incoming principal, who decided that taking time to discern Conant's identity and mission was an important step in the long term planning process. Continuing to collect evaluative data will be helpful in starting dialogues about a vision for Conant's future.

Objective: Additional data about program and parent involvement will be gathered during the 2008-2009 school year through formal and informal avenues, such as surveys, staff meetings, and parent coffees.

Strategies and Outcomes: TBD 9/08

Responsible Parties: School Council Task Force, Dr. Price

B. Goal Two: Respect, Safety, Health and Diversity

1. Respect: Anti-Bullying work
2. Safety: Building Emergency Preparation
3. Health: Wellness Taskforce and Conant's Food Policies
4. Diversity: Outreach to Hispanic, Indian, Asian Communities

Introduction: The above initiatives reflect the on-going development of and implementation programs designed to enhance wellness in the global sense at Conant School. Continuing to support anti-bullying efforts will deepen our commitment to nurturing a respectful community and thus strengthen outreach to international families. Similarly, ensuring that our staff is prepared to face any building-based emergency only enhances the safety of the students in our care. The newly created district-wide Wellness Task Force will be examining food-related policies across the Acton schools; its formation offers the Conant community an opportunity to examine its food-related policies as well.

Objectives:

1. Respect: Continue to support district-wide anti-bullying initiatives through on-going discussions and information gathering. Raising awareness through visiting speakers is another avenue to explore.
2. Safety: Support building emergency preparedness efforts by raising awareness of communication channels and information protocols (ConnectEd, PowerSchool) across the district.
3. Health: Ensure Conant is represented on the new Wellness Taskforce. Begin discussions of Conant's food policies within the Conant community through forums, on-line surveys, and interviews. Establish Health Task Force at Conant.
4. Diversity: Continue to encourage outreach to Acton's Hispanic, Indian, Asian communities through coordinated efforts with the Conant PTO.

Strategies and Outcomes: TBD 9/08

Responsible Parties: School Council Task Force, district Wellness Task Force, new Conant Health Task Force, Dr. Price

C. Goal Three: Community Service Learning

Introduction: The successes of the Community Service Learning Task Force underline how much its ethos and initiatives have become part of the culture of Conant School. Identifying opportunities for service to the local and global communities can expand the scope and mission of this important project.

Objectives: Continue to involve students in community service learning, expanding opportunities for service in Acton and surrounding communities. Investigate opportunities at each grade level for long-term partnerships with existing community groups.

Strategies and Outcomes: TBD 9/08

Responsible Parties: The Community Service Learning Task Force, Ann Burbank, Conant School PTO

D. Goal Four: Science Review and Nature Trails Initiative

Introduction: The science strand review will continue for the next academic year, allowing teachers to examine current curricula how it aligns to proposed changes to the state Frameworks. In this process, teachers will have the opportunity to revisit

district and national standards for science instruction and to revise or develop new curricula accordingly.

The Nature Trails Initiative, new in 2007-2008, provides a unique context for teaching and learning environmental science, as well as integrating community service activities.

Objective: A Science Task Force will be convened and will serve as a resource and sounding board as the review process moves forward. A subcommittee of the Task Force will help oversee the Nature Trails Initiative and will include other members of the faculty at large, as well as Tom Tidman, Acton's Natural Resources officer.

Strategies and Outcomes: TBD 9/08

Responsible Parties: School Council Task Force, Nature Trails Subcommittee, faculty volunteers, Tom Tidman, Dr. Price, Judy Hause

E. Goal Five: Technology

Introduction: The funding of the Technology Vision for APS presents myriad opportunities for teachers to enhance their technological fluency, be introduced to new applications, and to identify opportunities to use technology in the classroom. Working closely with the TRC and with the new technology assistant at Conant will allow teachers to expand their skills and build their confidence as they work with a new platform, prior to implementing the platform with children.

Objectives: Support teachers' learning with their new laptops and operating system by tracking needs and concerns addressed by technology specialist. Continue to encourage teachers to use the Tech Request procedures and to consult the point person when the tech specialist is not available.

Strategies and Outcomes: TBD 9/08

Responsible Parties: School Council Task Force, Technology Specialist, Building Point Person