



MURDOCK MIDDLE SCHOOL

Where Students Come First!

3 Memorial Drive
Winchendon, MA 01475
978-297-1256
www.winchendonk12.org

April 24, 2019

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Each Spring, students in grades 3 through 10 in Massachusetts are required to participate in the MCAS assessment. The results of this assessment are used to compare student performance and achievement across the Commonwealth. Over the last few years, the MCAS results for our students have been stagnant. As a result, the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has required our school to design and implement a Turnaround Plan. This process required us to take a look at all aspects of our school; curriculum, instruction, assessment, student individual needs and make a change. As part of this process and change, Murdock Middle School implemented a personalized learning model utilizing Summit Learning in order to provide a stable and rigorous curriculum for our students.

Our teachers have been provided with training and support to be able to personalize teaching for each of our students. Specifically, our students now benefit from a classroom environment centered around learning through real-world projects, developing lifelong skills and habits, and having the 1:1 ongoing support of a dedicated teacher/mentor at our school. Teachers have been able to incorporate their own units and projects into the platform and are able to make changes to their curriculum and instruction as needed based on student's individual needs.

We've seen real progress since implementing this approach:

- Students in grades 7 and 8 made tremendous growth on the Winter MAP testing, exceeding their projected growth scores.
 - In Mathematics, grade 7 students were in the 81st percentile for growth made, while grade 8 students were in the 87th percentile. *Note: the average growth percentile is 50%.
 - In Reading, grade 7 students were in the 95th percentile for growth made, while grade 8 students were in the 78th percentile. *Note: the average growth percentile is 50%.
- Murdock Middle School's latest classroom observation results conducted by the American Institute for Research (AIR) have found significant improvements in several areas including Instructional Learning Formats, Content Understanding and Instructional Dialogue to name a few.
- Teachers have made several adjustments based on comments and suggestions received by parents and our professional development partners to ensure students are receiving a comprehensive, rigorous education.
- Teachers are printing math units, project checkpoints, specific tasks that students collaborate on and examples of final products as needed for all students.
- Students have stated the following about their experience with personalized learning and using Summit:
 - "Using Summit has helped me in more ways than I expected. I've grown in important areas of my education like note taking, meeting deadlines regularly, and being responsible for my own studying and work."
 - "Although Summit may seem very independent, I work with my teachers constantly. I ask them many questions about the material I'm learning, what I need to learn to succeed in what I'm working on, and how I can stay caught up with their subject."
 - "Summit has held me accountable and responsible for my learning and grades."
 - "I love the projects we are given on Summit because they are really in depth and I feel accomplished after I complete them."

- “I think that Summit is a really good platform especially for students that struggle to keep organized. It gives you easy access to the assignments that you have and have not done and also to your grades. It shows you that if it is green it is done, yellow needs improvement and red not done or needs fixing. It has really helped me stay organized with my learning and stay caught up in all of my classes.”
- “Using Summit has taught me a different way of learning and review from that of a regular class. I get to learn at my own pace and go back when I need it unlike how I would normally be pushed to keep at the same spot with my classmates. It may be something I already know pretty well or it could be something I struggle with wrapping my head around so having that independence allows more choice and growth, in my opinion.”

This approach has been a key component of the progress made under our Turnaround Plan, yet positive stories such as ours are often overlooked and not reported in the press. However, you may have read or heard about a recent article regarding several schools in another state who have implemented the same program.

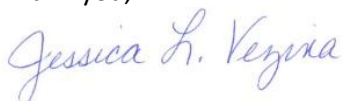
The New York Times published an [article on Sunday](#) mentioning the rollout of Summit Learning in Kansas. We want to address misleading claims made in the article, ensuring you understand our perspective and have answers to any questions you may have.

Let's start with the basics about Summit Learning:

- There are more than **380 schools across the country - in 38 states, in rural, urban, and suburban districts - where 72,000+ students** are thriving, and teachers and parents support the program.
- **Summit Learning does not replace the work of teachers with technology.** The Summit Learning Platform is designed by educators **as a tool** to support great teaching and learning - just as books have done for years. Teachers at MMS are still teaching!
- **Summit Learning does not call for students to be working on a screen all day.** Students in Summit classrooms spend significant time with hands-on project-based learning, mentorship, and other non-tech learning activities.
- The Summit Learning Program was **developed by teachers, for teachers, in partnership with nationally-acclaimed learning scientists, researchers, and academics.** The program was successful with students at Summit Public Schools — a charter school network that first opened in 2003 — before it was ever offered to other public schools.
- **Protecting student personal information is a top priority for Summit.** In addition to maintaining a [transparent student privacy practices](#), Summit has gone above what is currently required by federal law by voluntarily signing on to the Future of Privacy Forum's [Student Privacy Pledge](#).

At Murdock Middle School our door is always open. Should you have any additional questions, please feel free to reach out to us. We invite you to come visit MMS for a tour or set up a time to meet with me or our teachers to answer any of your questions or concerns. We appreciate your support as a parent and as a partner in your child's education.

Thank you,



Jessica L. Vezina
Principal