David Mindess Elementary School

2008-2009
School Improvement Plan
September 2008
1.0 The Vision Statements and Educational Principles of the Ashland Public Schools

1.1 Vision Statement
The Ashland Public Schools will provide a challenging education for all students through a common core of knowledge and values in a nurturing and safe environment. All members of the school community will respect the uniqueness and worth of each other, show passion for learning, be technologically current and have global awareness.

1.2 Educational Principles
All students can learn.

All students learn in different ways at different rates.

All students deserve and need positive support and respect.

Students learn best when active participants in the process and should be encouraged to take risks.

Learning occurs best in a safe, nurturing and challenging environment.

The school community values differences and appreciates diversity.

The school community fosters honesty, integrity and a strong sense of ethics.

The commitment to education is a shared community responsibility.

1.3 Diversity Resolution
The Ashland Public Schools celebrate diversity. The Ashland Public Schools are committed to providing a safe and secure learning environment for all of its students without distinction based on race, age, religion, ethnicity, ability, gender, or sexual orientation. Discrimination, sexual and bias-motivated harassment, and violations of civil rights will not be tolerated.
2.0 The David Mindess School Statement of Purpose and School Goals

2.1 Statement of Purpose
We are an elementary school dedicated to the intellectual, social and emotional development of 8 to 11 year olds.

We support the implementation of educational practices and school policies that reflect a developmentally responsive elementary school.

We are committed to increasing our students’ mastery of basic skills and fostering critical and creative thinking within all areas of the curriculum.

We promote the implementation of diverse models of organization or learning environments to advance both student achievement and the professional development of faculty and staff.

We endorse a school climate that fosters diversity, tolerance and safety.

We are dedicated to a school environment that stresses the role of students as members of a family, a community and society at large.

We are committed to establishing a school climate that is intentionally inviting to students, parents, and community.

2.2 Our School Goals:
• Establish a five-year plan (2006-2010) to increase student achievement as represented by measurable growth in the core curricular areas.

• Identify one critical skill/ habit of mind that will receive school-wide focus and attention each year. Year 1 – Scientific Inquiry and Technology; Year 2 – Improved Writing Skills; **Year 3 – Reading for Comprehension**; Year 4 - Mathematical Computation and Reasoning; Year 5 – Connect the Past to the Present.

• Utilize data to support student/teacher learning and inform administrative practice.

• Utilize the formulation and interpretation of parent, teacher and student surveys to assess school programs and policies.

• Promote a school climate that places high expectations on respect and responsibility, citizenship and community.

• Appreciate, support and connect with family and community
3.0 The Mindess School Improvement Plan 2007-2008

Goal 3.1 Curriculum and Instruction-Academic Improvement in MCAS
To increase the percentage of students who score in the Proficient range by 3-5% while decreasing the number of students in the needs improvement range in third, fourth and fifth grade in ELA. Concentration on writing skills will be the focus in fourth grade.

Objectives:
- Focus on open ended questions in all three grades.
- Give all students more writing assignments in all subject areas.
- Improve the students’ test taking skills by giving them more strategies to take tests.

Action Steps/Resources:
- Give students daily opportunities to write in the classroom.
- Use the result of the GRADE testing from May 2007 and September 2007 to pinpoint student weaknesses in ELA.
- Use curriculum time during the year to give the teachers additional ideas for teaching writing.
- Use strategies from the data driven curriculum workshops to continue dialogue on how to effectively use student learning to improve instruction.
- Continue to provide professional development to all teachers in John Collins and answering open response questions.

Performance Indicators/Evaluation:
- Teacher feedback
- Increased percentage of students achieving Proficient on the ELA MCAS
- Improvement on the GRADE scores in grades 3-5

Budget Implications:
- Professional development money to attend John Collins workshop.
- Yearly cost of the GRADE tests
- Money to purchase MCAS prep books in ELA

Status:
Unfortunately, only the third and fifth graders were able to increase their percentages of proficient or above greater than 5%. Third graders were able to increase their scores in ELA by 9% from 2007 and in Math by 13%. Fifth grade scores increased by 3% in ELA and by 17% in Math by achieving the Proficient range or greater.

Fourth grade scores actually went down in both areas. ELA was 11% less in the Proficient/Advanced range and Math was 3% less.
3.0 The Mindess School Improvement Plan 2007-2008

Goal 3.2 Continuation of the Anti-Bullying Program
To ensure the physical and emotional safety of the students and faculty at the Mindess School by continuing with the training and philosophy of the anti-bullying program begun in February 2007 in grades 3-5.

Objectives:
- Identify the pieces of the Olweus program that work for Mindess School.
- Have students take a bullying questionnaire and compare the results with last year's results.
- Continue with the vocabulary and definitions used in the Olweus program so the program is consistent with grades 6-8.
- Work with the faculty on techniques for holding “class meetings” as an anti-bullying technique.

Action Steps/Resources:
- Continue working with the Anti-Bullying Team on strategies and program planning.
- PTO will provide a guest speaker on anti-bullying for all the students.
- A parent program will be held in October to train parents on identifying the various types of bullying.
- Document class meetings in all classrooms.

Performance Indicators/Evaluation:
- Parent survey
- Student survey
- Feedback from faculty

Budget Implications:
- All major expenses have been covered including books, reference materials, faculty training and consultant fees.
- PTO will fund Enrichment programs as needed

Status:
We continue to work on this topic all the time. We had two programs this past year. In October, the parents were invited to a workshop given by Nancy Mullin, who trained all the teachers. Unfortunately, the attendance was only about twenty people, including school personnel. The second program was for students called Chris Poulos, Stunt Rider, discusses Anti-bullying. This program was OK. It was more stunt riding than discuss of anti-bullying. In September of 2008, we had another program from the Kaleidoscope Theatre which presented scenarios on situations a child in elementary school might face and how to deal with situations of bullying. Teachers continue to have class meetings to deal with the issue and the school continues to hang posters in each classroom as well as all the corridors.
3.0 The Mindess School Improvement Plan 2007-2008

Goal 3.3 Exploring Diversity in the school with an emphasis on tolerance
The Mindess School students will work this year on exploring the diversity of our school in culture, race, gender and disabilities.

Objectives:
• Explore the many ways we are diverse at the Mindess School.
• Develop lessons around topics that are particular to our school.
• Teach the students that tolerance is most important when dealing with diversity.

Action Steps/Resources:
• The PTO will bring in several programs during the year to emphasize how we are all different.
• The students will participate in Mix It Up Day at Lunch on Nov. 13th.
• There will be a display of various books in the Library on the topic of diversity and tolerance.
• Students will be given several writing assignments from the Principal on the topic of diversity and papers will be hung up throughout the school
• A poster contest will be held asking students to celebrate their differences.

Performance Indicators/Evaluation:
• Feedback from students and faculty
• Participation in the poster and writing contests
• Increased empathy of students towards their classmates.

Budget Implications:
• Prizes for contests
• Books and resource materials for faculty
• PTO funding for programs during the year

Status:
The students were involved in Mix It Up Day at lunch in November. They seemed to enjoy meeting new people and discussing topics over lunch. We were able to acquire ten new books on Diversity and these were displayed in the Library with several activities the students could do after reading each book. A poster contest was held in November and students were asked to depict a special family event. Children were encouraged to discuss their various values and traditions when presenting their work. All the projects were displayed in the school for several days and prizes were given to students whose work was judged to be creative and informative. There were also several writing assignments that students worked on in their classrooms and the work was then displayed in the corridors for all to view. Students enjoyed sharing their culture and traditions with others.
4.0 The Mindess School Improvement Plan 2008-2009

Goal 4.1 Curriculum and Instruction – Academic Improvement in MCAS
   To increase the percentage of students who score in the Proficient range by 3% while decreasing the number of students in the warning category. Concentration on Open Response questions in all grades.

Objectives:
   • Focus on open response questions in all grade 3-5
   • Give open response questions when assessing students in their everyday work
   • Use open response questions in the ELA benchmark assessments

Action Steps/Resources:
   • Have students and teachers review 4th grade compositions, without names for peer reviewing and use of a rubric.
   • Give students opportunities to use open response questions everyday
   • Use the TestWiz information from MCAS 2008 to pinpoint areas needing improvement
   • Give packets to all teachers on open response questions to use with their classes
   • Continue to provide professional development training to all teachers in the area of ELA
   • Use MCAS Prep books for all students in grades 3-5

Performance Indicators/Evaluation:
   • Teacher feedback
   • Decreasing the numbers of students who are in warning
   • Scores of 3 and 4 for open response questions instead of 1 and 2.

Budget Implications:
   • MCAS review books/ about $10 per student
   • Jump Drives for teachers to keep old compositions for classroom work
   • Professional development for the teachers

Status:
4.0 Mindess School Improvement Plan 2008-2009

Goal 4.2 Mindess Parent Survey Winter 2009

Objectives:
- The survey itself and the survey results aim to demonstrate that parents’ opinions and concerns are of vital importance to the daily and long term management of the Mindess School and the Ashland Public Schools.
- Recommendations in each of the areas evident from survey results will be incorporated in the School Improvement Plan for 2009-2010.
- The analysis of survey data and feedback from parent and teacher reviews of this survey will be utilized to formulate School Improvement Plans and achievement of school goals.

Action Steps/Resources:
- Members of the School Site Council will sort data from the short answer and open response sections of the Parent Survey from March to May.
- Results of the Parent Survey will be reviewed with the faculty and staff in September 2009.
- Results of the 2009 Parent Survey will be published in a parent newsletter in September 2009.
- Attempts will be made to put the survey on-line for parents to view and respond to within a three week time frame.

Performance Indicators/Evaluations:
- Evidence of completion of data collection and dissemination.
- Return of 10-15% of the population of 515 families (?)

Budget Implications:

No additional funding is required for the analysis, review and publication of data from the survey.

Status:
4.0 Mindess School Improvement Plan 2008-2009

Goal 4.3 Recognition of Student Achievement

Identify and recognize those individuals or groups of students who have achieved success in all areas of daily living. Social, academic, musical and athletic talents will be highlighted for all students in a variety of ways.

Objectives:
- To recognize student achievement in all areas of daily living. Students may be individual or in a group (sports team)
- Try to recognize each child in the school for none event before the year ends.

Action Steps/Resources:
- Publicize student achievement over the PA in the morning with students giving a Mindess ovation to the recipient.
- Write a blurb for the Mindess News weekly describing various students achievements
- Displaying the information on the bulletin board in the hallway for all students to see
- All areas of recognition should be displayed (ex. Winning a contest or raffle)

Performance Indicators/Evaluation:
- Every student has had a recognition for some talent throughout the year
- Keep records for the 635 students in the school to make sure no one is eliminated from recognition

Budget Implications:
- May need some materials for display or prizes for contests

Status: