

School Improvement Council
December 16, 2009

Attendees:

Linda Weene, Principal
Terry Stewart, Assistant Principal
Michael Benadon, Grade 2 Parent
Alanah Bravman, Kindergarten Parent
Ken Robinson, Parent Representative
Heather Dalton, Guidance Counselor
Betsy Usherwood, Grade 2 Teacher
Ellen Ahern, Elementary School Librarian

1. The December meeting of the 2009-2010 Placentino School Council came to order at 3:50PM.
2. The minutes were reviewed and unanimously approved.
3. Linda advised the Council that at the January 6th School Committee Meeting all of the Building Principals would be presenting updates of their 2009-2010 School Improvement Plans. She invited any member of this year's Council to join her at that meeting.
4. The Council began to review the 2009-2010 School Improvement Plan with the updates to be presented to the School Committee on January 6th.
5. As previously scheduled, the Miller School Council joined with the Placentino Council to review initiatives under discussion for their 2010-2011 School Improvement Plans.
 - Members of both Councils introduced themselves to the group.
 - a. Dave Keim, Principal of the Miller School, explained that the Miller School Improvement Plan was focused on the goals of the District Strategic Plan. He reminded the members that the District currently has a committee working on creating a new Strategic Plan. He distributed the Strategic Plan Committee's document which represents the goals that are central to the new Plan.
 - b. Dave reminded the Council members of the work done in the recent past creating our Professional Learning Communities (PLC's). He stressed the importance of this work and how it has enabled the staff in both buildings to work collaboratively in the important areas of Curriculum reviews, enVision Math, the Reading Street Research Project, and updating assessments.
 - c. Linda focused the Council's attention on how the goals of the new Strategic Plan are centered on the student - "Each student achieving at their own, individual, best level of performance in a physically and emotionally safe

school environment.” She reiterated that the School Improvement Plans are “nested” in the District Strategic Plan.

- d. Michael Cassidy, Holliston Fire Chief and the Community Representative on the Miller School Council, advised that he is a member of the Strategic Plan Committee and that there is a strong cross-representation of the community on this committee. He felt that the Superintendent had brought all the stakeholders together and there were “good discussions” at these meetings.
- e. Linda stated that the goals of the prior plan were realistic, and the schools were able to achieve those goals. She noted that when the 4 schools presented their new School Improvement Plans to the School Committee last spring they were very connected with continuity and consistency across the buildings even though they were developed separately.
- f. Linda presented the 3 main goals of the Placentino School Improvement Plan: Curriculum, Communication, and Health, Safety and Well Being. These were the same goals from the 2009-2010 Plan, and they continue to represent the focus of needs at the Placentino School.
- g. Dave presented the Miller School Improvement Plan goals: Curriculum and Instruction, School Environment, and Student Academic Support. He advised that the Student Environment goal is focused on helping children to see the “gift in giving.” He also stated that as a school they needed to continue to focus on Curriculum and Assessment.
- h. Ken Robinson asked how the District defines success. For example, was it graduating from High School and going to college? Dave responded that the Superintendent has indicated that we can see the success of our students in the 98% of the students achieving a Proficient or Advanced ranking on the MCAS testing which is a state criteria, the results of the NAEP testing which is a national test given to random schools – our 4th graders ranked 1st in Math and Language Arts, and also the TIMS testing which is global test in Math in which our students have done very well. Dave also stressed that Placentino and Miller are the “building blocks” of learning in Holliston. At these levels the children accumulate the skills needed to perform well enough to succeed in going to college or other career goals.
- i. Linda reminded the Council members that the MCAS results at the Miller school are “the Placentino Report Card.” She explained that at Placentino in order to ensure that the skills needed for success are being addressed, we look carefully at the results of the MCAS testing to see what areas indicate the “highs and lows.” This helps us focus our instruction in those important areas.
- j. Dave added that this year the focus is on children responding to text. This is a 2 month process at the Miller School, and the staff is working to develop a template that will help the children improve in this area.

- k. Michael Cassidy added that the Strategic Plan is “action oriented” but measurable over the next 5 years. The Committee is dedicated to creating a plan that addresses Critical Issues and defines who is accountable within a specific timeline.
- l. Linda indicated that once the new Strategic Plan is adopted it will be a familiar format and that the goal is consistency across the District.
- m. Ken Robinson asked if there is a need to market the schools. Dave responded that the work we are doing is mandated under the laws created with the School Reform Act of 1993. He also advised that people consistently come to Holliston because of the reputation of the schools and the great facilities that we have. Linda added that “the schools sell themselves.”
- n. David stated that the Miller Council has “brainstormed” several goals for their School Improvement Plan: service learning; student life – transitions from grades 3-4 and 4-5, how to use technology more effectively, the new Reading Street program, and Differentiated Instruction.
- o. Linda asked the Council members how they felt about the goals for both schools. Maureen Gonsalves from the Miller Council asked how much the Strategic Plan should drive the Building School Improvement Plans – common language, colors, explicit connections to be tied both together. Ellen Ahern, Placentino Council member, asked if the Strategic Plan is close to the final product. Ken Robinson asked how the Plan would be shared with parents.
- p. Michael Benadon, Placentino Council Member and Strategic Plan Committee Co-Chair, advised that the Initiatives of the Strategic Plan are finalized and could provide guidance for the School Improvement Plans. The Committee is discussing the Initiatives individually and those discussions are not public. The goal is to complete the discussions by the end of January, and then plan for a presentation to the School Committee and the community.
- q. Dave reminded the Councils that the School Committee holds “coffee hours” at Coffee Haven on Railroad Street. These meetings are open to the community.
- r. Linda reminded the Council members that the 2010-2011 School Budget will be challenging. She shared the Superintendent’s counsel that we need to be creative next year with our current resources. We need to use those resources creatively and set goals for the future.

6. The Miller Council members departed at 4:35PM.

7. Linda completed the review of the School Improvement Plan updates to be presented to the School Committee.

8. The meeting adjourned at 4:45PM. The next meeting is January 20th at 3:45PM in the Placentino Library.