

**Ashland Public Schools  
School Improvement Plan  
Middle School**

87 West Union Street, Ashland, MA, 01721

**2022-2023**

**District Blueprint for Continuous Student Improvement**

The Ashland Public Schools is a forward thinking district that cultivates the academic and social-emotional growth of each student through a supportive, collaborative, and innovative and challenging environment. Students will develop into self-motivated, resilient, life-long learners who will embrace their role as responsible contributors to a global society.

**District Improvement Priorities**

The four improvement priorities that guide our work at the district and school level:

- DIP#1: Promote Academic Excellence:** We will improve achievement for all students by providing individualized, equitable, and challenging opportunities in an environment that fosters growth and skill acquisition for each student.
- DIP#2: Cultivate Well-Being of All:** We will ensure student, faculty, and staff well-being by teaching strategies, skills, and competencies necessary to maintain and support social-emotional health.
- DIP#3: Engage Students, Families and Community as Partners in Learning:** We will continuously model a district environment based on collaboration, respect, and open lines of communication through partnerships with students, caregivers, community members, businesses, community-based organizations, and educational institutions.
- DIP#4: Champion Educator Excellence:** We will attract, develop, and retain highly qualified, passionate educators who are committed to the vision of Ashland Public Schools.

**Ashland Middle School Goals**

The following school goals aim to further and support the district strategic objectives through focused work that accounts for the strengths and needs of the individual school community:

Goal 1	Ashland Middle School will continue to improve achievement in an equitable and challenging environment so that all students reach state, district and individual learning goals.	DIP #1
Goal 2	Ashland Middle School will ensure student, faculty and staff well-being by teaching strategies, skills and competencies necessary to maintain and support social-emotional health.	DIP#2
Goal 3	Ashland Middle School will continue to open lines of communication by fostering a school environment based on collaboration, respect, partnerships with students and parents, businesses, and the entire Ashland Community.	DIP #3

**Goal #1:** Ashland Middle School will continue to improve achievement in an equitable and challenging environment so that all students reach state, district and individual learning goals.

**District Alignment: DIP#1: Promote Academic Excellence:** We will improve achievement for all students by providing individualized, equitable, and challenging opportunities in an environment that fosters growth and skill acquisition for each student.

Stage:

- Planning
- In Progress

Start Date: (August 31, 2015)

End Date: Ongoing

Action Items:

1. Curriculum Work and Analysis:

As a result of analysis of data and curriculum, changes were made regarding software entering the 2021-2022 school year. 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade Science moved to replace the Stemsscopes software with Gizmos. The Social Studies department piloted and was trained on NEWSELA's Social Studies platform (and curriculum). All Staff Professional Development will be dedicated to NEWSELA trainings which will include materials and resources aimed at supporting our English Language Learner population. During the 2022-2023 school year, the middle school will continue to effectively utilize platforms deemed to enhance instruction.

2. MCAS Testing occurred in the Spring of 2022. Students tested in two sessions in the subjects of ELA (all grades), Math (all grades) and Science (grade 8 only)

AMS administration will analyze Next Generation MCAS data. Based on data analysis, students who are not meeting standards and meet set criteria will be offered Title 1 math services. ISSPs (Individualized Student Success Plans) will also be created for students in any MCAS tested subject in which they are not meeting expectations.

- A. Teachers (in Teams) will utilize Discovery Block to increase remediation for students who scored in the Did Not Meet or Partially Met on MCAS tests.
- B. Teachers will use Team Meeting time to review ISSPs and student performance. Strategies and goals may be adjusted over the course of the school year.

3. Ashland Middle School will continue to close the achievement gap by scoring high growth (over 60%) in all grades in Math and ELA on standardized testing.

- A. Teachers and administrators will continue to analyze data to identify curriculum needs.
- B. Teachers will identify students in need of support and create ISSPs to create strategies and set student goals.

- C. Teachers (in Teams) will utilize Discovery Block to increase remediation for students who scored in the Did Not Meet or Partially Met on MCAS tests. 75% of this group will achieve 50% growth for the 2022-2023 school year.
4. The RTI team will meet weekly throughout the school year to identify students in need of support and set goals (6 week intervals) for individual growth and success.
  5. Teachers will be provided curriculum meeting time and/or professional development to discuss the process of assessing students at the onset of the 2022-2023 school year. Time will also be dedicated to continue to improve transitions from one grade to the next. This work includes alignment, assessment calibration and the creation of benchmark or common assessments. Teachers will also be meeting by department to discuss the impacts of Covid on the curriculum and make adjustments to units, lessons, assessments, etc.
  6. During the 2022-2023 school year, AMS will review the number and services/supports of the ELL and sub separate Special Education students in the building. This will include a review of the current 5<sup>th</sup> grade EL population. Based on findings, personnel and budgetary requests/decisions will be put forward to address current and future needs of the program.
  7. Ashland Middle School staff will participate in DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) training during the 2021-2022 school year. An AMS equity team will also be created and tasked with data review and working to support our ELL and high needs students. Based on this work, the purpose will be to make decisions to implement goals and action items to help close the achievement gap for this population. The equity team will lead professional development and DEI work during the 2022-2023 school year.

Indicators of Success:

- A. Creation and implementation of ISSPs in the fall of 2022. Parents receive ISSPs in November.
- B. Ashland Middle School will continue to close the achievement gap by scoring high growth (over 60%) in all grades in Math and ELA on standardized testing.
- C. RTI – Based on individual data, appropriate interventions are implemented so that students may reach individual, state and district goal targets
- D. ELL students, students with disabilities and students of color will show moderate-high growth in percentage of students meeting expectations on MCAS testing.
- E. A review of the number and services/supports of ELL and Sub Separate Special Education students in the building is conducted. Based on findings, personnel and budgetary requests/decisions are put forward to address current and future needs of the program.
- F. The equity team implements DEI PD/discussions and will show staff learning and growth using survey pre-testing and post testing.

G. Narrative:

To achieve this goal, a two prong approach is being implemented. One goal focuses on data analysis to identify need areas for the curriculum while the other goal centers on meeting individual learning needs of students. By analyzing MCAS data and assessing student performance, teachers and administration can address growth areas and implement action items to target those areas.

## Accomplishments

### 2021-2022 School Year

1. During the 2021-2022 school year, Ashland Middle School staff were trained and received professional development around DEI and supporting our underserved population.
2. ISSPs were created for students in the Not Meeting Expectations category of MCAS scoring.

The following goals have been fulfilled within the past 5 years, and are currently in place.

Goal	District Alignment	Date Completed
AMS curriculum aligned to MA Common Core standards. Universal Backwards Design units created by teachers during professional development time.	DIP #1	School year 2015-2016 and ongoing
Curriculum Pacing, structure, assessments shifted to meet the needs of all students (assessing covid impact)	DIP #1	School year 2020-2021 and ongoing
Ashland Middle School is now a 1:1 school - all students were distributed a device(Chromebook) for the 2020-2021 school year. Families in need of Wifi will be provided a "hotspot" so all can have equitable access.	DIP #1	School year 2020 and ongoing
AMS achieved 60% growth (overall) in both ELA and Math in years prior to the 2020-2021 school year (MCAS cancelled due to Covid)	DIP #1	School year 2015-2019
AMS achieved target and growth goals for MCAS in years prior to the 2020-2021 school year (MCAS cancelled due to Covid)	DIP #1	School Year 2016-2019
ELL/Sub Separate Special Education programs examined. Personnel added to meet the needs of current and future students in the program.	DIP #1	School Year 2018-2019 and ongoing
Teachers (teams) added in 7 <sup>th</sup> and 8 <sup>th</sup> grade to address increased student population (and class sizes)	DIP #1	School Year 2021-2022
Two Teachers (Bronze team) added in 6 <sup>th</sup> grade to address increased student population (and class sizes)	DIP #1	School Year 2022-2023

**Goal #2:** Ashland Middle School will ensure student, faculty and staff well-being by teaching strategies, skills and competencies necessary to maintain and support social-emotional health.

**District Alignment: DIP#2: Cultivate Well-Being of All:** We will ensure student, faculty, and staff wellbeing by teaching strategies, skills, and competencies necessary to maintain and support socialemotional health.

Stage:

Planning

In Progress

Start Date: (August 31, 2015)

End Date: Ongoing

Action Items:

**Students:**

1. During the 2022-2023 school year, guidance counselors will continue to implement the “Connections Academy”. This program provides outreach, support, and social connection to students in all grades as they navigate the stressors and challenges brought about by the impact of the Covid pandemic. Informal check ins and “minute meetings” with all students are components of the academy. Students in all grades will receive SEL lessons delivered by their Guidance Counselor – the 5 SEL competencies will be addressed. Lessons and tips will be sent home to AMS families.
2. During the 2022-2023 school year, AMS will again implement the S.O.S. (Signs of Suicide) program at the middle school. A 7<sup>th</sup> grade program will be introduced. 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students will also attend a Minding your Mind Presentation. Small group discussions will follow S.O.S and Minding Your Mind presentations.
3. Student leadership will offer mentoring to younger students. This provides an opportunity for social connections and support for younger students. During the 2022-2023 school year, the program will be expanded to include both 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade.
4. An R and R Afternoon will be held at Ashland Middle School during May of the 2022-2023 school year. They will have the opportunity to attend sessions focused on mindfulness, stress management, and relaxation.
5. The 2021-2022 school year saw a rise in incidents relating to digital citizenship, appropriate social media use, and cyberbullying. Guidance counselors at the middle school will deliver a Digital Citizenship lesson to students in all grades before the February Vacation.

## **Faculty/Staff**

1. District SEL Coordinator shares “Zen Den” resources with teachers and staff each week.
2. Faculty will be provided professional development and training as part of delivery of the S.O.S. program to learn about issues and warning signs relating to depression, suicide and/or mental health training. A Self-Care presentation/training will also be offered in May of 2022. These programs will continue during the 2022-2023 school year.
3. During the 2021-2022 school year, AMS professional development focused on equity, diversity and inclusion to help support our underserved populations. This will include anti-bias and anti-racism training. Staff professional development, training and curriculum review/resources will be included in this action item. This will continue during the 2022-2023 school year and be driven by the Equity Team.
4. R and R Afternoon will be held at Ashland Middle School in May. During this day, staff will also have the opportunity to attend staff only sessions targeted at mindfulness, SEL and rest/relaxation.

### Indicators of Success:

- A. Connections Academy Implemented
- B. S.O.S and Minding Your Mind Programs implemented
- C. Faculty trainings/professional development on mental health, Diversity and Inclusion, Anti-Bias/AntiRacism education.
- D. AMS R and R afternoon occurs in the spring

### Narrative:

Ashland Middle School will be analyzing the data from the biannual Metrowest Health Survey – the survey was taken in November of 2021 (The 2020 survey was cancelled due to Covid). Based on student survey data from 2021, AMS will set goals to support parents, students, and faculty to develop strategies, skills and tools necessary to maintain a healthy physical and mental well-being. The AMS R and R afternoon were implemented virtually in March of 2021. AHS students and community members led three 45 minute experiences that supported strategies and skills around stress reduction and physical and mental well-being.

## Accomplishments

The following goals have been fulfilled within the past 4 years, and are currently in place.

Goal	District Alignment	Date Completed
Our Wellness curriculum was examined to determine how we can further support AMS students around mental and physical well-being. The revised curriculum will be fully implemented.	DIP#2	2018-2019 school year and Ongoing
AMS Guidance pilots Online SEL program, Staff PD and faculty meetings focus on SEL and staff surveys analyzed	DIP#2	2018-2019 and Ongoing
AMS Counseling staff provides the “Connections Academy” Ongoing support for students in need	DIP#2	2019-2020 and Ongoing
AMS brings the “Minding Your Mind” mental health program for 8 <sup>th</sup> grade students.	DIP#2	2021-2022 and Ongoing
Professional Development for Faculty on SEL/mental Health Issues(Sandy Hook Promise in 2018-2019)	DIP#2	2016-2017 and Ongoing
AMS Successfully implemented R and R Afternoons	DIP#2	2016-2017 and Ongoing
SOS Program implemented in 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	DIP#2	2021-2022 school year and ongoing

**Goal #3:** Ashland Middle School will continue to open lines of communication by fostering a school environment based on collaboration, respect, partnerships with students and parents, businesses, and the entire Ashland Community.

**District Alignment DIP#3: Engage Students, Families and Community as Partners in Learning:** We will continuously model a district environment based on collaboration, respect, and open lines of communication through partnerships with students, caregivers, community members, businesses, community-based organizations, and educational institutions.

Stage:

- Planning
- In Progress

Start Date: (August 31, 2015)
End Date: (Ongoing)

Action Items:

1. Ashland will continue to communicate to parents and faculty using various technologies including weekly emails, Twitter, Website, and Blackboard messages. For the 2021-2022 school year, administrators were trained on a new communication system. A new consistent communication platform will be used for the 2022-2023 school year.
2. The Principal will hold grade level meetings every 4-6 weeks to connect with students, deliver information, and answer student questions.
3. The Principal will conduct virtual or in person transition parent meetings/webinars to communicate changes and answer parent questions over the course of the school year.
4. Ashland Middle School will use Iparent to communicate and update students and parents on grades, assignments, attendance, and course recommendations. Team and Department Curriculum Updates will be sent via email and teachers will also be utilizing Google Classroom to share assignments, assessments and student performance.
5. Ashland Middle School will run an all school assembly in November to recognize local Veterans.
6. During the 2022-2023 school year, the district will be sending all Ashland families a survey around district and school communication. The middle school will use results to review and improve the way we communicate and/or present information to families. AMS will evaluate and look to improve how we communicate with our ELL student population.
7. Ashland Middle School will partner with businesses in the community to offer "R and R" afternoons. Teachers and community members will engage in various experiences with students focusing on stress reduction and positive physical and mental well-being.

Indicators of Success:

- A. Iparent and Google Classroom are utilized to communicate assignments, grades, attendance and student performance.

- B. Parent Virtual Meetings/Webinars and virtual grade level meetings occur over the course of the school year. The “Connections Academy” began during the 2020-2021 school year to support students – it will continue during the 2022-2023 school year.
  
- C. Adjustments are made to improve communication to all families (and the manner in which the school shares/posts information). AMS will evaluate and look to improve how we communicate with our ELL student population.
  
- D. R and R afternoons provide valuable SEL experiences/opportunities for students: Parents, Community Partners and high school students will run sessions.

Narrative:

Ashland Middle School continues to strive to improve communication to parents in ways that are helpful and comprehensive. Ashland Middle School continues to use the Iparent portal, giving parents the opportunity to view student grades and performance on individual assignments. AMS will continue to explore ways to utilize the Iparent software to improve communication and efficiency.

### **Accomplishments**

The following goals have been fulfilled within the past 3 years, and are currently in place.

Goal	District Alignment	Date Completed
Successful Iparent/Google Classroom use and continued operation	DIP3#	2015 school year and ongoing
Safety Committee Member	DIP#3	2013 school year and ongoing
8 <sup>th</sup> grade Recommendations conducted paperless via Iparent	DIP #3	2015 school year and ongoing
R and R afternoons conducted in the spring	DIP #3	2015 school year and ongoing
District Communication Survey Administered	DIP #3	2020 school year and ongoing

Participation in the Decisions at Every Turn Coalition	DIP #3	2013 school year and ongoing
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Principal Coffees – 3 per year.	DIP #3	2014 school year and ongoing

## Glossary of Terms

**R and R Afternoons** – Rest and Relax afternoons held at AMS for the first time this spring. This year, AMS has focused on supporting the mental health and well being of our students. These days, which were conducted in the afternoons on April 4<sup>th</sup> (for 6<sup>th</sup> grade and Team Green) and April 5<sup>th</sup> (for Team Purple and 8<sup>th</sup> grade), aimed to create positive experiences focused on mindfulness, stress management, and physical and mental relaxation. Teachers and community businesses hosted experiences for students in the afternoons.

**Achievement Gap** - Refers to any significant and persistent disparity in academic performance or educational attainment between different groups of students, such as white students and minorities, for example, or students from higher-income and lower-income households.

**MCAS** – The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System is designed to meet the requirements of the Education Reform Law of 1993. MCAS tests are given to all public school students in Massachusetts and measures performance based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework learning standards. There are 3 tests students participate in: ELA (English Language Arts), Math, and Science and Technology/Engineering. During the 2014/2015 school year, AMS 8<sup>th</sup> grade students tested in Science and Technology/Engineering.

**DEI** – Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. DEI was the focus of professional development and training for the middle school during the 2021-2022 school year. The equity team will take up this work during the 2022-2023 school year.

**ISSP** - Individualized Student Success Plan. ISSPs are created by Team teachers in the fall for those students who scored warning or needs improvement on MCAS tests in the spring. Teachers create these plans to implement strategies and create an action plan so these students may reach state and school learning goals.

**Vertical Meetings**: Teacher meetings that take place during professional development days to improve transition from one building to the next. 8<sup>th</sup> grade Ashland Middle School teachers and counselors meet with Ashland High School staff to discuss recommendations for 9<sup>th</sup> grade, skill development, curriculum alignment, etc. 6<sup>th</sup> grade Ashland Middle School teachers and counselors meet with Mindess staff to discuss math placement, skill development, curriculum alignment, etc.

**PBIS** – Positive Behavior Intervention and Support. All schools in the district have adopted Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS). At AMS we are proud to have a national, data-driven model that supports us in establishing a positive school culture. PBIS starts with establishing core values and teaching the behaviors we expect students to show in living those values. PBIS also emphasizes the importance of recognizing students who meet these behavioral expectations.

**Advisory** – 10 minute period during the school day when AMS students meet with their mentor teacher or advisor. This is a period when teachers can check in with students and many have a snack during this time. AMS guidance will also run initiatives during this period such as Diversity, Kindness, and Cyberbullying.

**Metrowest Health Survey** - Since 2006, the Metrowest Adolescent Health Survey has been administered every other year to monitor trends in health and risk behaviors and identify emerging health issues at the local and regional levels. With over 41,000 students surveyed in 2014 alone, this regional census is one of the largest adolescent health surveys in the country. Yet it maintains a local focus, with the goal of providing comprehensive data on issues of local concern to inform schools and communities as they strive to enhance policies and programs, improve prevention efforts, and set priorities for achieving a healthier youth population. In Ashland, the 2014 MWAHS was administered to middle school students in grades 6 through 8 and high school students in grades 9 through 12 this past November.

**Mentoring Program/initiative:** AMS students trained in leadership so they may mentor (and connect) with incoming 6<sup>th</sup> grade students to ease transitions to begin the school year.

**ASAP** – Ashland Substance Abuse Prevention. Group of students (grades 6-8) led by an advisor to provide information to AMS around substance abuse prevention.

**Shout outs** – Individual AMS students recognized during announcements for reflecting the AMS core values of Respect and Responsibility.

**STEM** – Science Technology Engineering and Math. The AMS STEM teacher works with core academic teachers to deliver the STEM curriculum to students.

**Discovery** – “D” period class in the AMS schedule that rotates during the day. During Discovery, teachers conduct interdisciplinary units, enrichment opportunities and remediation. Specialized instruction, Band and Chorus also occur during this period.

**UBD** – Understanding by Design. Thousands of educators across the country use the Understanding by Design framework, created by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, to get a handle on standards, align programs to assessments, and guide teachers in implementing a standards-based curriculum that leads to student understanding and achievement.

**Ipament** – Software that allows parents to periodically view student attendance, grades, assignments and course recommendations.

**RTI** – Response to Intervention. This is a multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs. The RTI team meets weekly to identify students in need of support and sets measurable learning goals for those individuals.

**Site Council Members**

**David DiGirolamo**

**Florence Wagner**

**Patricia Callahan**

**Tracy Terry**

**Mike Morro (non voting member)**

**Dan Keller**

**Approvals**

Approved by Site Council on: 5/26/22

By: David DiGirolamo

Title: Principal