

Murdock Middle School
Executive Summary
2020-2021

Murdock Middle School is identified as a school “requiring assistance or intervention” because Spring 2018 MCAS scores placed the school within the 7th percentile compared with all non-high schools in Massachusetts. Previous to 2018, Murdock Middle’s MCAS scores had placed the school in the Level 3 category since 2014, identified as such due to assessment performance school-wide or within specific student groups (i.e. students identified as Hispanic/Latino, Economically Disadvantaged, High Needs Students, Students with Disabilities, English Learners (ELs) and former ELs).

In the winter of 2016, Murdock Middle School was selected to participate in the Level 3 Turnaround Process developed by the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The process is designed to provide Level 3 schools with constructive information and feedback that will contribute to the school’s efforts to engage in rapid improvement. During this process (classroom observations, principal interview, and staff survey conducted by the American Institute of Research in April 2017), the Murdock Middle School staff came to the understanding that to increase learning and performance, we needed to increase the knowledge and skill of teachers, and provide more opportunities for students to build close relationships with their teachers and therefore, gain a better understanding of the content. Using data received from the TSV process, the School Improvement Team created a one-year Turnaround Plan that focuses on the implementation of Personalized Learning.

During the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school year, grades 7 and 8 implemented a personalized learning model utilizing the Summit Learning program in all classes. The start of the first year was rocky due to the implementation of a new program but teachers and students persevered. We implemented an assessment system using Measures of Academic Progress to help us track students’ strengths, areas of need, and growth.

At the beginning of the 2019-2020 School Year, the Murdock Middle School Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) rolled out the 19-20 Turnaround Plan. During the summer, the school administration had created a leadership plan which included but was not limited to, leadership’s vision, instructional expectations and goals, description of how instruction is aligned to standards, instructional focus areas, etc. This document, titled Murdock Middle School’s Structures and Systems was provided to all staff members, and training was provided during the first Professional Development Day. Throughout the first month of school, the ILT established a collaborative teaming structure and schedule for Team (CPT) and Dept. meetings using these revised team meeting protocols, rolling agendas, and data tracking forms.

During the 2019-2020 school year, up until March 2020, MMS continually focused on the goals, strategies, and benchmarks as detailed in our Turnaround Plan. Much of our work centered on Turnaround Practices 2 and 3 and the following Strategic Objectives:

Strategic Objective II: Provide standards-aligned curriculum & tiered instruction to all students while using data to improve instruction to support students’ critical thinking & problem-solving skills, improve students’ academic discourse, and improve student’s ability to collaborate with peers.

As a team, we were able to accomplish the following:

- Create a schedule of school-based data meetings to inform practices involving tiered interventions.
- Use data analysis protocols to form intervention and enrichment groups
- Review EWIS data to identify students as high need, economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities and/or low income

- Create intervention groups, progress monitor, and revise groupings every 6 to 8 weeks
- Use Summit data to create small group workshops
- Provide Department Planning time
- Complete scope and sequence with standards alignment
- Implement Summit Learning in grade 6
- Provide all grade 6 staff & new staff Summit Learning training
- Conduct walkthroughs and provide timely and actionable feedback specifically about the DOK level observed in lessons
- Implement regular coaching cycles for Grade 6 teachers, providing teachers with precise feedback on student engagement; actionable steps to improve engagement if needed, and with follow-up, observations to gauge improvement
- Provide PD on Depth of Knowledge

Strategic Objective III: Strengthen targeted interventions for students identified as requiring academic & non-academic supports.

As a team, we were able to accomplish the following:

- Build a calendar of assessment, and for data analysis
- Redesign RTI structures to consistently allow for targeted intervention
- Use MAP data and other data sets during CPT to plan for intervention and enrichment
- Create a tiered system of supports with criteria, data, and protocols to identify students for interventions and enrichments.
- Develop common language and expectations for the 2019-2020 school year.
- Create a SST meeting schedule and group membership
- Refine our Student Support teaming structure and procedure for assigning student supports
- Within PBIS section of systems and structures document, revise the current multi-tiered system of supports for identifying and addressing non-academic student needs

At the time of the school closure on March 12th, MMS had seen progress on the MAP midyear assessment in ELA and Math and had established a second round of interventions. Our Summit coaches (MMS teachers) had completed an initial coaching cycle with grade 6 and new teachers and were beginning to schedule a second round. When the decision was made that schools would remain closed for an indefinite amount of time, MMS had fewer barriers moving to remote learning than others in the district due to our use of the Summit Learning platform. Teachers continued to teach their curriculum and hold students to a higher expectation. Students were required to complete previously assigned work and projects and held accountable for this work which led to a higher attendance rate.

The district has supported the implementation of our plan as detailed in Section VI of the Turnaround Plan, including by establishing a district-wide Turnaround Plan to support the schools with the implementation of the buildings' Turnaround Plans.

Work completed this summer focused on planning for the fall re-opening and preparation for both the possibility of hybrid and/or remote learning. With our return to school, we continue to be focused on making sustainable improvements no matter the current circumstances. Revisions to our SIP/Turnaround Plan embody these efforts.

An analysis of our current improvement plan indicates the need for changes to specific goals, strategies, and benchmarks to reflect the current situation our school community currently faces. Last year our Turnaround Practice 1 focused on the overall systems and structures of MMS. This year we are focusing specifically on

building a culture focused on collaboration and communication. It is imperative in our current situation that our staff consistently and effectively collaborates with one another and families to provide goal-oriented and actionable outcomes for greater student achievement and growth.

In Turnaround Practice 2, we will continue to create a culture in which staff continually assess student learning and make adjustments to practice using research-based instructional practices to optimize growth and achievement for all students. This year, in particular, it will be crucial to employ systematic approaches for gathering and analyzing data to assess student learning in both remote and hybrid environments and to adjust instruction accordingly.

The focus of our Turnaround Practice 3 goal and strategies has also been adjusted to match our current needs. Teachers must know and understand our student's strengths, needs, learning gaps, and targets so that we can effectively match, progress monitor, and adjust interventions for all students to make growth and reach/exceed learning targets. Additionally, through an analysis of our current data and Tier 2 and 3 non-academic supports, we have found a need to further develop our system for Tier 2 & 3 social-emotional interventions. For our at-risk students, there is a need to provide appropriate social-emotional interventions, which MMS is currently lacking.

In Turnaround Practice 4, we will continue to foster a safe and supportive school climate and culture focusing on building strong relationships between and among students, families, and staff.

Teachers and staff have been involved in the Turnaround process since the first plan was written in 2017. The ILT tracks and reviews the plan throughout the year and makes changes as necessary. This year, the staff was notified of this Sustainability Improvement Planning process during a Professional Development day. The 20-21 Sustainability Improvement Plan will be presented to other stakeholders including parents, guardians, community members, and the School Committee on October 15th. A parent/guardian question and answer forum specific to the MMS SIP will be held on October 21st.