

Newton South High School: School Improvement Plan

Mission Statement: We will develop a healthy and effective school community by increasing connections among our diverse group of students, faculty, and parents.

Goals to meet this mission include:

1. Research and recommend ways to increase faculty collaboration for the purpose of sharing best practices and increasing consistency with regards to academic and behavior expectations, curriculum, and grading.
 - a. Restructure one monthly department meeting each year to foster collaboration between departments. Department chairs will arrange these interdepartmental meetings for the exchange of curricular ideas and/or teaching methodology.
 - b. Department Chairs will encourage each teacher to conduct one peer observation across disciplines and/or schools each year.
 - c. Expand CFG's by providing "in-school" time and or "meeting time" to support these.
 - d. Continue the One Book/One School program.
2. Continue to develop modes of communication on the progress, behavior, and attendance of students as a way to strengthen relationships among parents, teachers, and students.
 - e. Provide time, support, and resources to support teacher transition to new SMS data management software.
 - f. Streamline communication methods and create behavior expectations/guidelines for teachers, students, administrators, and parents
 - *Example:* Establish when teachers must contact parents about a student's behavior/grades and in what timeframe.
 - *Example:* Establish an appropriate time for a parent to expect a response from a teacher.
 - *Example:* Include each student's liaison on teachers' class lists, given out at the beginning of the year.
 - *Example:* Develop a chain of communication policy for parent concerns (first to teacher, then to department head, then to principal, etc.).
 - g. Improve school to parent communication using attendance data on a daily basis, beginning in September 2009.
 - h. Improve communication among faculty. We will create an internal database of faculty names and pictures so we will be able to put faces to names of people we email, but do not see daily.
3. Continue to develop opportunities for connections for all students (inclusive of sexual orientation, race, gender, and socio-economic status) to be engaged in school activities in a way that decreases stress and increases the quality of their experience at South.
 - i. Increase faculty attendance at school events (sports, theater, music, speech, other clubs, faculty events, etc) through consistent communication of the events using house notice boards, email, and school papers.
 - j. Build Teacher to Student connection/community by re-establishing the faculty-student senate as a regular decision-making body.
 - k. Develop intramural activities to increase faculty and student interaction.
 - l. Increase opportunities for teacher-to-teacher connections by re-establishing the rotating breakfasts sponsored by houses and departments.
 - m. Pilot a whole-school activity during the school day.
 - n. Identify ways for students to lead aspects of the School Improvement Plan, feel connected to it, and help to carry it out.

School Improvement Plan – Part B – Academic Improvement

Our goal: Raise documented achievement for all struggling students.

- 1 Improve standardized test scores, grade point averages, and other indices of academic success for students in Curriculum 2 classes.
- 2 Improve standardized test scores, grade point averages and other indices of academic success for students who are earning grades of C and below in Curriculum 1 classes.
- 3 Increase the number of students from underrepresented groups taking honors and AP classes.

To do this, we will:

- 1 Create a network of support, both in-school and out of school, for students who struggle.
 - Create peer-tutoring opportunities for all struggling 9th and 10th grade students in English, math and science.
 - Create adult help centers in English, math, and science.
 - Create an after-school tutoring program for struggling 9th and 10th graders.
 - Build support across the curriculum for students' literacy development.
- 2 Create a school-wide focus on vocabulary
 - A list of school-wide words that all students are expected to know
 - Discipline-specific words across classes
 - All teachers trained in research on effective vocabulary instruction
- 3 Identify struggling readers early and provide a wide range of supports for them.
 - Target any student who isn't at grade level in reading for support as he or she enters NSHS.
 - We have a wide range of in-school and out-of-school supports so each student gets what he or she needs.
- 4 Institute school-wide reading time
 - Reserve some time each day when every person in the building reads.
- 5 Integrate the network of support with special-education instruction and existing classroom instruction.
 - Create a protocol for teachers to follow when they encounter students who struggle.
 - Create a system in which students may be referred to and enrolled in school-day support and after-school tutoring.
- 6 Coordinate classroom instruction
 - Build a system of professional collaboration so all teachers in the five major departments are part of a collaborative group that:
 - a) Meets regularly, with regular attendance;
 - b) Is led by teachers;
 - c) Has established goals for improving student performance;
 - d) Has devised a short-term plan to improve instruction;
 - e) Uses student data to evaluate their effectiveness in reaching their goals.
 - Build a repertoire of best educational practices that are in common use in classrooms across the building.
 - a) Focus every lesson on a mastery objective.
 - b) Implement grading practices that support learning.
 - c) Find effective ways to report on achievement, progress, and effort so they are not all lumped together in one letter.
 - Apply consistent grading standards across sections of the same course.
 - Have all teachers trained and proficient in differentiating instruction for diverse learners.
- 7 Create a network of support for students from underrepresented groups who want to enroll in honors and AP courses.