

Parents and Schools as Partners for a High-Quality Education:

A Series of Training Sessions for New Bedford School Councils

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Three Training Sessions

- ❑ **Session 1:** Fundamentals of School Councils
- ❑ **Session 2:** Incorporating a Framework for a High-Quality Education into the Development of School Improvement Plans
- ❑ **Session 3:** Additional Parent Involvement Requirements under Title I to Promote a Quality Education

Session 1:

Fundamentals of School Councils

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Goals for Session 1

- ❑ To provide an understanding of the legal requirements for the establishment and functioning of school councils.
- ❑ To demonstrate how school councils can be effective in helping to bring about school-level change to improve educational outcomes.

Rationale for School Councils

- ❑ Provide an opportunity for valuable collaboration between teachers, administrators, parents, and school community members.
- ❑ Create a forum for the sharing of differing perspectives.
- ❑ Serve as a mechanism to promote joint parent and educator participation in school-based decision-making that can lead to meaningful school improvement.
- ❑ Benefits of parent involvement in school-level decisions highlighted in the educational research.

School Council Membership

- ❑ Principal (co-chair)
- ❑ Parents
- ❑ Teachers
- ❑ Other persons (not parents or teachers)
- ❑ At least one student (for schools with any of grades 9-12)

Source: M.G.L. c. 71, § 59C

Composition of School Council

- ❑ Parents to have “parity” with school personnel (equal number).
- ❑ No more than 50% to be non-school members.
- ❑ To be broadly representative of the racial and ethnic diversity of the school and community.

Selection Process

- ❑ Principal to determine the specifics of the process with approval by the superintendent and school committee.
- ❑ Parent representatives to be selected by parents in elections held by PTO.
- ❑ Teacher representatives to be selected by teachers in the school.
- ❑ Other representatives to be selected under direction of principal.

Conducting of Meetings

- ❑ First meeting to be convened no later than 45 days after first day of school.
- ❑ Second co-chair to be selected at first meeting.
- ❑ Remainder of meetings to be held “regularly.”
- ❑ All meetings to comply with Massachusetts Open Meetings Law.

Responsibilities of School Council

To assist the principal in:

- ❑ Adoption of student performance goals.
- ❑ Identification of the educational needs of the students attending the school.
- ❑ Review of the annual school budget.
- ❑ Formulation of the school improvement plan.
- ❑ For schools with grades 9-12, preparation and distribution of the student handbook.

What Does “Assist” Mean?

- ❑ Provide information/recommendations re: the educational needs of students.
- ❑ Read and discuss the budget to understand the implications for the school improvement plan.
- ❑ Participate actively in the analysis and planning necessary for the identification of annual goals, activities, and outcomes leading to school improvement.

Involvement in Other Areas

- ❑ School councils can make non-binding recommendations to school committees on matters of interest to the school or district.
- ❑ School committees have discretion to grant school councils additional authority in the area of educational policy (other than in matters pertaining to collective bargaining).

Elements of a School Improvement Plan

- ❑ Intended to advance the school's student performance goals and improve student achievement.
- ❑ Based on a needs assessment.
- ❑ Required to meet state and federal law mandates.

Source: M.G.L. c. 69, § 1I.

Elements of a School Improvement Plan (cont'd)

Must include, at a minimum:

- ❑ Analysis of data reflecting student and subgroup achievement gaps in core subjects.
- ❑ Identification of specific improvement objectives.
- ❑ Description of strategic initiatives that will be used to achieve these objectives.

Elements of a School Improvement Plan (cont'd)

Must include:

- ❑ Identification/adoption of performance benchmarks and processes for evaluating the effect of the strategic initiatives.
- ❑ Description of professional development and teacher induction and mentoring activities.

Approval of the School Improvement Plan

- ❑ To be submitted to the superintendent for review and approval no later than July 1.
- ❑ Upon request of the school committee, copies of the plan to be made available to the committee for review.
- ❑ Superintendent has final approval authority.

Using the School Council to Help Bring about School-Level Change

- ❑ Use of the school council to address concerns of the school community through the development of the school improvement plan.
- ❑ One example – school climate and effectiveness of the school's discipline policies.

Session 2:

Incorporating a Framework for a High-Quality Education into the Development of a School Improvement Plan

Goals for Session 2

- ❑ To present a framework for understanding the components of a quality education.
- ❑ To provide an understanding of how to utilize this framework as a guide in the development of a school improvement plan.

Components of a Quality Education

1. Standards
2. Curriculum
3. Instruction
4. Appropriate Interventions and Assistance
5. Assessments
6. High-Stakes Decisions
7. Participants in School Decision-Making

Framework for Understanding the Components of a High-Quality Education

1. **Standards:** What should students learn? What do parents and schools want students to learn?
2. **Curriculum:** Are all students being taught a curriculum that is aligned with state standards and the school's learning goals?

Framework for Understanding the Components of a High-Quality Education (cont'd)

3. **Instruction:** Do the instructional methods enable students to reach the state standards and the school's learning goals?
4. **Appropriate Interventions and Assistance:** Are students who experience difficulty in mastering state standards and the school's learning goals provided timely and effective interventions and assistance?

Framework for Understanding the Components of a High-Quality Education (cont'd)

5. **Assessments:** Are students given regular and ongoing assessments of what they know and can do?
6. **High-Stakes Decisions:** How are important decisions being made about students?
7. **Participants in School Decision-Making:** What is the role of various stakeholders in school decision-making?

1. Standards

What should students learn?

What do parents and schools want students to learn?

- Standards describe high-level knowledge and skills that all students should learn and that are consistent with what successful adults do when they are using their minds well.
- Standards are required under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Mass. Education Reform legislation.

What Are Standards?

- ❑ **Academic Content Standards:** What the state/community decides that all students should learn. Must be clear and rigorous, providing breadth and depth, and focus on authentic achievement. (Mass. Curriculum Frameworks)
- ❑ **Achievement Standards:** Describe “how well” students have met the content standards (advanced, proficient, basic).

Why Do Standards Matter?

- ❑ Without high standards for all, students learn different things from school to school and from teacher to teacher based on:
 - Placement in different “track” assignments.
 - Race, limited English proficiency, or disability.
 - Limited expectations.
 - Lack of adequate professional development.
- ❑ All children have a right to learn to use their minds well. Setting higher standards in all schools and classes can make this happen.

Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks

- ❑ Divided into subject areas (e.g., ELA, Math) and strands (content areas within each subject).
- ❑ **General standards:** Broad statements outlining what students should know and be able to do.
- ❑ **Learning standards:** Specific goals geared toward different grade levels.

Example from ELA Curriculum Frameworks

- ❑ **General Standard 19:** Students will write with a clear focus, coherent organization, and sufficient detail.

❑ Learning Standards:

Grade Level	Learning Standards (Imaginative/Literary Writing)
Grades 1-2	Write or dictate stories that have a beginning, middle, and end.
Grades 3-4	Write stories that have a beginning, middle, and end and contain details of setting.
Grades 5-6	Write stories or scripts containing the basic elements of fiction.
Grades 7-8	Write stories or scripts with well-developed characters, setting, dialogue, clear conflict and resolution, and sufficient descriptive detail.

2. Curriculum

Are *ALL* students being taught a curriculum that is aligned with state standards and the school's learning goals?

- Is the school's curriculum aligned with the state's curriculum frameworks?
- Is the curriculum challenging, age and grade appropriate, requiring authentic performance for all students?

Curriculum (cont'd)

- Is the school's vision for all students connected to authentic instruction and achievement?
- Is the expectation that all students learn to high standards shared by teachers, parents and students?
- Does the curriculum promote equity and excellence for all?

3. Instruction

Do the teaching and instructional methods enable students to reach the state standards and the school's learning goals?

What do we know about effective instruction?

- Effective instruction addresses the range of multiple and varied learning needs of all students in the classroom (differentiated instruction).
- Highly qualified teachers possess appropriate credentials and the substantive knowledge and skills to teach the course material.

Effective Instruction (cont'd)

- Effective teachers are given ongoing training and support to help all students learn.
- Professional development opportunities should prepare teachers to provide effective instruction and to teach a range of diverse students, including students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency.

4. Appropriate Interventions/Assistance

Are students who experience difficulty in mastering the state standards and the school's learning goals provided timely and effective interventions and assistance?

- ❑ Are all students struggling academically given the opportunity to receive additional assistance?
- ❑ Are students with disabilities provided the necessary special education and related services to enable them to have meaningful participation in the general education curriculum?
- ❑ Are students with limited English proficiency provided the necessary supports to enable them to learn what all students are expected to learn?

5. Assessments

Are students given regular and ongoing assessments of what they know and can do?

- ❑ Are assessments aligned with state standards? Do assessments rely on multiple measures that advance higher-order thinking skills?
- ❑ Are assessments used for the purposes for which they are valid and reliable, consistent with nationally recognized professional, technical standards?

Assessments (cont'd)

- ❑ Are assessments designed to include ALL students? Do assessments allow for reasonable accommodations and adaptations? Are assessments written in a language and form that will allow limited English proficient students to demonstrate mastery?
- ❑ Are assessments being used to inform instruction?

NCLB Assessment Requirements - the Basics

- ❑ Assessments must be aligned with state academic content and achievement standards.
- ❑ Mandatory public reporting of data results must be disaggregated by key subgroups to show if state overall, district and school made Adequate Yearly Progress.

NCLB Requirements (cont'd)

- ❑ If school doesn't make AYP for any subgroup, school doesn't make AYP (note new regulation re/students w. significant cognitive disabilities; flexible policy re/LEP).
- ❑ Failure to make AYP triggers consequences, including student transfers, supplemental educational services, professional development, restructuring.

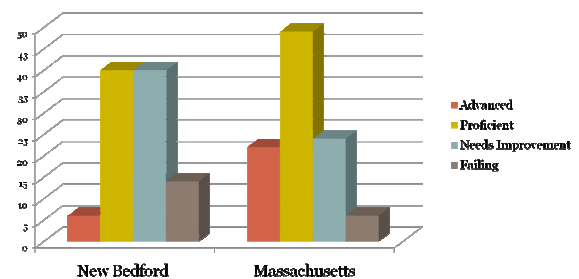
What is Adequate Yearly Progress?

- ❑ Measure of continued improvement .
- ❑ Based primarily on academic assessments showing enough annual progress to get all students in each school and each subgroup – racial/ethnic group, economic disadvantage, LEP, and SWD – to a proficient level in language arts and math by 2014.

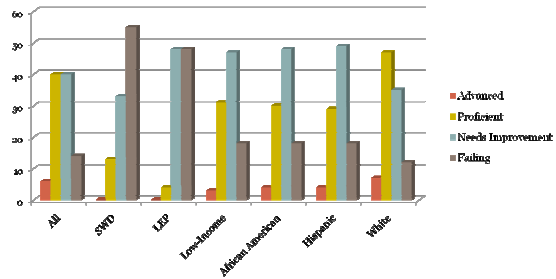
AYP (cont'd)

- ❑ Each state determines if schools (districts and state overall) are making "AYP" based on its own definition of proficiency.
- ❑ When a school fails to make AYP, students are afforded the right to transfer to another school (choice) and receive supplemental educational services (SES). The school is designated for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring.

Comparison of Performance Levels of New Bedford and Massachusetts Grade 10 - English Language Arts



New Bedford Grade 10 - English Language Arts Percent of Students Scoring at Each Performance Level by Subgroup



6. High-Stakes Decisions

How are important decisions being made about students?

- Does the school have a clear and valid set of criteria for making decisions concerning such actions as program placement, promotion, and graduation?
- Are all students given an opportunity to learn the knowledge and skills necessary for meeting the criteria for important decisions?

7. Participants in School Decision-Making

What is the role of various stakeholders in school decision-making?

- Is decision-making shared among all members of the school community, including teachers, administrators, other staff, parents, and students (when appropriate)?

School Decision-Making (cont'd)

- Are all members of the school community given effective access to information, training, and assistance necessary to become active participants in school-level decision-making?
- Are parents and educators working together in effecting school-level change?

How can the preceding components of a high-quality education be incorporated into the development of an effective school improvement plan?

- ❑ Ask the series of questions to help conduct the needs assessment of the school.
- ❑ Make use of the various components to identify objectives and strategies for the school improvement plan.

Session 3

Additional Parent Involvement Requirements under Title I to Promote a Quality Education

Goals for Session 3

- ❑ To present additional requirements concerning parent involvement for Title I schools.
- ❑ To provide an understanding of why parents and educators should work together to make changes to improve student achievement.

Traditional Accountability Provisions under Title I

Each state must:

- ❑ Adopt challenging state standards for ALL students.
- ❑ Report results of assessments publicly by subgroups (race, limited English proficiency, special education, income).

Traditional Title I Accountability Provisions (cont'd)

- ❑ Provide parents with options when schools do not improve or make “adequate yearly progress” (AYP): school choice, supplemental educational services.
- ❑ Hold schools and school districts accountable.

Unintended Consequences

- ❑ Tendency to narrowly define accountability has resulted in an overemphasis on standardized test outcomes.
- ❑ Narrowing of curriculum and instruction (teaching to the test).
- ❑ Triggering consequences without being sure that schools have the resources and support needed to improve.

“Other” Accountability: Parents

Title I schools must:

- ❑ Work together with parents to create a plan for providing all students with a high-quality education.
- ❑ Partner with parents to close the achievement gap between all students.
- ❑ Provide parents with the *knowledge* and *skills* necessary to become equal partners in school reform.

Schoolwide Program Plan

School Plan must:

- ❑ Be *jointly* developed and agreed upon with parents.
- ❑ Include a comprehensive needs assessment.
- ❑ Describe how the entire school community will provide a high quality education for every child.

Parent Involvement Policy

- Each school district and school receiving funds under Title I must develop *jointly* with parents a written parent involvement policy that:
 - Describes *how* parents will be involved in *joint* planning, development, and review of district and school plans.
 - Addresses training and capacity building for parents and school personnel.
 - Is *jointly* developed and agreed upon.

School-Parent Compact

- *Jointly* developed document that outlines *how* parents and school staff will share responsibility for improved student achievement.
- Describes school's responsibility to provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in effective learning environment that enables students to meet state standards.
- Describes parents' responsibility for supporting their children's learning.
- Addresses importance of communication between parents and teachers.

Capacity Building

To promote partnership and build capacity for improving student achievement, each school must:

- Provide training and assistance to parents about standards, assessments, monitoring children's progress.
- Provide materials and training to help parents work with their children (e.g., literacy training and training in the use of technology).

Capacity Building (cont'd)

Each school must:

- Educate school staff about parental outreach, communication and working with parents as "equal partners."
- Ensure that information, materials, and learning opportunities are accessible to parents.

Evaluating the Title I Process

- ❑ Does the school plan *specifically* describe *how* every student will receive a high quality education?
- ❑ Does the parent involvement policy *specifically* describe *how* parents will *jointly* develop the school plan?
- ❑ Does the parent involvement policy *specifically* describe *how* parents will receive the information and training needed to be equal partners in this process?
- ❑ Were both documents *jointly* developed and *agreed* upon by parents?

Title I Parent Involvement Provisions as Tools for Providing a High-Quality Education

- ❑ Improve learning through building school-level capacity.
- ❑ Define what is required by Title I in terms of a high-quality education and what is necessary to enable students to meet state standards.

Title I Parent Involvement Provisions as Tools for Providing a High-Quality Education (cont'd)

- ❑ Require schools and school districts to work with parents to close the achievement gap between children of color and white children, rich and poor children, and students with and without disabilities.
- ❑ Build school-level capacity to develop broader learning communities with a common goal.