

# **Conant School Council**

## **School Improvement Plan for the 2009 – 2010 School Year**

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

**Principal: Christine G. Price, Ph.D.**

**June 12, 2009**

## Table of Contents

<b>I.</b>	<b>Background and Rationale</b>	
	A. About the School Council -----	3
	B. School Council Membership -----	4
<b>II.</b>	<b>Evaluation of Current School Year Improvement Plan</b>	
	A. School Council Goal One:----- Community Building	4
	B. School Council Goal Two:----- Respect, Safety, Health, and Diversity	5
	C. School Council Goal Three: ----- Community Service Learning	7
	D. School Council Goal Four: ----- Academic Goal: Science	8
	E. School Council Goal Five: ----- Technology	8
<b>III.</b>	<b>Plans for the 2009-2010 School Year</b>	
	A. School Council Goal One:----- Community Building	9
	B. School Council Goal Two:----- Respect, Safety, Health, and Diversity	9
	C. School Council Goal Three: ----- Community Service Learning	10
	D. School Council Goal Four: ----- Academic Goal: Science and Nature Program	10
	E. School Council Goal Five: ----- Technology	10

# 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. In 2008-2009, the Council met on the fourth Wednesday of the month, in the mornings to accommodate the late schedule. 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. 2008 – 2009 Conant School Council Membership:

The School Council Membership convened a full slate of representatives, having had elections in the spring of 2008. (We did need to add a member in the fall, as the timing of meetings did not work for a past representative.) All members committed to a two-year term, with the agreement that they were open to extending their terms for additional year.

Our membership is:

<u>Conant School Council</u>	<u>Length of Term</u>
Principal: Christine Price	
Parents: Maureen O'Brien	2008 - 2010

	Cheryl Petersen	2008 - 2010
	Kristin Grip	2008 - 2010
Staff:	Mary Cole	2008 - 2010
	Melissa Hayes	2008 - 2010
	Janet Kennedy	2008 - 2010
	Jana Patten	2008 - 2010
Community:	Keith Campbell	2008 - 2010

In 2009-2010, we will also include a representative from our PTO leadership team to keep them informed of school-wide issues and discussions.

## II. Evaluation of Current Year School Improvement Plan

As the School Improvement Plan for 2008-2009 was developed before the new slate of members was convened, the document served as a point of departure in the context of long-term planning. Specific goals were addressed, with the understanding that those goals would be continued into the next (2009-2010) school year as appropriate. Progress on those goals was as follows:

### Plans for the 2008-2009 Academic Year

#### A. Goal One: Community Building: Gathering Information

**Introduction:** As part of a long-term vision of a vibrant, committed school community, the Council recognized the need to build community through understanding the needs and values of the constituencies that make up Conant School. The Council committed to collect data to inform planning and programming over the next two years.

**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:

- The Council developed a parent survey that was distributed electronically through Survey Monkey this spring. The intent of the survey was to gather information about parents' perceptions of Conant and why Conant was a good "fit" for parents and children, hoping to understand parents' priorities and values.
- Three informal parent coffees were held, with structured agenda points as well as unstructured time. These coffees revealed some pressing issues within the community such as equity of resources across the district, the use of technology, and anti-bullying initiatives.

- On a very anecdotal level, the installation of the Conant School Sign was a point of community pride and excitement. The work of the Community Service Learning Committee, the Auction Committee, and a number of generous volunteers made this possible.
- Though not a specific goal for this year, the addition of our Before, After, and Extended Day programs provided much needed services to our community, and thus enhanced the quality of community life at Conant.

**Responsible Parties:** School Council Task Force, Dr. Price

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

1. Respect: Examining our core value as a staff, revisiting Anti-Bullying programs
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 reflected the on-going development of and implementation of programs designed to enhance wellness in the global sense at Conant School. Review of our core value of respect by the staff played a central role in building healthy classroom environments, Continuing to support a range of anti-bullying efforts was directed at our commitment to nurturing a respectful community and strengthening outreach to all families. Similarly, enhancing our emergency preparedness helped ensure the safety of all our students. The newly created district-wide Wellness Task Force examined food-related policies across the Acton schools; its recommendations afforded the Conant community an opportunity to examine its food-related procedures as well.

### **Objectives:**

1. Respect: Examine our core value of respect, and explore ways to model and teach respectful behavior. Continue to support district-wide anti-bullying initiatives through on-going discussions and information gathering.
2. Safety: Support building emergency preparedness efforts by raising awareness of communication channels and information protocols (ConnectEd, PowerSchool) across the district. Plan and execute safety drills with the support of public safety officers (police, fire).
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. Develop increased cultural awareness through community survey data.

## **Strategies and Outcomes:**

### **Respect**

- Faculty read "Choosing Civility" for a book study group, and developed activities for their classrooms that taught and reinforced respectful civil behavior. These activities were gathered in an anthology designed to be a resource for the entire school community.
- At division meetings, faculty discussed the ways they could model respectful behavior in their classrooms and support the carry-over of those behaviors to the lunchroom, playground, and buses.
- Faculty continued the implementation of *Responsive Classroom* strategies such as "Morning Meeting" at all grades; our book groups provided professional development opportunities to learn about becoming a *Responsive Classroom* school.
- Extension of the Second Step anti-bullying program was discussed and additional funding options broached. Exploration of other programs was recommended.
- Student Council continued to plan and run All School Meetings and identify the thought of the month as a community-building theme. The overarching thought for this year was, "Respect begins with me."

### **Safety**

- There was increased use of Power School, Connect Ed and the PTO NewsFlash to disseminate important safety information quickly. This was especially important with the challenging winter weather and our late spring illness outbreak. Parents responded positively to these new avenues for safety communication.
- Working with the Acton Police and Fire Departments, building safety drills were planned this year, including a blocked exit fire drill, a "lock down" drill (in the case of a building intruder), and a building evacuation to a distant safe location. As of this writing, the fire drill and the lockdown were successfully completed; our evacuation drill was cancelled due to poor weather. We are hoping to reschedule it for the last week of school.
- Cybersafety continued to be a rising concern, and our youth officer directly addressed this issue during his DARE time with us in the fall.

### **Health**

- The work of the Wellness Task Force guided discussion among the staff as to the role of food in the curriculum and in celebrations. With the recommendations of the Task Force released in the spring, the staff began planning for the 2009-2010 school year.
- The recommendations of the Task Force were also considered in light of PTO fundraising efforts, which prompted extensive discussion on both the Council and PTO levels.

- The School Council made plans to convene the Conant Health and Wellness Committee as a subcommittee of School Council for the coming school year, as it meets twice during the school year according to the policy.

### **Diversity**

- Student Council continued to invite students to share cultural traditions such as music and dance at our All School Meetings
- Faculty continued to support cultural sharing in all classrooms
- The School Council’s parent survey invited parents to volunteer to be “cultural ambassadors” to the wider Conant community. It also asked parents for programs or speakers they might find helpful in terms of learning about other cultures
- Increased efforts to invite participation across the community for PTO events, including the Festival of Cultures, proved successful

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:** Staff and parents continue to involve students in community service learning, expanding opportunities for service in Acton and surrounding communities. Staff also began to investigate opportunities at each grade level for long-term partnerships with existing community groups.

### **Strategies and Outcomes:**

- The Community Service Learning (CSL) task force of Conant teachers and parents continued to identify community and other service opportunities.
- The success of the School Sign project underscored the importance of many groups working together to achieve a goal
- The CSL organized and facilitated a variety of school-wide CSL activities, including:
  - Our annual Turkey Trot run collected funds for Acton Community Supper
  - Our food collection for the Acton Food Pantry collected cupboard staples for hungry families
  - Our first-ever Pajama Drive collected pajamas for children in shelter housing
  - 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
  - Our Pennies for Pediatrics project collected funds for Emerson Hospital's Pediatrics programs
- As an extension of the Nature Trails Initiative, fifth graders collected and then recycled Christmas trees for trail markers.

**Responsible Parties:** The Community Service Learning Task Force, Ann Burbank, Conant School PTO, Dr. Price

## **D. Goal Four: Science Review and Nature Trails Initiative**

**Introduction:** The science strand review continued for the 2008-2009 academic year, allowing teachers to extend their examination of current curricula and how it aligns to local, state, and national standards for science learning. This year, teachers also enhanced and extended existing units of study.

The Nature Trails Initiative, new in 2007-2008, continued to provide 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. Teachers will enhance and extend existing units of study in the area of science.

### **Strategies and Outcomes:**

- The decision to convene a Science Task Force was put on hold for this school year, in order to allow teachers the time needed to focus on curriculum review. The need for a task force will be revisited in the coming year.
- Teachers reviewed grade level curricula, identifying strand areas taught and areas across the school missing from current instruction.
- Teachers enriched, extended, and enhanced existing curricula, and then presented their work in a "Share Fair" this spring. This promoted discussion among grades about skill development and strand exploration.
- The Nature Trails Initiative continued as an extension of the fifth grade study of ecosystems. Though the CPA funding was not available due to legal issues on the state level, the students improved the trails and expanded access on the school property.

**Responsible Parties:** School Council Task Force, faculty, Dr. Price, Judy Hause

## **E. Goal Five: Technology**

**Introduction:** The funding of the Technology Vision for APS presented 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, teachers expanded their skills and build their confidence as they worked with their new laptops and a new platform, prior to implementing the platform with children in the next academic year.

**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:**

- Teachers successfully participated in training over the summer of 2008, and arrived at school ready to use their laptops.
- Through the TRC and the building Technology Specialist, teachers were afforded many opportunities to learn applications that would direct and enhance instruction, including multi-media tools such as digital audio and video
- The role of the mobile lab and all its potentials was a topic of discussion throughout the year, as was the role of Smartboards and their application in the elementary classroom.

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

**III. Goals for the 2009-2010 School Year**

The School Council has opted to keep its goals highly focused for the next school year, building on those areas it has been working on this year. It was also felt that in the past there were too many sub-goals under each heading, and that this "muchness" hampered achievement of the goals. This strategy was recommended based on the relative newness of the committee members and the reconstituted status of the Council.

**These, then, are our focused goals for 2009-2010:**

**A. Goal One: Community Building**

- Analyze results of our Parent Survey, establishing priorities based on data
- Plan appropriate parent education programs that promote discussion and awareness across the community
- Continue informal outreach through parent coffees and the Conant Crier

Responsible Parties: School Council, PTO, Dr. Price, Faculty volunteers

**B. Goal Two: Respect/Safety/Health/Diversity**

- Explore avenues for re-starting the Second Step Program in grades 2-6
- Increase school officer's time to focus on cyberbullying in upper grades

- Identify outside organizations in the community as resources for anti-bullying initiatives
  - Increase visibility of school officer at all grade levels, to promote positive perceptions of law enforcement
  - Establish a “cultural ambassador” program to promote general cultural understanding across the community as well as extend outreach to cultural constituencies
- Responsible parties: School Council, PTO, staff, Dr. Price

**C. Goal Three: Community Service Learning**

- Identify and partner with local community service initiatives to reinforce awareness of local needs (e.g. HGRM, Community Supper, COA, etc.)

**Responsible parties: School Council, Community Service Learning Committee**

**D. Goal Four: Science and Nature Program**

- Working with the PTO, examine the Naturalist program and consider ways to better integrate with science curriculum
- In final year of science strand review, staff will assess effectiveness of enhanced curriculum units and revise or extend accordingly

Responsible Parties: School Council, PTO Nature Program rep, faculty at each grade level, Dr. Price

**E. Goal Five: Technology**

- Working with staff and TRC, support implementation of mobile lab initiative and SmartBoard applications on a school-wide basis as appropriate
- Support wireless capacity and promote its applications for diversity of building uses.

Responsible parties: School Council, Staff, TRC, Tech Specialist, Dr. Price

Specific objectives for each goal will be finalized at the last School Council Meeting of the 2008-2009 school year; an addendum will be provided to this document.