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Kennedy School Improvement Plan 2022-2023

The John F. Kennedy School (*The Kennedy Tigers*) is driven by the goal of providing all students with academic, social, and emotional experiences necessary for future success in a positive learning environment that embodies equity, innovation, inclusion, passion, and active participation from all stakeholders - students, staff, families, and the community. The school places a strong emphasis on educating all students, ensuring each thrives as a valued learner capable of soaring to the sky and beyond. *Impact, Innovation and Relationships* are the frameworks for the Kennedy School exemplified in our *Tiger Habits (Teamwork; Integrity; Growth mindset; Empathy; Respect)* to help develop Social Emotional Skills.

We will continue and strengthen our practice of using our data (especially our everyday data) to inform our daily instruction with targeted supports making learning visible as a school where we embrace, respect, and learn from the diversity we strongly value. Our focus is to continue to grow as a truly collaborative school where student learning growth is everyone's responsibility and focus - administration, teachers, support staff, paraprofessionals, counselors, parent liaison, families, custodial staff, kitchen staff, and *most importantly* the students themselves.

Community building, Social Justice Practices, Restorative Justice Practices, History, and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) play prominent roles in a Kennedy students' daily learning experiences. Kennedy students at all grade levels have opportunities to learn the value of making a positive difference in their community. We will seek to create a strong volunteer partnership with our community to model this practice and include our students in this initiative, as well. The Kennedy School was the district's first school to develop a Makerspace/Innovation Lab that all students and teachers are able to use to enhance and support what students are learning daily and to further stimulate student inquiry and engagement. This allows each student to see learning in a new way offering a path that opens the door for many students to the excitement of learning in an innovative way. A rich menu of out-of-school-time activities and programs provide students with additional enrichment and academic support. These include Art club; Current Events club; DJ club and Newspaper Club. We are looking at ways to provide new and interesting extended learning programs that engage our students in their own learning, opening up new and challenging paths for learning as a lifelong adventure.



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SEEK, SKIP and Life Skills at the Kennedy School

The Somerville Public Schools is committed to providing the least restrictive setting possible for children with special educational needs. The SEEK (Social Emotional Education at the Kennedy) program serves children in grades K-6 who exhibit emotional and behavioral challenges that prevent them from accessing the curriculum. A highly skilled staff of teachers, clinicians, and support staff serve the children in multi-graded classrooms. Opportunities for inclusion in general education classes are provided with the active support of SEEK staff in collaboration with our classroom teachers and counseling staff.

SKIP (Specialized Kennedy Intensive Program) provides services to students with severe physical, cognitive, and medical disabilities and related challenges. This program offers an individualized program in very small class settings with staff-to-student ratios of up to 1:2, along with one full-time nurse and related clinical specialties. While students spend a considerable amount of time in small classes, each program strives to provide appropriate 'inclusion' opportunities based upon individual student needs.

Our Life Skills programming currently has three classrooms that are multigraded. Students in the Life Skills Program spend a majority of their day engaging in a range of learning to develop their functional life skills with a long term goal of vocational skills. Students are developing and building skills related to communication, social skills, personal/time management, personal hygiene/self-care, self-advocacy, and functional academics. The Life Skills Program is individualized to address each student's goals and objectives in order to best develop each student's skill sets.

Each student in these sub-separate programs are valued "***Kennedy Tigers***". They are included appropriately in all Kennedy activities allowing each of our students to value each other as learners. This offers students involved in these programs the opportunity to receive the special educational tools they require to succeed while maintaining a strong engagement with the entire school and the strong learning expectations of the Somerville Public Schools. It offers our regular education students the opportunity to engage with all members of a true learning environment developing empathy and appreciation for all students and supports our focus on



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embracing our diversity. Everyday learning and inclusive learning happens daily at the Kennedy School.

School Improvement Foci and Action Steps

Rationale for choosing focus areas:

As the Kennedy community moves positively forward from the challenges and confusion of the 2021-2022 school year, mitigating the real learning issues caused by COVID, pandemic obstacles and administrative changes, the interim administration is keenly aware of the need for stability and a strong school focus moving forward. The start of the year brought staff changes which included the retiring of long time staff and welcoming new staff members. This was an exciting time to examine and evaluate our practices and a call to return to a successful “new beginning” bringing strongly back the genuine joy of our profession and of experiencing the strength of a powerful school learning community.

Our school values of, “**Impact, Innovation and Relationships**” still aligned with what the community felt was important as a framework for all we do. The school committee has tasked the schools to examine academics, equity and social emotional wellness. Our focus areas cover these categories as does our targeted professional development plan moving forward as a school community. It also reminds us that Kennedy is a school where everyone is valued and respected and that we welcome the opportunity to examine our practices and ourselves to become educators who offer learning free from biases and truly meaningful and effective for every learner in our community.

Teaching and learning from all students is the theme for our professional development this year. Our instructional leadership team has developed professional learning for the entire year around various important aspects of this theme. Our rationale for choosing our focus areas uses the teaching of all students as an umbrella for what we strive to do at a high level here at the Kennedy School. Much of the focus will be on using our data; especially formative, everyday data to inform our teaching and support for each individual child offering all a strong pathway to



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a successful school year. Strengthening our Tier One and Tier Two instruction and collaboration between learning partners and teams opens a window to effective learning/teaching practices allowing our students and our teachers to succeed and grow as learners.

Focus Area: Academics

Root Cause Analysis

The Kennedy school has continued to show strong achievement in MCAS results in general as a school. However, a closer look at our data shows that we need to be more targeted and focused on the instructional needs of our students with disabilities and those with high needs. In looking at the data, we can see that there is a higher percentage of students receiving a needs improvement or not meeting expectations than meeting or exceeding within these groups of students. We are exploring what those root causes might be by examining stamina and identifying the subject and standard areas that most need our attention and support. Looking to put together a meaningful plan for improvement in this area of our instruction.

As stated our theme this year is teaching all students. The MTSS process is an important mechanism that highlights the concerns of ensuring tier 2. This is carryover from during the pandemic and the forecasted loss of skills. Students carried the weight of the social emotional needs and the academic deficits that became evident especially noticeable in students who had never actually been in a school setting. We are currently working to improve the effectiveness and value of our MTSS process as we work to create a more collaborative environment for strengthening our teaching practices to meet the needs of every learner in positive, successful ways that engage our staff and our students in a successful learning journey.



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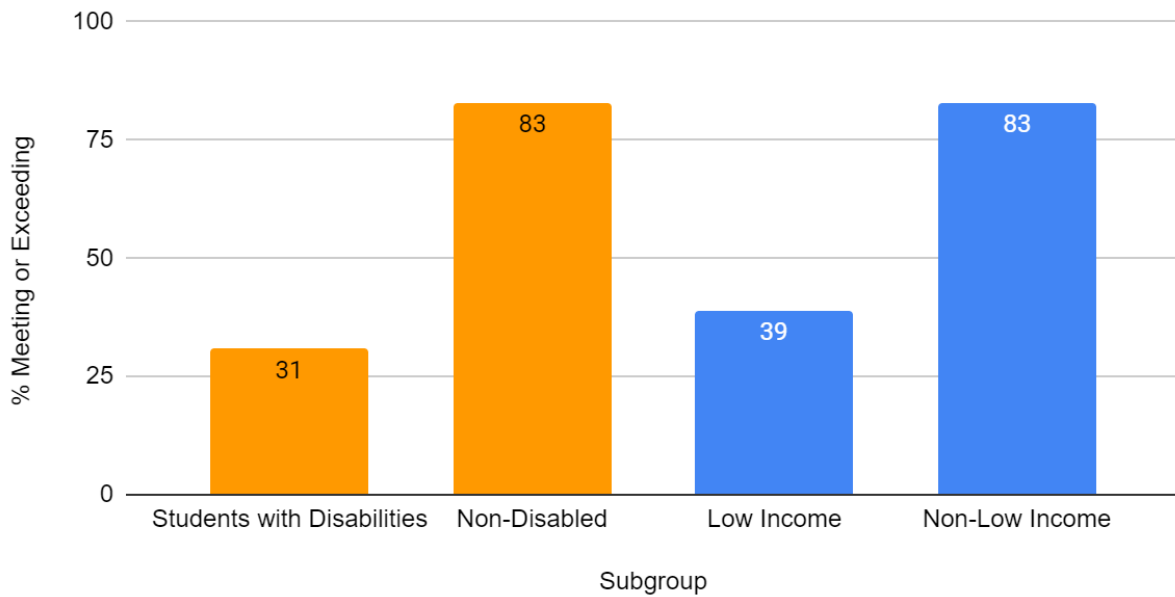
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Data

Link to 2021-2022 MTSS referral data: [MTSS Referral Data 2021-2022](#)

2022 MCAS Data ELA and MATH meeting or exceeding vs Subgroup

2022 ELA MCAS
% Meeting or Exceeding vs. Subgroup

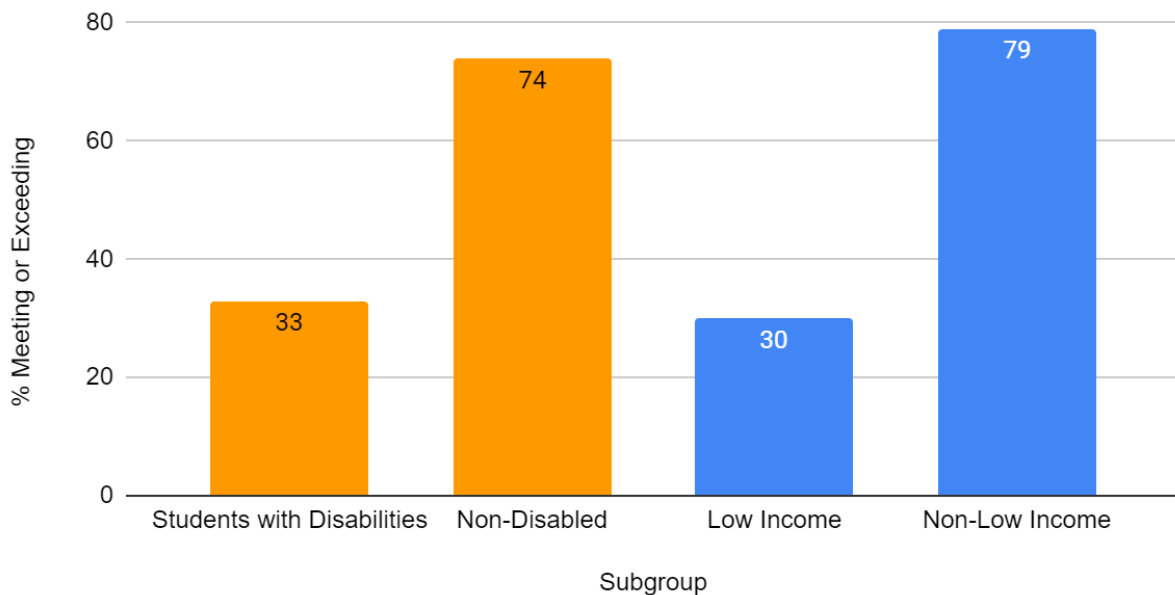




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2022 Math MCAS % Meeting or Exceeding vs. Subgroup



Goals/Objectives

1. To support staff in the MTSS process in strengthening tier 1 and identifying tier 2 interventions that are used with fidelity prior to seeking a special education referral.
2. To identify strategies that can be used with students to strengthen their skills at taking assessments so gaps and deficits can be addressed appropriately.
3. To identify social/emotional supports needed to break down identified barriers to accessing the curriculum.
4. To create more collaboration and sharing of good teaching tools between/among our teaching and support staff with an increased focus on using daily formative data to inform instruction..
5. Creating protocols for looking at individual students' needs within the framework of a safe, productive school environment that includes consideration of attendance/behavior/social/academic/cultural needs.
6. Increase the percentage of differently abled students meeting expectations by 30% over the next two years.



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7. Increase the percentage of low income students meeting expectations by 40% over the next two years.

Strategies/ Action steps happening now and in the future

- Review and modifications of the MTSS process. This is being done through a committee of administration, teachers and support staff reviewing practices and researching best practice to improve access to Tier 2 interventions.
- Ensuring Data being collected reflects the targeted needs of students and is being used to formulate student centered supports and approaches to improve outcomes.
- Student support team weekly meetings to identify students needing support around three targeted areas: Attendance, Discipline and Social emotional support. Identifying a key point-person and action step with identified follow up to monitor progress.
- Professional development that focuses on teaching all students. Strategies for Tier 2 interventions; understanding resources and support staff responsibilities and common language are all targeted areas for our monthly professional development meetings.

Progress measurement

- 80% Growth in teacher coming to the MTSS process with data showing appropriate tier 1 and tier 2 data supporting student learning and growth
- 90% increase in teachers using the MTSS process to specifically talk about student need and growth
- 45% increase in overall performance level on Spring MCAS year 2023 and year 2024 for differently abled students and low income students.

Focus Area: Equity

Root Cause Analysis

As the community reflects on the work we endeavor to do through our PD, teaching and reaching all students, equity is a lens that is imperative for us to see things through. The purpose of an equity lens is to be deliberately inclusive as an organization making decisions that impact the learning path for all our students, staff, and families. It introduces a set of questions into the



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decision that help the *decision makers* focus on equity in both their own implicit biases; as well as in the ultimate process and outcomes. **We are all decision makers daily** that in turn affect processes and outcomes for our classrooms; the students we work with and the community as a whole. How we make and support these decisions is crucial to the success of the entire Kennedy School learning environment.

We showed the Kennedy demographics for students at one of our PD's and staff demographics at another PD this year. It is critical as we move forward as a school to understand that our staff demographics (as is the case in most public schools in Massachusetts) represent what our students see everyday. We, as a school in the Somerville Public School district, are a majority white and female identifying staff. Most of our students will have a white identifying female teacher in front of them especially in our younger grades. The administrators of this building are white, as are our counseling and support staff. This is something that has to be acknowledged as we do this work.

It is critical for us to remember this and not forget who the student's see in front of them and who we as a community interact with and what beliefs, values, assumptions and biases we bring with us. We need to build a commitment to not let these go unchecked, unchallenged and stretched to make us better. We need to be unafraid to evaluate and critique our work with every student through an equity lens to ensure that every student gets the support during their educational journey they need to soar and be the best they can be.

As noted in the beginning of this memo, Kennedy has district wide special education programs. We recognize that it is vitally important to focus on how student's in these programs are able to be a successful part of the community and what steps need to be taken to accomplish this. Our MCAS data, MTSS referrals and discipline data provide a window into what is taking place and what needs to be done.

Data

- See MCAS and MTSS data above.
- Discipline Action Data Totals:
8/01/2021-1/31/23:
Emergency Removal: 11
Susp in School: 8
Susp out of school 13

2022-2023 school year conduct action list with some demographics:



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Category	Grade	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	IEP	504
Emergency Removal		4 M	Black	yes	
Emergency Removal		8 F	White		
Emergency Removal		5 M	White	yes	
Emergency Removal		5 M	Black	yes	
In school suspension		4 M	White	yes	
Loss of privileges		6 M	LatinX	yes	
Suspension in school		5 M	White	yes	
Suspension in school		6 M	White	yes	
Suspension out of school		5 M	White	yes	
Suspension out of school		5 M	Black	yes	

Goals/Objectives

1. To facilitate professional development for our faculty and staff that centers around implementing successful and impactful tier 1 and tier 2 interventions.
2. To survey all stakeholders by the end of the school year 2023 and repeat those surveys next year using the results to improve collaboration and communication among all stakeholders.
3. To build and maintain an active equity team. This team should extend to students and families, as well.
4. Provide 40% more learning opportunities for all staff and students in the area of equity and impact on learning and the school environment.
5. Create a student aspiration/advisory team to help foster student voice by February 2023 and continue this in the school year 2022-2023 expanding this initiative to a staff aspiration team and a parent aspiration advisory team in the 2023-2024 school year.
6. Review literature and obtain guidance on purchases that broaden student exposure to equity. By the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year we will have reviewed books used in primary classrooms (K-2) to better reflect equity in the classroom. This will provide an expected 50% growth in book titles that reflect equity and cultural diversity.



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7. Implement a staff “Book Group” to broaden staff thinking around the areas of implicit biases and equity in our classrooms to support the creation of truly inclusive classroom learning opportunities.

Strategies/ Action steps happening now and in the future

- Consultation with District about book purchases
- Equity team doing voluntary, non evaluative, walk throughs to observe three specific areas: Student voice, Student representation and Environmental considerations.
- Planning use of funds designated for equity work.
- Professional development as planned by the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT)
- Aspiration team development.
- Staff, Student and Family surveys
- Focus groups with students
- Staff student input for use solely by individual teacher in their classroom (Per SEU contract)

Progress Measurement

- Student, Family and Staff surveys 2x’s per year starting in 2023-2024
- Increase by 25% hiring of a more multicultural staff
- 95% increase in staff participation in equity coaching and practices
- Strong Equity Team
- 85% staff participation in Book Club initiative
- 50% increase in the availability of books for all classrooms focused on equity

Focus Area: Social Emotional/Wellness

Root Cause Analysis:

As we continue to move forward from the “pandemic mentality” and the challenges of the last few years, the Kennedy community continues to believe in the importance of Wellness and Social Emotional skill building. We have seen the increasing need for connection to an inclusive



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and equitable school community that strives to meet this need. We know that supporting and including students, families and staff voices is critical in bringing us to our overarching goal of **teaching all students** in an environment that spells success. Some areas being addressed are attendance, access to counseling support and social emotional programming as part of the schedule.

As a school, we make daily attendance calls and document our attempts to reach out to students who are chronically absent or tardy. We utilize our School Attendance personnel to help support the effort of ensuring students are in their classes and getting the excellent educational opportunities provided at Kennedy. Some of the challenges we face are those students whose families take vacations during non-vacation times. These can be lengthy and disruptive to a continuity of learning. Another area that we are addressing is tardiness. We have seen even students who live very close to the school coming in approximately 10-15 minutes late. This impacts those morning opportunities to check in with students or have them receive the first instructions for the day.

Another area that is important is staff, student and family voice. We have recognized that over the pandemic years we lost a lot of opportunities to have families participate in community involvement within the school. We also felt that people drifted away from communicating positive things happening as well as concerns needing to be addressed. It was important to strategize on how to survey our stakeholders and see what we can take on as a school and with the school improvement council.

In looking at our behavioral data, it is clear that a majority of our emergency removals and suspensions reflect behavior of students on IEP's. This is an area that needs to be addressed with our social emotional program (SEEK) and the special education department as a whole.

Exploring how we can support or adapt this programming to meet the needs of our students will be critical.

The need for mediation and restorative justice practices is becoming clearer as we are mandated and desiring to explore alternatives to suspension. It will be critical to increase staff training and familiarity with these resources and practices.

Data

- Attendance as of January 2023 95.7% present.

School Year	Attendance rate
2021-2022	93%
2020-2021	95.9%



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2019-2020	95.7%
2018-2019	95.9%

- Tardy rates as of January 2023 94% of students on time. Grades 6 and 7 have students with the highest incidence of tardiness.
- Suspension occurrence for 2022-2023 presently at 5 suspensions (including in school (3) and out of school (2)).
- 12 Safety Plans for individual students during the 2022-2023 school year. This includes instances of social media conflict and harassing behavior both in and out of school. These safety plans include plans for students specifically on IEPs the other 10 are not students on IEPs or 504 plans.
- Increase in opportunities for groups and individual student sessions with counselors due to there being 2 general education counselors and 2 special education counselors. One of the special education counselors is specifically for our SEEK program

Goals/Objectives

1. To have a social emotional program endorsed and supported at the district level by the summer of 2023.
2. To review said SEL programming and ensure that it is accessible to all students which includes all of our special education programming. Making any needed adaptations by the end of Summer of 2023.
3. Continue to maintain the Kennedy attendance rate within the 90th percentile range. This may include decreasing the number of students and families taking extended vacations; chronic absenteeism and significant tardies.
4. Increase Wellness opportunities through clubs, assemblies and community activities by 40% over the next two years.
5. Continue a follow through with our Parent/Guardian, Staff, and Student surveys with 75% completion rate to hear the “voice” of every part of our learning community building trust, engagement and growth.
6. To increase the use of the district mediation program by 50% over the next two years.
7. Increase the number of staff trained in restorative justice practices by 50% over the next year and 65% over the next two years.

Strategies/ Action steps happening now and in the future



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- Started in 2022-2023, Additional Adjustment counselor added to staff with a focus on grades 6-8
- Started in 2022-2023, School based Social worker added and shared with the Brown
- Focus on Tiger Habits as our expected values for the Kennedy community
This is done through staff created lessons for each and initiatives that involve the entire Kennedy community
- Counseling staff have created SEL lessons for topics that are relevant to the needs of the community. Examples include self-respect; physical safety and healthy choices, Conflict resolution and how to be a good friend.
- Attendance calls, meetings with families around attendance and working with student services to identify areas of need to improve attendance.
- Creating effective attendance contracts with students, families, Redirect, and our Attendance Supervisor where we work together in positive ways to assist families and students
- Creating effective, monitored academic, behavior, social, attendance plans to foster student accountability and success
- Look carefully at student pull in and push out options (especially in math) ensuring our x-blocks are used appropriately for all students.
- An increased use of Restorative practices among staff and an increase in the use of the mediation process for student conflict with the goal of creating our own Mediation Team.

Steps to Consider:

- *Add a second Redirect Counselor to ensure every student and family has access to effective tools for student learning and social emotional growth - breakdown of (Pre-K - 4 and 5-8).*
- *Ensure during all hiring processes to interview and hire (when licensed appropriately) staff of color to ensure students can really see themselves in the Kennedy staffing.*
- *Add two support paraprofessionals to assist with Special Education transitions into regular classroom settings to support curriculum goals and accountability for student learning and social emotional growth.*

Progress measurement

- 98% attendance rate with and 60% decrease in the numbers of tardies during the 2023-2024 school year.



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- 90% effectiveness of academic, behavior, attendance and social/emotional plans as shown by student learning growth.
- 90% increase in the use of Restorative Justice practices with all grade levels using circles and other tools.
- 95% increase in student on-time learning as evidenced through Redirect generated learning plans.
- 98% drop in the number of bullying incidents.
- 75% decrease in suspensions and emergency removals of students on IEP's

Additional Thoughts Moving Forward.....

As everyone is aware, the last few years have been challenging ones for all students, staff and families at the Kennedy School and for all communities across the nation. Here at Kennedy, an unexpected change in leadership has also added to that challenge. The 2022-2023 school year has been a rebuilding year and, I believe, the joy of teaching and learning is being restored within the entire school community. We want that rebuilding to continue with the added challenge of ensuring that every voice is heard, validated and respected and that Kennedy becomes a school where everyone has the equity of learning opportunities that each so richly deserves and that every student has the tools they need to become active, participated and successful members of the world community.

We are in the process of restoring faith and trust into our community. This memo of direction is just a small start in the plans we have ahead. The needs of our high need students and Special Education students stand out and must be addressed quickly and with purpose. More collaboration between all stakeholders is a critical piece as laid out above. Other things to consider are.....

- The valuing and use of the MTSS process for students across the Kennedy community
- Meaningful collaboration across all areas of the very talented teaching community at Kennedy
- More effective and meaningful parent engagement including an increase in the volunteer impetus
- Drawing on community members to engage in school activities that show our students the diversity of Somerville in positive, productive ways
- An increasing staff engagement in the use of formative data to truly guide instruction and support for individual students and for the entire learning community.



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- A more indepth look at our MCAS data to help with questions of equity and learning growth
 - Are our students exceeding expectations on the MCAS continuing to grow?
 - Why are female students in Grades 3-5 not reaching higher expectations in math?
 - Grade 3 - 21% of males exceeded expectations while 0% of females did
 - Grade 4 - 63% of males exceeded expectations while only 7% of females did
 - Grade 5 - 12% of males exceeded expectations while 0% of females did

John F. Kennedy School is an amazing learning community that is making every effort to effectively support the learning and social-emotional growth of every “Kennedy Tiger” through on-going and active support of the school’s core values of *Teamwork, Integrity, Growth Mindset, Empathy and Respect* in all our actions and decisions making this a learning environment where every member can reach for the stars and achieve!