



OLD COLONY

REGIONAL VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

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To: Old Colony Community
From: Aaron L. Polansky, Superintendent-Director
Date: May 2, 2023
Re: District Improvement Plan 2023-2024

The following draft is a starting point for a one-year District Improvement Plan that we will look to finalize before August 1, 2023. We have taken this approach following discussion amongst our Administrative Team during which time we identified the potential impacts of the impending votes that will take place at our April and May Town Meetings regarding a Feasibility Study. In the event that a Feasibility Study is approved, it will drive much of our work over the next three years. In the event a Feasibility Study is not approved, we will need to make alternative arrangements to address the many issues that we will face as a district. This information will be considered as we draft our three-year District Improvement Plan (2024-2027) beginning in September of 2023.

This one-year plan for the 2023-2024 is intended to serve as a bridge for the work that will take place during the 2023-2024 school year and identifies a number of priority areas, major goals, and key actions that will drive our work.

Goal #1: Addressing the Social Emotional Needs of Students

Rationale: A foundational well-being of our students and staff allows each of us to focus on the daily work associated with our school day. Supporting capacity in the areas of self-management, social awareness, relationship building skills, wellness related-education, and responsible decision making will have immediate and long-term impacts on our students, staff, and future success.

In the 2023-2024 school year, we will provide the following initiatives to support the social emotional development and growth of our students.

Peer Leadership and Mentoring Program:

In the Spring of 2023, we will kick-off a program where our current students will begin outreach to incoming students. The program will begin with a welcome letter to incoming students from a current member of our current 9th-11th grade population. The program will continue with a student-led orientation (with adult supervision) for incoming students over the summer prior to their first day of school. Peer leaders will be trained prior to the New Student Orientation and will work collaboratively with new students on multiple occasions throughout their freshman year to ensure connection and smooth acclimation in their first year at Old Colony.

Culture-Focused Surveys

Surveys will be sent to staff, students, and families at points throughout the year to identify areas of strength and focuses for improvement. We will explore the possibility of using the Panorama platform for the purpose of looking closer at data related to a series of reliable and validated questions. More information on Panorama is [available at this link](#). Next steps will be planned based on data from survey results.

Student Intervention Team (SIT):

This team, comprised of our Assistant Principal, Special Services Coordinator, SRO, Counseling Staff, and Nurse, will meet weekly to address struggling students, programming, and related action items to ensure appropriate supports are in place to support students in the curricular and extra-curricular experience. A member of the SIT will report to the Administrative Team during weekly Administrative Team Meetings.

Staff Training - Signs of Suicide Program (SOS):

The SOS Program is used to screen our 9th grade students. The screening tools and information are managed by our Adjustment Counselors. The program provides a baseline surrounding mental health concerns for new students and an opportunity to intervene when students are in need. Plans for 2023-2024 include the addition of staff training to help staff better understand the signs and provide a mechanism for reporting.

Mindfulness and Meditation

Ms. Wilbur (Adjustment Counselor) will offer two half-hour morning sessions per week (i.e. Mondays and Fridays) and one 30 to 60-minute afternoon session per week (i.e. Wednesdays). This effort will be supported through grant funding. The program will focus on training individuals working in the field of education to provide classroom, school, or districtwide mindfulness-based interventions for students. Studies have shown the positive impact that mindfulness and meditation can have on children and adolescents especially regarding their mental wellness, ability to self-regulate, and process emotions. Additionally, research has shown the significance of interactions between adults and children/adolescents via emotional contagion (facial, and vocal expressions, posture, and behaviors) and mirror neurons (cells in the premotor cortex and inferior parietal cortex). When educators (who spend 6-8 hours a day, or more with students) are able to model regulating emotions, engage with compassion and practice non-judgment, students will become attuned to this and are better able to use these same skills. Other benefits of meditation and mindfulness that research has found includes positive impacts on stress and burnout including lowering cortisol levels. Overall, including a mindfulness and meditation program at Old Colony has the potential to benefit both the staff and students within the school.

Goal #2: Use of Data for Improvement of Curriculum, Planning, and Assessment

Rationale: To best serve our students and instructional staff, we must provide opportunities to evaluate current practice and associated outcomes. The administrative team will work to provide training for exploration of, and access to data in an effort to support teacher, student, and program development with a focus on high quality instruction and measurable growth/outcomes for students. Training will be provided for staff using the DataWise process offered through the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Industry Recognized Credentials (IRC), Cooperative Employment, and Intra-Curricular Competitive Opportunities

The expansion of Innovation Pathways is a wonderful addition to Massachusetts Education. However, with this expansion, it is more important than ever that our Chapter 74 programs remain the platinum standard in Career and Technical Education. Each of Old Colony's thirteen vocational programs will reflect upon data from 2022-2023 to set goals for 2023-2024 with regard to access to IRCs, Cooperative Employment placement, and success in intra-curricular competitions such as SkillsUSA, MRA ProStart, and programs of the like. Growth in each of these areas will be a focal area for all programs in 2023-2024.

Advisory Board Development

Vocational Programs will evaluate current representation on Advisory Boards and work to ensure representation in the following categories as required by state regulations:

- PERSON WITH DISABILITIES
- RACIAL OR LINGUISTIC MINORITY
- NON- TRADITIONAL BY GENDER (IF APPLICABLE)
- BUSINESS/INDUSTRY
- ORGANIZED LABOR
- POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTION
- REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP
- PARENT/GUARDIAN
- STUDENT

MCAS Planning and Benchmark Testing

The Old Colony Science, ELA, and Math Departments will reflect upon the most recent MCAS data and information to best prepare students for 9th grade Biology, and 10th Grade ELA and Math exams. Benchmark testing aligned with state standards will be created for use three times a year using grade-level released MCAS items. A continued commitment to data exploration will drive the work. Time will be allocated for teacher discussion and data review.

Explore Literacy Across the Curriculum: Speaking and Writing

The ability to clearly articulate a thought, explain a perspective, and communicate through writing are all integral pieces of preparation for life beyond high school. Old Colony will explore and plan for implementation of a program in 2024-2025 to address these skillsets with regularity across the vocational and academic curriculum. The program will focus on authentic practice and interaction with opportunities to develop and highlight student voice and work with regularity. We will gather stakeholders during the 2023-2024 school year for planning purposes.

Advanced Placement Expansion and Honors-Level Course Development

AP Pre-Calculus and AP Environmental Science will be added to the Program of Studies in 2023-2024. A continued focus on the development of our Advanced Placement programs will coincide with support and partnership from the Mass Insight organization. Old Colony will continue to support teacher development and extended time in learning for AP students through grant funding.

We will investigate data around the [number of low income students enrolled in honors, AP, and early college courses](#). An effort will be made to encourage students to challenge themselves during course selection periods. There will be work done in collaboration with our Guidance Department to encourage students to move beyond their comfort zone.

Remediation and Intervention Efforts

Our Special Services Department will continue to expand offerings for special populations through after school programming, summer programming, and specialized 1:1 intervention when appropriate. Data for special populations will be reviewed as a means of measuring growth and outcomes. Data will also be used to shape programming moving forward.

Goal #3: Addressing Short and Long-Term Facility and Program Needs

Rationale: Old Colony has recently completed the Eligibility Period of the Massachusetts School Building Authority's grant program. The next phase for Old Colony will be dependent on the support of our five (5) member towns with respect to a vote being proposed at Town Meetings during the spring of 2023. If we are successful, we will proceed with a Feasibility Study that will commence in either June or August of 2023. If we are unsuccessful in our attempt to secure support, we will need to take a comprehensive look at our needs and devise a plan in accordance with a prioritized list of capital projects. This section of our one-year plan is being developed with an optimistic approach and hope that our member towns will support our request to incur debt at their May 22nd Town Meetings.

Establish an Educational Plan to Guide the Development of our Vision for the Future

Meet with Building Committee Members and stakeholders to identify the core concepts that will drive our vision for infrastructure in the form of renovation, new construction, or a combination of the two. (i.e., How should departments be grouped in a school? What are the core programs that should be considered beyond academics and vocational classes? What groups would we like to include and serve within our school community? Where should certain programs be placed with respect to the footprint of a building? Are there spaces that will play an integral part in educating our future students?)

Consider the "Right Size" for Old Colony and Potential Programmatic Additions

The MSBA and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education have approved a project that can range anywhere from existing capacity up to 810 students with the addition of programs such as Plumbing, HVAC, Biotechnology, and Dental Assisting. These four programs were suggested due to our enrollment trends, a labor market analysis and the [Southeastern Massachusetts Labor Market Blueprint](#). Permission to build a school that accommodates up to 810 students and the need to balance costs to our member towns is an important consideration in the event we are blessed to move forward with a planning process. In doing so, we will need to include stakeholders and member towns in the discussions that will lead to eventual decisions. These discussions will begin with a Feasibility Study in the event we move forward.