Winter Hill Community Innovation School

School Improvement Plan

2022 - 2024

February 2024 Update

Introduction

The past few years at the Winter Hill Community Innovation School have been challenging. Since the pandemic closure of 2020, Winter Hill has been faced with numerous obstacles related to the physical building. When schools returned to full-time in-person learning in April of 2021, Winter Hill temporarily relocated to Somerville High School due to poor and unacceptable air quality at Winter Hill proper. Upon returning to 115 Sycamore in the fall of 2021, there were numerous COVID restrictions such as social distancing, weekly testing, and less-than-ideal schedules to accommodate these necessary health and safety measures. In the fall of 2022, there was a tremendous amount of progress in increasing attendance, reducing behaviors that interfere with learning, and reestablishing a sense of normalcy and focus on academics. Unfortunately, in the spring of 2023, a piece of ceiling concrete fell, forcing the building at 115 Sycamore to close again. All staff and students were relocated to three different locations to complete the last seven days of the school year and then to the new semi-permanent Edgerly Education Center for the 2023-2024 school year. PK and Kindergarten still remain at the Capuano Early Childhood Learning Center and will, hopefully, move into the Edgerly in the fall of 2024. The silver lining in all of this is that the MSBA has moved Winter Hill into the next phase to build a new Winter Hill school.

The constant building issues, while at 115 Sycamore or not, have presented many challenges to staff and students. The frenetic work to prepare the Edgerly Education Center over the summer of 2023, the lack of accessibility to the building for staff to plan their classrooms, figure out physical routines of transitions within the classroom and building, and the stress of moving with little time to unpack and set up, led to teachers and staff having to use their precious preparation time before school opened to figure out how school was going to work in new places. After five months, the community is starting to settle into the new spaces, routines are becoming second nature, and there is an urgent focus on academics. Through all of this, the Winter Hill has continued to strive toward the goals set by the Governing Board for 2022 - 2024. With our mission, vision, and theory of action intact, we are continuing to focus on our goals of improving the overall school experience for all Winter Hill students. The Winter Hill wildcats will continue to be the cats that ROAR!

Vision Statement

We, the WHCIS community, strive to create a warm, welcoming and nurturing environment where all students, of any race, country of origin, first language, sexual orientation, gender identity, socio-economic status or neurodiversity, develop into thoughtful, caring and engaged young adults and community members. We recognize the unique identity, personality and talent of each individual student and are committed to educating the whole child. Our school challenges all students to ensure they make continuous academic gains, develop socially and emotionally, take ownership of and responsibility for their learning, and thrive in a community that actively promotes inclusion, diversity, human rights, global responsibility and local action.

Mission Statement

With that Vision as our guide post, our Mission describes our objectives and how we will meet them.

Winter Hill Community Innovation School is a Community of Learners where:

Every student receives high quality, standards-based instruction in all subject areas;

Every educator supports students in producing high quality work that meets or exceeds state standards and inspires students to learn;

Every student thrives in a fair and caring learning environment that fosters confidence, creativity, and a sense of belonging;

Every student actively participates in a challenging curriculum that applies their learning to the world around them, thereby enhancing students' intellectual, social, emotional and ethical development;

All staff share responsibility for educating, supporting and empowering all students.

Theory of Action

We, at Winter Hill, believe that if we:

★   Believe in an antiracist, growth mindset and believe that all students can learn and achieve at a high level;
★   Build positive relationships with students;
★   Engage in a continuous process of reflecting on and improving our practices;
★   Provide high quality instruction in academic and non-academic learning, differentiated to meet the needs of all students;
★   Implement research-based social-emotional programs and supports;
★   And engage families actively in their children's education;

Then:

★   Our students will enter high school focused on college and career readiness, confident in their unique talents and identities and ready to be productive members of their school and greater communities.

Our School & Our Students

- ★ PK – 8
- ★ Innovation School
  - ○ Collaborative decision-making model
  - ○ "Wildcat Way" - integrated approach to social-emotional learning

- Theater as a core specialist
- Adaptive specialist classes for students with autism
- Family Engagement focused on supporting all families
- ★ 2 District Programs
  - A.I.M. (Adapt*Include*Motivate) - sub-separate program for K - 8 students with autism
  - Middle Grades (6 - 8) Newcomer Academy - sub-separate program for multilingual learners including SLIFE, SEI 1, SEI 2
- ★ All Inclusion & SEI Classes - ALL of our general education classes have MLLs (SEI Gen Ed) and students with disabilities
- ★ Student Demographics
  - First Language Not English: 54% (most common 1st languages: Portuguese, Spanish, Haitian Creole, French Vietnamese, Nepali, and Arabic)
  - Economically Disadvantaged: 55%
  - Multilingual Learners: 34%
  - Students with Disabilities: 25%
  - High Needs: 72%
  - Race / Ethnicity
    - Hispanic: 45%
    - White: 37%
    - Black / African American: 9%
    - Asian: 5%
    - Other: 4%
  - Total Students: 403 students

Wellness Focus Area: Connectedness

Rationale & Root Cause Analysis

Coming out of the health emergency of the pandemic, our efforts in the 2021-2022 school year were focused on refocusing and recovering. Students faced many challenges beyond academics and struggled to re-engage with in-person learning. There were increased rates of absenteeism, unexpected and disruptive behaviors and lagging proactive social skills. For the 2022 - 2023 school year, we were able to increase our staff to support in these areas and there was an decrease in overall absenteeism and office referrals while increasing student access to tiered social-emotional supports. Overall, we are addressing the trends that have negatively impacted students.

Impact of the Pandemic on Students - National Trends that Impacted Our Students

- ★ <u>"Education in a Pandemic: The Disparate Impacts of COVID 19 on America's Students"</u>
  - * WHCIS has the second greatest percentage of high-needs students in the district; MCAS results show that WHCIS students' performance dropped more than district or state averages pre to post ESC.

- ★ [“What School Staffing Shortages Look Like Now”](#)
  - ○ *There are some unfilled positions for paras and day-to-day substitutes and there have been challenges filling long-term substitute positions.
- ★ [Project Bread: latest data on food insecurity in MA](#)
  - ○ * During the pandemic, WHCIS was strategically selected as a food distribution point because of the community's need. WHCIS also supports monthly food pantry events.
- ★ [Middle School is Always Hard and the Pandemic Made it Worse](#) (Washington Post)
  - ○ * At WHCIS, in both 2021-2022 and 2022-2023, the majority of conduct infractions have been in the middle grades.
- ★ [Depression and anxiety doubled in children during the pandemic](#)
  - ○ * WHCIS has more counselors (5.4), and all of them have full caseloads. There have been increased instances of SI and SI ideation since the extended school closure.
- ★ [“More fights and class disruptions”](#)
  - ○ * At WHCIS class disruptions and minor pushing and shoving are down more than 50% in 2022 - 2023 as compared to 2021-2022.

We proactively reimplemented our tier 1 social and emotional practices grounded in trauma-informed approaches that include Responsive Classroom, PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports), Second Steps and Restorative Justice. Furthermore, we further developed our school-wide systems, like the Student Support Team (SST), Multi-tiered System of Student Supports (MTSS), and the Family Support Team (FST), to support teachers referring students for additional support services. As a result, attendance is increasing, office referrals for behavior are decreasing, tiered counseling supports are increasing and students are referred to SST regularly.

As we developed our goals for 2022 - 2024, with our systems and supports in place, student connectedness to school became the focus. Based on data from the *Conditions for Learning Survey*, Winter Hill has used a short five-question survey (in four languages), three of which measure student connectedness. Two of the questions are similar to the *Conditions for Learning Survey* and the other one asks students about having friends at school, which is essential for the development of the whole child.

We developed the following goal based on:
(1) Students are more likely to engage in healthy behaviors, attend school more frequently, and succeed academically when they are connected to their school.
(2) Strong relationships with adults are critical for student success. ([Student Connectedness Helps Students Thrive](#))

Current Goal & Data

The percentage of students agreeing with the statements "I like coming to the Winter Hill schools"

and "If I have a problem, I can talk to a teacher or another adult at school" will increase by 50%.

	Spring 2019	Fall 2022	Fall 2023	Target Spring 2024
I have friends at Winter Hill.	73%	85%	85%	N/A
I like coming to the Winter Hill school.	54%	47%	43%	79%
If I have a problem, I can talk to a teacher or another adult.	52%	51%	52%	78%

*Note – Spring 2023 survey was not done due to school relocation. / Winter survey results are not yet available.

Fall 2023 by Grade Level

Grade	I like coming to the Winter Hill school.		If I have a problem, I can talk to a teacher or another adult.	
	Agree	Sometimes	Agree	Sometime
3	64%	28%	69%	26%
4	60%	40%	49%	40%
5	47%	47%	61%	25%
6	46%	42%	38%	46%
7	36%	59%	55%	45%
8	16%	59%	43%	43%

Fall 2023 by Program

Grade	I like coming to the Winter Hill school.		If I have a problem, I can talk to a teacher or another adult.	
	Agree	Sometimes	Agree	Sometime
General Education	47%	43%	50%	38%
Newcomer	46%	30%	60%	32%

SEI 1				
Newcomer SLIFE	50%	33%	67%	33%
AIM	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

CFLS Student Items	% Agree Always	% Agree Sometimes
I enjoy going to my school.	29%	48%
Teachers at my school really make an effort to get to know me.	26%	66%
There is an adult at school that I feel comfortable sharing my problems with.	30%	48%

The current data shows that the percentage of students who like to come to school has decreased and that the number of students who have an adult they can talk to has stayed the same. The data is less positive than the Conditions for Learning Survey but overall more positive when combined with the "sometimes" category.

Additionally, when disaggregating the survey by grade and program, there are positive trends. Students in lower grades tend to like coming to school and feel that they can talk to an adult about their problems at higher rates. The programmatic trends show that students in heavily supported programs, Newcomer SEI 1 and SLIFE, have higher rates of liking to come to school and having an adult that they can talk to.

The analysis of this data reveals that overall, students feel connected to school and the adults; however, there is more work to be done to build connectedness in developmentally appropriate ways. There has been a tremendous amount of focus on the middle grades and building community. Furthermore, the survey needs to be modified to ensure that the data collected is actionable and provides concrete suggestions from students in these areas.

Evaluation of Progress Milestones Toward Wellness Goal

Strategy	Milestones of success – Implementation of Strong Tier 1	Timeline

Teach ROAR (PBIS) expectations	☑ ~~All homeroom teachers teach into these expectations~~
	☑ ~~Expectations are reinforced schoolwide / matrices are posted throughout the school~~
	☐ Office Referrals for Major Behaviors
	    ☐ 0 referrals = 83%
	    ☐ 1 referral - 10%
	    ☐ 2 - 5 referrals = 5%
	    ☐ 6+ referrals = 2%
		Fall 2023 & ongoing

Use Responsive Classroom to develop classroom agreements in alignment with ROAR expectations	☑ ~~All homeroom teachers develop these with students~~ ☑ ~~Classroom expectations are posted in classroom~~	Fall 2023 & ongoing
Use Threshold	☐ All students are greeted each day when they come to school and/or enter class	Ongoing

Use Morning Meeting, Restorative Circles & Closing Circle to build classroom communities & mediate peer conflict	☑ ~~All grades have morning meeting and closing circle in their schedules~~
	☐ Restorative circles are used as needed by classroom teachers, deans, and/or admin
	    ☐ 17 restorative circles facilitated by deans
	    ☐ 50 mediation sessions by peer mediator
	    ☐ More than 100 student reflection sheets based on ROAR expectations
		Ongoing

Strategy	**Milestones of success - Implementation of Strong Tier 2 / 3**	**Timeline**
Conduct weekly Student Support Team meetings	☐ Entire team meets weekly with fidelity re: attendance, behavior, health, and crisis - have discussed 84 students ☐ Team makes referrals for tier 2 and tier 3 supports ☐ Social worker - 37 students (900 minutes / week)	Ongoing

	☐ Guidance Counselor - 100 students (1200 minutes / week) ☐ Check-in / check-out - see below ☐ Team monitors student progress	

Provide access to student supports in native language	☐ All Newcomer Academy students participate in tier 1 whole class group (38 students), and small group / individual counseling if needed
	    ☐ Bilingual Spanish School Adjustment Counselor - 17 students (340 minutes / week)
	    ☐ Bilingual Portuguese School Adjustment Counselor - 15 students
		Ongoing

Establish *Becoming a Man* (BAM) program	☑ ~~Initially implemented in spring of 2023~~ ☑ ~~Fully implemented in fall 2023 – currently 60 boys participate in grades 6 – 8~~	Ongoing
Implement check-in (CI) / check-out (CO)	☐ Deans, teachers and counselors have formal CI/CO system - 10 students have formal CI/CO	Ongoing
Establish *Team Time* for grades 7 - 8	☑ ~~Every other early release day, deans, counselors, and teachers have a structured time to build community~~ ☐ Various topics include community building, addressing issues (i.e. racial slurs), restorative circles ☐ ALL 7th and 8th graders participate	-Piloted 2022-2023 school year -Implemented fall 2023 & ongoing
Increase Student Voice: -HGSE Student Research Project (Community Participatory Action Research) -Student Representative to GoverningBoard	☑ ~~Students successfully completed the project, made a recommendation regarding dress code, which was unanimously accepted by the Governing Board~~ ☐ Student attends Governing Board and gives report	-Dress Code project implemented 2022-2023 -New project in development for 2023-2024

Strategy	Milestones of success – New for 2024	Timeline
Implement student focus groups	☐ Meet 2x/month with student groups to discuss how to increase student joy at school	–Winter / Spring 2024

Add additional questions to survey to elicit more detailed information	☑ ~~Include questions to identify who students can or want to talk to, how we can support them wanting to come to school~~
	    ☐ Adjust wording to "I have at least one adult I can go to when I need help or feeling down" and if agree, list adults that they feel connected to or if not, want to feel connected to
	    ☐ Include "generally" to "want to go to school" accommodate for variation in students' mood / developmental stage
	☐ Review the data and implement changes based on the feedback
		–Winter / Spring 2024

Revive the 8th grade exit interview	☐ Use piloted exit interview from 2022 to inform decisions for 2024–2025 school year	–May 2024

Academic Goal: Language & Literacy

Rationale & Root Cause Analysis

For our academic goal, we are focused on language and literacy. The ability to read and analyze text is critical for success in all content areas, not just English Language Arts. In grades K – 3, the focus is on learning to read and monitoring student progress. As students transition from learning to read to reading to learn, our academic goal shifts to deepening students' abilities to read and comprehend more complex texts. The introduction of iReady has provided teachers with a much-needed tool to monitor student progress toward this goal.

Since the pandemic, there has been a sharp increase in students above fourth grade who need reading instruction. In order to support these students, we have implemented various strategies to address reading concerns at higher grade levels especially for students who are multilingual

learners.

Our data indicates that our students are not performing as well as other schools in Somerville or in Massachusetts on MCAS. Our focus on developing language and literacy skills will provide students with the skills needed to be prepared for high school.

Current Goal & Data

(1) All K – 3 students will demonstrate growth in reading and 85% will be at CORE.

📄 AllGradesStatus_WinterHill_Winter2024.pdf

(2) ALL MCAS grades will increase their average, scaled ELA score by 8 points.

MCAS Average Scaled Scores & Analysis

Grade	Baseline Score for MCAS 2022	Target Score for MCAS 2023	Actual Score MCAS 2023	Target Score for MCAS 2024
3	493	*497*	**488**	*501*
4	482	*486*	**489**	*490*
5	480	*484*	*480*	*488*
6	476	*480*	**462**	*484*
7	478	*482*	**476**	*486*
8	477	*481*	**468**	*485*
Overall	480	*484*	**476**	*488*

Key: **exceeded goal**, **met goal**, **stayed the same**, **did not meet target**

📄 **ELA MCAS 2023 Growth & Achievement**

Evaluation of Progress Milestones Toward Academic goal

Strategy	Milestones of success – Literacy Foundations	Timeline
K – 3 Reading		
Implement science of reading structured literacy routines	☑ ~~Teachers have ongoing PD on structured literacy routines that are used in class~~ ☐ Now using "decodable" text such Geodes	Ongoing

	☑ ~~Literacy coach does individual coaching cycles with teachers and supports ESL specialists informally~~ ☐ Literacy coach doing first cycle with a special education teacher	
Use DIBELS data to determine reading intervention groups with homeroom teacher, ESL specialist, reading specialist	☑ ~~K – 3 teachers, ESL specialists, reading specialists and special educators review data and create flexible groups~~	Formal grade level meetings: September, February, April Ongoing informal teacher co-planning
Utilize small group instruction to target explicit skills	☑ ~~K – 4 teacher maintain flexible groups during academic time and X block~~	Ongoing
Grades 3 - 8 MCAS		
Pilot a new ELA curriculum in grades 7 – 8	☑ ~~Grades 7 – 8 general education pilot *Fish Tank*~~	2023 – 2024
Continue reading intervention for grades 4 – 6	☑ ~~Additional reading interventionist works with students in grades 4 –6~~	Ongoing 2022 – 2024
Pilot *Wondrous Words* in grade 4	☑ ~~Grade 4 ELA pilot of *Wondrous Words* to continue word study beyond *Fundations*~~	Ongoing 2023 – 2024
Use iReady assessment system to set individual student progress goals	☑ ~~Teachers use stretch growt hgoals of iReady for students who are not yet meeting the expectation on MCAS~~ ☑ ~~Midyear assessment data will inform instruction for second ½ of school year~~ ☐ Note: for SY 24-25, requesting iReady Personalized Instruction to support flexible small groups in grades 6 - 8 based on students' needs	Fall 2023 & ongoing
Whole School		
Develop school-wide instructional focus of success criteria	☑ ~~All staff trained in use of success criteria as part of a well-structured lesson~~	2022 – 2023

Develop school–wide expectations for use of word walls and how to use them daily in class	☑ ~~All staff currently being trained in the various types of word walls and how to interact with them~~	Ongoing 2023 – 2024
Utilize the MTSS process for students not making progress in reading or ELA	☑ ~~Structure of MTSS in place~~ ☑ ~~Refer students after mid–year data if not making progress on DIBELS or iReady~~	February 2024
Develop Winter Hill Standards of Excellence	☐ ILT is developing the standards of excellence and ROAR academic habits of mind that will guide all instruction at Winter Hill	Spring 2024

Equity Goal: Long-term English Language Learners

Rationale & Root Cause Analysis

Long-term English language learners (LTELs) are students who have been enrolled in a US school for six or more years and have not yet been reclassified as fluent English proficient. At Winter Hill, there are students at grades 6, 7, and 8 who have an LTEL classification, which ultimately can lead to worse outcomes as students get older. At the high school level, MLLs have additional classes to take and do not have elective options that non–MLLs have. For students who have been in a US school for less than six years, these classes are needed. However, for long-term ELLs, more needs to be done to support them to reach the level of proficiency for academic success, ultimately giving them more options in high school and decreasing their odds of dropping out of school.

This focus is the equity focus because ALL LTELs are students of color, approximately ⅓ are dually identified as MLL and a student with a disability, and only 1% of multilingual language learners are meeting expectations for the ELA MCAS. The potential root causes include:
> (1) transitions - 55% of LTELs have transferred to Winter Hill since the pandemic with 32% of those students transferring programmatically through AFA
> (2) dual-identification - 32% of LTELs receive special education services resulting in a service-driven schedule and the coordination of multiple teachers
> (3) stronger language supports in general education classes - there is a lack of consistent practices *across the school* to support language learners

Current Goal & Data

Goal: All LTELs will FLEP (be classified as former limited English proficient) by the end of the 2024 school year.

Grade	# of LTELs	# of FLEPs ACCESS 2023	Target # of FLEPs ACCESS 2024
8th ↠ 9th	5	0	5
7th ↠ 8th	6 (1 DI)	0	6
6th ↠ 7th	5 (4 DI)	0	5
5th ↠ 6th	4 (2 DI)	1	4

Evaluation of Progress Toward Equity Goal

Strategy	Milestones of success	Timeline
"Double dose" LTELs	☑ ~~All LTELs take an additional English language development block 4x40 weekly in addition to ESL support in ELA class~~	Fall 2023 & ongoing
Provide specialized ESL instruction to students in AIM program	☑ ~~Designate 1 ESL specialist to support all AIM students with 1:1 or very small group instruction~~	Fall 2023 & ongoing
Support transitions	☑ ~~Onboard new students and use assessments to determine academic strengths and areas for growth (iReady)~~ ☐ General education and Newcomer teachers develop specific success criteria for transferring newcomers to SEI 2 and SEI Gen Ed	Fall 2023 Spring 2024
Provide language supports in all classes	☑ ~~ILT provides PD on word walls and accessing vocabulary support~~ ☐ ILT developing standards of excellence to ensure access for all learners	Winter 2024 Spring 2024
Share information	☑ ~~Success plans shared with general~~	Fall 2023

about students	education teachers at CPT ☐ Progress monitor students with MLED data and iReady	Winter 2024