

Worcester Public Schools

Union Hill School School-Level Redesign Plan

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III. School-Level Redesign

School Name: Union Hill Elementary School	District: Worcester Public Schools
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School Level Redesign Overview

Union Hill School has a rich history in the City of Worcester. Our older, intermediate building was built following the Civil War. This old, strong, sturdy building has withstood the many changes in the neighborhood from its early years as a neighborhood of mostly Jewish immigrants and merchants to today's urban neighborhood, rich in diversity but struggling with stability, crime and poverty.

In March of 2010 when Union Hill was identified as a Level IV school, it was a school without internal structure. It had a chaotic environment with many deficits. It lacked supervision, discipline, a daily schedule, standards-based curriculum, effective instruction and leadership.

Those passing by Union Hill School this summer were left with no doubt that change was in the air. Physical plant improvements, materials, supplies, new desks and a flurry of teachers in and out of the building all summer preparing for the arrival of their students were constant sightings. The leadership team held a Summer Institute where the key levers for school improvement were carefully laid out.

Using this opportunity from the Early Implementation Grant, Union Hill staff worked in collaborative groups looking at our data and creating a baseline of where we are and setting goals for where we need to be. We worked on the notion of efficacy- having high expectations for all learners by partnering with the Efficacy Institute.

After a summer of staffing decisions and intense professional development with Lesley University's Center for Literacy, we mapped out a blueprint for how we would teach reading, select best practices, and implement Readers Writers Workshop. A shift towards standards-based instruction, high quality teaching and learning opportunities, assessment, appropriate use of time, teacher development and supervision and family and community engagement were the major themes that emerged from our summer work together.

A new commitment, passion and intent drove the school's opening in August 2010. In order to position our students for success, there was much to be done. Priorities were established through data analysis, stakeholder meetings and reports, staff interviews, parental input, and community meetings. What was agreed upon was that the school needed to address several essential areas in order to drive accelerated student achievement.

The following are the recommendations for focus:

- Provide a safe and secure learning environment for all learners
- Monitor appropriate use of instructional time
- Institutionalize the use of data to make decisions about teaching and learning
- Create a shift from a 'defeated culture' to a 'winning culture'
- Support the people driving the change with high quality professional development

The end result is a school with an accelerated trajectory in student outcomes, improved knowledge and pedagogical practice, a culture that is driven by success and a school that has become the "hub" of our community.

1.School-Level Redesign Team

Union Hill embraced the opportunity to begin anew in the spring/summer of 2010. The school opened in August with a new commitment, passion and intent to raise student achievement. This transformational energy began with the creation of Union Hill's redesign team; a group of dedicated people devoted to the success of the young people in this neighborhood. Talented administrators and teachers, concerned

families, caring community members and partners joined hands to create and share a vision of school excellence and define the nature of their work through information gleaned from a variety of data. The team analyzed the school's culture, the root cause of underperformance and instructional practices. During the first five redesign meetings beginning in December and occurring weekly, the team discussed the following:

- 1.) Examining the culture and needs assessment
- 2.) Examining instructional practices; accelerating student outcomes through advancing instruction
- 3.) Best Practices- guided reading, writing to learn, vocabulary development, and interactive read-alouds
- 4.) Data as evidence – aligned instructional systems that measure student progress- Union Hill's data goals
- 5.) Maximizing impact and accelerating school improvement through school, family and community partnerships.

The results of these meetings to date include an action plan with strong teacher teams, improved school culture, improved student performance, increased family and community involvement, additional student and family supports and increased and strengthened teacher capacity. The school's ILT (Instructional Leadership Team) meets weekly to ensure continued focus on these identified areas.

A team selection matrix was devised in order to pick the members of the Redesign Team. Criteria used for the selection was: visionary, sees the big picture; skilled practitioner - demonstrated ability to help students and adults learn; knows the instructional core and school design; relationship builder/collaborator/facilitator; skilled communicator; project manager; speaks honestly and shares ideas and makes things happen – knows the system. The use of this matrix allowed the building of a team that provided a balance of skills and perspectives.

To establish an effective leadership team for Union Hill School, the superintendent recruited and appointed an experienced principal with a consistent record of sustaining high academic achievement for the students she served. Mrs. Morse was the principal of Clark Street School from 2006 to 2010. During her tenure, the school was nominated for Blue Ribbon status and recognized as a commendation school currently maintaining Level I status. Her experience at Clark Street School proves that Mrs. Morse works strategically to identify high-leverage ways to improve instruction and student learning by aligning resources and actions in mutually reinforcing ways to accelerate improvement efforts (Curtis and City, 2009). Mrs. Morse holds a bachelor's degree in education and two master degrees in educational leadership. She continues to grow professionally through participation in the National Institute of School Leadership and Courage to Lead, as well as through collegial networking. Mrs. Morse also supports developing leaders as she facilitates a School Leadership graduate course in the Worcester Public Schools-Worcester State University Leadership Cohort program. (*See Appendix C: Union Hill – Resume*)

It was through her teaching in this program that Mrs. Morse was professionally introduced to Kareem Tatum who has been appointed Assistant Principal of Union Hill. Mr. Tatum has earned his Master of School Leadership from Worcester State College, a Master of Education from Cambridge College and a Bachelor of Arts in Education and Psychology from Assumption College. Throughout the courses he exhibited a high caliber of classwork, thoughtful diligent analysis of case studies and application of improvement planning strategies, and an unfaltering commitment and clearly articulated belief in the potential of all students to succeed at high levels. He was recruited based on this leadership and the strong recommendations from his previous principal. Mr. Tatum brings deep knowledge of literacy development, curriculum standards and pedagogy. He is a skilled communicator and collaborator who sets an example by his diligent attention to details, equitable, open-minded stance in dialogue with families and faculty, and his ability to maintain clear focus on the school improvement strategies.

As Union Hill's principal Mrs. Morse serves as the chair of the Redesign Team in collaboration with Mr. Tatum. To ensure that all members of the school community have a voice in the redesign process, the membership of the team reflects the diverse stakeholders to include parents, administrators, faculty members with different roles and grade level responsibilities, and community members:

Profile of team members:

- *Kevin Brennan, Grade 6 returning teacher* holds a Bachelors of Arts degree in Psychology from Worcester State College, a Master's of Arts in Counseling Psychology from Anna Maria College and a post-baccalaureate in Elementary Education from Worcester State College. He is a member of our school's ILT and Redesign team. He was chosen as a member of the redesign team as he is a leader among staff and has strong pedagogical skills. Mr. Brennan has applied professional development learning to his practice and has begun the process of improving student outcomes in reading and writing. He has the skill and knowledge to identify necessary instructional changes required to turn around our school.
- *Beth Trychon, a new teacher to Union Hill*, holds a Master of Education in Elementary Education from Cambridge College and a Bachelor's of Science in Elementary Education from Worcester State College. A member of our Redesign and ILT teams, she provides an ability to identify needed modifications to create systemic change. Utilizing data to match student learning with student needs, she has a strong capacity to deliver instruction. Ms. Trychon works as a critical member of our PBIS team and has significant experience working with students who have learning issues impeding their success. Ms. Trychon is a strong veteran teacher who brings 22 years of experience to Union Hill.
- *Mary Beth Juneau, a new teacher to Union Hill*, holds a Master in Education from Cambridge College and a Bachelors of Science in Elementary Education and Psychology. She serves as a Teacher-Leader and heads our ILT (Instructional Leadership Team), PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention Supports) initiatives, professional development and grade level staff meetings. Ms. Juneau is instrumental in helping to build a winning culture based on aligned instructional systems, assessment systems and continuous feedback. She has a strong, proven record of success as a teacher leader among colleagues.
- *Fawn Robidoux, a returning teacher*, holds a Bachelors of Science in Early Childhood Education from Worcester State College. She is a Grade 1 teacher, an ILT and Redesign member. She was selected as a team member since she has a long standing presence at Union Hill and has demonstrated teaching excellence in literacy by embedding summer institute professional development and data into everyday teaching. Ms. Robidoux possesses a strong commitment to Union Hill School and its families and students.
- *Noeliz Irizarry, a new teacher to Union Hill*, holds a Bachelors of Science in Natural Science and Psychology from Worcester State College. She comes to us with expert knowledge in behavior modification from a private residential setting. Ms. Irizarry was elected as a re-design team member as she brings to the team strong content knowledge, a balanced perspective and an ability to support and mobilize teachers' abilities to structure the classroom environment in order to maximize student learning and provide student supports.
- *Jennifer Lee, a new teacher to Union Hill and the Focused Instructional Coach*, holds a Master of Education in Reading from Worcester State College and is a certified Reading Specialist Kindergarten through Grade 12. Ms. Lee exhibits strong leadership around refining and improving best practices, modeling, coaching, data and strategic planning and design. She has excellent content knowledge and pedagogical skills and is able to teach and lead adults in school improvement initiatives as an ILT and Redesign team member.

- *Dexter Morse- Headmaster of Worcester Academy since 1997-* has been a critical friend to Union Hill School. Mr. Morse has fully committed to extend the privilege of his full support in our turnaround process, sharing facilities, human capital and resources.
- *Mullen Sawyer- Executive Director of Oak Hill Community Development Center.* Oak Hill CDC was established in 1985, and works as a neighborhood revitalization agent in the neighborhood. Mr. Sawyer is a strong organizer and is committed to improvement efforts at Union Hill School.
- *Hyacinth Sterling-Cain- President of the PTO and Site Council.* Ms. Sterling-Cain is a supporter and strong advocate of school improvement efforts.
- *Mary Meade-Montague- Quadrant Manager,* brings both a school and a district perspective. Her expertise is in instructional leadership in addition to designing new schools. She brings 32 years of educational experience that has crossed all levels from pre-kindergarten through college. She has been a high school chemistry teacher, curriculum specialist, college chemistry and experiential education professor and elementary principal and currently is a district administrator. She holds a bachelor's and master's degree in Chemistry and is currently enrolled in a doctoral program in Educational Leadership. Additionally she is a Milken Educator.

The varied backgrounds and areas of expertise of the individuals selected to serve on the Redesign Team underscore the importance of hearing the voices of all the school's constituencies as we move forward in this very important work.

2. Baseline data and needs analysis

A variety of data were gathered and analyzed to identify critical areas of concern in student performance and progress at Union Hill. The sources include MCAS as well as data from local assessments such as Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), and the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). Performance levels, patterns and achievement gaps were analyzed to assess the current status of the school and to identify important issues to address in the development of a strategic Redesign Plan based on the Conditions for School Effectiveness.

A comparison of student performance on MCAS across the grade levels at Union Hill to that of students across the state indicates statistically significant differences between the two populations. While some of this variation can be explained by differences in the demographics (i.e., poverty level of students, Limited English Proficient students), substantial gaps remain that warrant attention.

In 2009 through 2010, 97.4 percent of students at Union Hill Elementary were Low Income students, 19.9 percent were Special Education students, and 38.9 percent were Limited English Proficient.

Of Union Hill students in Grades 3 through 6, only 21 percent obtained a score in English Language Arts that was proficient or above in 2010 compared to 68 percent statewide. In Mathematics, just 18 percent of students at Union Hill were proficient or above in Grades 3 through 6 compared to 59 percent statewide.

Table 1: MCAS Results 2010 – Union Hill versus State

Grade	Subject	% Advanced/ Above Proficient		% Proficient		% Needs Improvement		% Warning	
		Union Hill	State	Union Hill	State	Union Hill	State	Union Hill	State
3	Reading	0	14	11	49	58	30	31	8
	Mathematics	0	25	17	40	33	24	50	11
4	ELA	0	11	10	43	48	35	43	12
	Mathematics	3	16	8	32	47	41	42	11
5	ELA	0	16	25	47	50	28	25	10
	Mathematics	8	25	23	30	46	28	23	17
	Science and Technology	0	15	10	38	44	36	46	11
6	ELA	5	15	31	54	33	21	31	9
	Mathematics	2	27	12	32	39	25	46	16
All	ELA	1	16	20	52	47	24	32	8
	Mathematics	3	26	15	33	42	27	40	15

Despite the challenging demographic student profile at Union Hill, it is important to recognize that there remains the expectation that all students can meet high standards. In fact, a review of other schools statewide and in Worcester shows that some students in similar demographically comprised schools are succeeding. As indicated in Table 2 below, there are 4 schools in Worcester that are very similar to Union Hill in terms of demographics. Two of these schools (Canterbury and Lincoln Street) are performing relatively higher on MCAS. In addition the rate of growth on MCAS relative to academically similar students statewide, particularly at Canterbury exceeds that of students at Union Hill Elementary. Columbus Park school, albeit with a slightly more socio-economically advantaged student body has MCAS scores even higher, suggesting that it may be very well factors that are controllable by Union Hill that could be changed in order to turn this school around.

Table 2: Comparison of Union Hill Elementary to Demographically Similar Schools

		Total Enr.	% Low Income	% SPED	% LEP	ELA: % Adv/Prof	Math: % Adv/Prof	ELA SGP	Math SGP
Worcester - Canterbury*	Pre-K through 6	360	94.7	24.4	45	32%	25%	58	63
Worcester - Chandler Elem Community*	Pre-K through 6	347	98.8	17.9	57.1	18%	16%	33.5	49
Worcester - Columbus Park*	Pre-K through 6	362	90.6	23.5	46.7	59%	51%	78	81
Worcester - Lincoln Street*	Pre-K through 6	243	91.8	18.5	44	27%	33%	43	59
Worcester - Union Hill School*	K through 6	311	97.4	19.9	38.9	21%	18%	40	54

Lack of Adequate Yearly Progress on MCAS

A review of data used for determining Union Hill Elementary School's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for 2010 reveals a failure to meet expectation for both student performance as well as improvement. While the school met expectations for both participation in MCAS (99 percent for English Language Arts (ELA); 99 percent for Mathematics) and student attendance (94.7 percent), Union Hill Elementary fell well short of its targets in both ELA (57.0 CPI) and Mathematics (51.3 CPI) in student performance and improvement. When different subgroups (including Limited English Proficient (LEP), Special Education, low income students, and Hispanic students) are examined and compared to school-wide performance and improvement in the aggregate, it is apparent that all sub-populations within Union Hill are also struggling to meet AYP (*see Attachment A - AYP*). It is for this reason the educational interventions described in this proposal are not specific to any one group of students within Union Hill Elementary but target all students within the school. Where the number of students is sufficient to calculate CPI, not a single subgroup with Union Hill met student performance or improvement expectations in 2010.

Examining school performance over time, while Union Hill made AYP in Mathematics in the aggregate in 2009 as well as for its subgroups, it failed to do so in 2010. In fact since Union Hill made AYP in 2005 in ELA, it has failed to do so again in ELA in any year with the exception of 2009. In Mathematics, Union Hill made AYP in 2008 but did not in either 2009 or 2010. Union Hill also made AYP in 2005 (as in ELA) but did not do so again in Mathematics in any year with the exception of 2008, and there are no years since 2005 where Union Hill's subgroups achieved AYP.

Student Growth on MCAS

An examination of student growth provides an indication of the rate at which students in different grade levels within Union Hill are improving over time relative to an academic peer group across Massachusetts. Grade 5 students at Union Hill were above the median SGP in mathematics, indicating that students at this grade level at Union Hill were growing at faster rates than academically similar students across the Commonwealth as measured by MCAS. However, Union Hill students were below the median SGP in Grade 4 and 6 as well as for each grade 4 through 6 in ELA.

Table 3: Union Hill Elementary MCAS Student Growth Percentiles (SGP) by Grade Level - 2010

Grade		ELA	Math
04	Mean	36.0	43.3
	N	40	39
05	Mean	44.1	64.5
	N	38	38
06	Mean	48.6	41.6
	N	48	48
Total	Mean	43.2	49.1
	N	126	125

Student Performance on MCAS subtopics in state standards

The analysis of MCAS data also included an examination of trends over time in student performance on items within different subtopics in state standards (see Appendix B). The data revealed significant differences in both ELA and Mathematics across grade levels and subtopics in state standards. It should be noted, however, that the gap was significantly smaller in Grade 5 in 2010 in Mathematics and to a lesser extent ELA in both Grade 5 and Grade 6. A similar pattern can be found when analyzing

student performance trends by question type (multiple choice, short answer, and open response). For detailed analyses, see *Attachment B: Student Performance on MCAS, subcategories*.

Student Performance on Local Assessments

Analyses of locally-based assessments such as DIBELS (Kindergarten through Grade 1), DRA (Kindergarten through Grade 3), and MAP (Kindergarten through Grade 6) also indicate substantial gaps in the performance of students at Union Hill relative to their peers in other district schools. As indicated in Table 4 below, only a small percentage of students are meeting the beginning of year DIBELS benchmark at Union Hill. The lack of progress at both grade levels is also a concern. While Grade 1 students showed some progress in 2008 through 2009 and to a lesser extent in 2009 through 2010, the early literacy skills of students at Union Hill is a significant concern.

Table 4: Percent of Students at Union Hill Elementary Reaching Benchmark on DIBELS, 2007 through 2010

Grade	Year	Beginning of Year	Middle of Year	End of Year
K	07-08	27	17	24
	08-09	21	11	15
	09-10	16	11	20
1	07-08	44	36	32
	08-09	26	41	40
	09-10	18	18	25

While Grade 3 students at Union Hill are slightly exceeding the district’s DRA benchmark, students in Grades 1 and 2 are doing so at significantly lower rates than their peer in other Worcester schools (see Table 5). The rate at which Grade 1 and Grade 2 students are meeting the DRA benchmark is significantly lower with a 39 percent gap at Grade 1 and a 23 percent gap at Grade 2.

Table 5: Percent of students meeting benchmark on the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) by grade - Union Hill versus District

Grade	Number of Students	School - % Meeting DRA Benchmark	District - % Meeting DRA Benchmark
1	53	21	60
2	42	31	54
3	43	63	61

An examination of student performance on the MAP also provides an opportunity to look at the performance of students at Union Hill in fine-grained ways to inform improvement planning and to develop hypotheses for exploring the causal links between educational strategies and interventions and student outcomes.

For example: Table 6 below contains school-level data on the percent of students meeting MAP growth targets (fall to spring administrations) by grade level from 2006 through 2007 to 2009 through 2010. The data here suggest that Union Hill Elementary may be making progress in closing the gap with overall district performance in some grade levels/subject areas. However, the rate at which Union Hill students are meeting MAP growth targets is below the district in every grade level/subject combination except for Grade 5 Mathematics and Grade 3 Reading. This suggests that targeted intervention in both Reading and Mathematics may be a prudent course of action.

Table 6: Percent of Students Meeting MAP Growth Targets: Fall to Spring

Mathematics

School	Grade	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
DISTRICT	2	43.8%	48.9%	43.4%	49.7%
	3	55.3%	59.0%	59.2%	63.4%
	4	58.7%	66.6%	63.6%	64.2%
	5	56.1%	64.5%	61.0%	62.1%
	6	59.3%	69.4%	64.9%	65.0%
Union Hill	2	21.6%	30.6%	33.3%	44.4%
	3	27.0%	36.7%	45.7%	45.9%
	4	44.1%	56.1%	80.0%	55.6%
	5	40.0%	44.7%	60.5%	81.1%
	6	17.6%	58.1%	55.9%	55.8%

Reading

School	Grade	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
DISTRICT	2	39.7%	49.0%	45.9%	49.9%
	3	47.2%	53.8%	50.4%	50.2%
	4	46.6%	50.3%	52.7%	53.2%
	5	53.1%	51.1%	52.3%	53.6%
	6	47.0%	52.6%	54.1%	51.8%
Union Hill	2	29.7%	34.3%	48.6%	41.7%
	3	18.9%	26.7%	37.1%	54.1%
	4	17.6%	24.4%	38.7%	30.6%
	5	45.2%	29.7%	50.0%	51.4%
	6	23.5%	35.5%	45.5%	44.2%

Priorities for Redesign

As a result of the data analysis, several priorities have been established.

- Implement targeted school-wide literacy approach
- Implement targeted interventions, supports and extensions
- Increase professional development in order to impact student achievement
- Improve feedback and evaluation system

- Engage families and community members as stakeholders

3. School-level redesign model

Worcester Public Schools evaluated each of the four federal intervention models required for school redesign for its potential to support rapid, sustained school performance improvement. Student performance data and the context of the school contributed to the decision to implement the Transformation Model.

The Transformation model is most appropriate for Union Hill due to the specific needs of students and the specific assets of the school, its principal and staff. The district's past successes in transforming schools to produce rapid, sustained improvement in student performance can be seen in results from University Park Campus School, Clark Street School, and the other seven schools recognized as Commendation Schools in 2010 by Governor Deval Patrick. Mrs. Morse provided the leadership to transform Clark Street School, earning a Level I designation by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The needs of Union Hill School mirror those seen at Clark School. She and the staff removed barriers due to poverty, delivered high quality, culturally competent instruction, and met the diverse needs of English language learners. District and school data demonstrate the power of leadership and instructional excellence in mediating persistent low student achievement and extinguishing the achievement gap.

The Worcester School Committee voted on April 12, 2010 to adopt the Transformation Model and the required components after discussion and debate during public meetings in March and April 2010. The district administration began implementation of the four required components of the Transformation Model at Union Hill School in the spring of 2010.

Worcester Public Schools continues to develop and increase teacher and school leader effectiveness. The superintendent replaced the principal at Union Hill School with Mrs. Marie Morse. The district continues to use a rigorous, transparent, and equitable evaluation system for teachers and principals. The October 2010 results of the Joint Resolution Committee granted contractual flexibility requiring teachers in Level IV schools to receive a full summative evaluation annually. The teacher evaluation process ensures high quality educator performance. The principal uses the evaluation system to identify and remove those who, after ample opportunities have been provided for them to improve their professional practice, have not done so. Through participation with the State's Race to the Top application, Worcester Public Schools will be making improvements to its evaluation system and implementing this system in all schools. Improvements will include the use of data on student growth as a significant factor as well as other factors such as multiple observation-based assessments of performance and ongoing collections of professional practice reflective of student achievement. Teachers and principals will be involved with the improvement and implementation processes.

In October 2010, results from the Joint Resolution Committee granted the school district contractual flexibilities pertinent to improving student performance at its Level IV schools. Each underperforming school may receive an aggregate award based upon students' performance measured by the Composite Performance Index established by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. These awards may be for school use only. This strategy is specifically designed as an incentive to attract and retain staff with skills necessary to meet the needs of the students in a transformation school.

During the pre-implementation phase in the summer 2010, a rigorous professional development program was provided for the Union Hill School staff. The principal and teaching staff developed improved capacity in literacy practices, PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports) and cultural competency. The October 2010 results of the Joint Resolution Committee granted contractual flexibility allowing the principal to schedule up to ten days of professional development during the month of August. Teachers may be required to work up to and including ninety additional hours.

Two new instructional coaching positions were implemented at the start of the 2010 – 2011 academic year at Union Hill. These two positions provide the staff with ongoing, high-quality, job-

embedded professional development that is aligned with the school's comprehensive instructional program and designed with school staff to ensure they are equipped to facilitate effective teaching and learning and have the capacity to successfully implement school reform strategies.

The October 2010 results of the Joint Resolution Committee granted contractual flexibility that supports the improved capacity of teachers to address the needs of students with special needs and the needs of English Language Learners. Teachers at underperforming schools may be requested to be licensed in Special Education or complete 40 hours of Special Education training /English as a Second Language (ESL) or complete all SEI category training by June 30, 2012 to enhance teacher effectiveness.

Worcester Public Schools is implementing comprehensive instructional reform strategies at Union Hill Elementary School. Student data and research guide decisions for selecting instructional tools. For example, Fast ForWord®, an adaptive, technology based tool, has been integrated into the school's repertoire of instructional tools to support literacy development of students, particularly English Language Learners. Five studies of Fast ForWord met the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) evidence standards. Fast ForWord provides each student with individualized support and real-time data regarding student progress and intervention strategies to teachers. Data generated from Fast ForWord informs instruction and supports teacher effectiveness. For example, Fast ForWord generates content specific vocabulary lists tailored to the individual needs of students to support the development of academic vocabulary and help teachers provide every student with comprehensible input. Literacy is a critical component of all content areas, as seen in the Common Core Standards.

Union Hill School is providing all students with increased learning opportunities and has created community-oriented schools. Worcester Public Schools has implemented a schedule that increases learning time by 90 minutes each day. The additional learning opportunities allow all students to experience a comprehensive academic core that includes reading / language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and the arts. Moreover, all students have access to enrichment activities that contribute to a well-rounded education. The added time supports the delivery of supplemental and intervention level services as well. Additionally, Supplemental Educational Services (SES) are provided either after school hours or on Saturdays, according to the preferences of parents.

The results of the Joint Resolution Committee granted contractual flexibilities supporting the implementation of common planning time at Union Hill School. Teachers engage in thirty minutes of common planning time each day. Teachers collaborate, plan, and engage in professional development within and across grades and subjects.

The district's comprehensive accountability system has four strategic goals for district and school improvement. One of these areas is focused on fostering high levels of family and community engagement, commitment and partnership. The school accountability plan (*See Appendix C: Union Hill – School Accountability Plan*) implements and monitors actions relative to parent participation and two-way communication. The October 2010 results of the Joint Resolution Committee granted contractual flexibility requiring all teachers to engage in home / school communication. Additionally, Union Hill School hosts quarterly progress monitoring meetings for parents and community members. These meetings help to keep the families and public informed about new developments and improvements at the school.

The principal's operational flexibility has been augmented by the results of the Joint Resolution Committee as cited above. The district continues to pursue additional, appropriate levels of principal autonomy to implement fully a comprehensive approach to substantially improve student achievement outcomes.

4. Stakeholder support

The Superintendent assured the district met federal and state requirements for stakeholder engagement, the formulation of stakeholder recommendations and the establishment of the

Superintendent's Turnaround Plan for Union Hill Elementary School by implementing the State Turnaround Plan Timeline. *(See Appendix C: Union Hill - Turnaround Timeline)*

A Local Stakeholder's Group was organized to represent constituencies from the school. The group was composed of not more than 13 individuals, as prescribed by state guidelines. Among those areas designated are representatives from: the MA DESE; School Committee; teachers union leadership; school administration; school teaching staff; parents; social services; workforce development agencies; Department of Higher Education or Early Childhood Education; and community stakeholders. This group convened for a series of six four-hour meetings for the purpose of using data and the Essential Conditions to frame recommendations to fuel the Superintendent's Turnaround Plan. *(See Appendix C: Union Hill – Memo)*

Meetings were conducted within established team norms. *(See Appendix C: Union Hill – Meeting agenda)* Data was used to inform decision-making. The team relied upon consensus to guide the group decisions and to support the recommendations. Meeting evaluations were conducted at the conclusion of each meeting to support participant satisfaction and high levels of productivity throughout the process. The district's Chief Academic Officer, Dr. Jeffrey Mulqueen, facilitated each meeting. The team used a tool for evaluation for the Local Stakeholder's Group. Respondents remained anonymous so they would feel free to express their deepest concerns. This evaluation helped tremendously to inform the process and help facilitate deeper discussions. *(See Appendix C: Union Hill – Local Stakeholders)*

Each stakeholder was responsible for two-way communication with his or her constituents. A standing item on each meeting agenda ensured that stakeholder feedback was discussed and used in the process leading to recommendations. Additional feedback was requested from stakeholders at the conclusion of the meeting schedules.

The Worcester Educational Collaborative publicized the process and promoted stakeholder feedback. Community meetings involving teachers, parents and the broader community were conducted at the school to convey the results of the local stakeholder group meetings and to solicit additional feedback. The District's website was used to publish information regarding the recommendations compiled by the Local Stakeholder's Group and to gather feedback. Superintendent Boone, Chief Academic Officer, Dr. Mulqueen and Principal Marie Morse of Union Hill School integrated feedback into the Superintendent's Turnaround Plan. Quarterly updates and progress monitoring meetings are under way. These were held in December of 2010, and will be held in February, April and June of 2011.

These meetings take place at the school. They are meant to support meaningful engagement of stakeholders in the implementation of changes and ongoing involvement in two-way communication. Meeting agendas and the recommendations of each Local Stakeholder's Group provide evidence of the meeting content.

The Teachers Union voted to support the District's Race to the Top application. In signing the Memorandum of Understanding the Teachers Union has agreed to support the federal Transformation models, including staffing and teacher evaluation requirements for Level IV schools.

The involvement of the Teachers Union in the district's Innovation Schools process also serves as evidence of the support for conditions relevant to the Transformation Model. Innovation Schools grant wide-ranging autonomy regarding policies, staffing, curriculum, budget expenditures, schedule, and calendar and professional development. Innovation Schools are on schedule for implementation in the Fall of 2011.

The School Committee engaged the Teachers Union in negotiation and subsequently relied upon the Joint Resolution Committee process to remove contractual impediments to school improvements. The Joint Resolution Committee process was initiated by the Superintendent on July 1, 2010. The results of the Joint Resolution Committee have provided additional supports to ensure a full and effective implementation of the Transformation Model and the support of staff and parents in the school to be served.

The Superintendent's Turnaround Plan for Union Hill Elementary School incorporates all the recommendations from our schools from the Local Stakeholder's Group.

B. Critical Issues, Key Priorities, Key Strategies and their Relationship to Conditions for School Effectiveness

Overview

As we examine Union Hill data and confront the brutal facts about underachievement and examine critical issues in the district that have not been adequately addressed, it becomes apparent that the district’s critical issues have contributed to the school’s critical issues. Both district and school issues are interrelated. The chart below parallels the district’s and school’s critical issues, key priorities, and key strategies.

District & School Critical Issues, Key Priorities and Key Strategies Linkages

District’s Critical Issues	District’s Key Priorities	District’s Key Strategies	Chandler’s Critical Issues	Chandler’s Key Priorities	Chandler’s Key Strategies	Essential Conditions
Lack of a systematic approach to human capital development throughout the system	Develop the system’s leadership and instructional capacity	Hire, develop, and retain effective instructional leaders; Align district functions with school improvement	Lack of leadership and teacher capacity to positively impact student learning	Develop leadership and teacher capacity to support and deliver High Quality Teaching and Learning	Hire the right team of individuals to lead school Coaching ILT Focus on Results Quadrant Support	1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 11
Lack of a systematic, standards-based approach to core, supplemental and intensive instruction	Provide all students with access to high quality standards-based instruction	Implement a 3-tiered instructional model with fidelity	Low percentage of students performing at grade level in English Language Arts and Mathematics	Implement a 3-tiered approach to instruction to address academic and socio-emotional issues	Differentiate instruction identified Best Practices: Guided Reading; interactive read-alouds, writing, PBIS, Adaptive Technology	2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11
Lack of systematic supervision and evaluation	Link adult efficacy to student results	Develop and implement a data-informed evaluation system for teachers and administrators	Low student Growth percentages in English Language Arts and Mathematics	Develop and implement a balanced assessment system to measure student and adult development	Implement a student assessment system Utilize the HQT &L framework to guide teacher supervision and evaluation	4, 5, 7
Lack of	Align partners to	Distribute	Lack of	Develop	Establish	7, 9, 10

partnerships aligned to accelerate and sustain district improvement	district improvement framework	leadership to partners through education and engagement	aligned partnerships to accelerate and sustain school improvement	coherent focused collaboration s between home, school and community resulting in outstanding results for all	Union Hill to be a community hub for student and family supports and learning	
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The ability to turn around the low student achievement at Union Hill School is contingent on how successful both the school and the district are in addressing critical issues. Improving teaching and learning is everyone’s work. The district and Union Hill School must align our resources and supports to improve student learning.

The belief that “all students can achieve high standards given significant time and support” is a nonnegotiable belief that all staff members and educational stakeholders must adopt (Fullan, Hill & Crevola, 2006, p.12)

Building a school culture that is student focused and supports teaching and learning is an intentional process. It should be the touchstone of the organization-the how of the organization, how individuals are inspired, and how they approach their work (Elbot & Fulton, 2008).

Research indicates that students’ academic achievement is greater when students’ academic learning time increases (Silva, 2007, *On the Clock: Rethinking the ways Schools use Time*). In addition, the national conversation on the power of an expanded school day has increased in recent years as evidenced by schools that have incorporated increased learning opportunities

According to the research from the National Center on Time and Learning the expanded time should be linked to three key areas:

Additional time for Core Academics

Union Hill captures additional time to accelerate learning in **core academic** subjects by making meaningful improvements to the quality of instruction in support of school-wide achievement goals.

Additional time for Enrichment

Union Hill uses additional time (either in core and/or specialty classes) to offer **enrichment** opportunities that connect to state standards, build student skills, tap student’s interests, and deepen student engagement in school/learning in support of school-wide achievement goals.

Additional time for Teacher Leadership and Collaboration

Union Hill also uses additional time to build a professional culture of **teacher leadership and collaboration** (e.g., designated collaborative planning time, on-site targeted professional development) focused on strengthening instructional practice and meeting school-wide achievement goals.

In order for time to be effectively leveraged as a school improvement strategy, the Union Hill leaders and Instructional Leadership Team examined the instructional schedule within and beyond the school day. They have developed a schedule that protects **core instruction** by providing an uninterrupted block of instructional time for literacy and math and allows significant instructional time for science, social studies and enrichments. Teachers are building efficient, consistent procedures for transitions within the classroom and throughout the school day to maximize time-on-learning. Additionally through the use of data, targeted interventions are being implemented to provide the “**and MORE**” for students

during the expanded time. Instruction in the longer school day and Saturday school learning opportunities is directly aligned with students' intervention plans to support accelerated learning.

Based on the work of the National Center on Time and Learning and the research the Union team has done as to 'what works' in other schools in both Massachusetts and nationally the characteristics of good work for them outlines how they plan to ensure the effective use of expanded time:

They must be:

- Highly focused in use of time
- Relentless in the use of data to improve core instruction
- Constantly identifying struggling students and match them with instructional supports (double or triple dosing) based on data
- Using clear structures and protocols for additional teacher collaboration time
- Engaging all faculty in setting and reaching school-wide achievement goals
- Engage students in a small number of high-quality well-planned enrichment electives tied to the schools

They must avoid:

- Using the additional time to try too many new initiatives and partnerships
- Assuming they know what "the data" says and don't take time to zero-in on student needs
- Adding time for academics without making sure the current time is as strong as it can be
- Using a "one size fits all" approach rather than targeted and data-oriented instructional supports
- Not providing enough guidance and structure for teacher collaboration time
- Offering too many enrichment activities that don't connect to the instructional focus

Staff have begun to address some of the deficits in their school with activities that are taking place. Union Hill students attend afterschool programming five days per week for 90 minutes of instruction and also receive three hours of instruction in Saturday School focused on English Language Arts and Mathematics interventions and are supported with adaptive technology to accelerate learning. Intervention for students includes sessions in Fast ForWord® and Headsprout; targeted math remediation; and additional opportunities for reading and writing.

Leadership and Governance

Effective school leadership is a key lever to achieving and sustaining high student performance. (Reeves, 2009) states that "of all the variables that influence student achievement, the two that have the most profound influence are teacher quality and leadership quality" (p.67). Schools that are successful in sustaining high student achievement have created school cultures where there is shared inquiry and decision-making. Teachers collaborate with each other and with administrators through coaching, reflection, collegial investigation, and study teams to enhance teaching and learning and solve instructional problems (Blasé & Blasé, 1998). To this end, the Worcester Public Schools is committed to ensuring that each school is led by a collaborative, data-driven instructional leadership team that includes a principal, assistant principal, coach, and teacher leaders.

The ILT's (Instructional Leadership Team) primary role is to lead the improvement of teaching and learning. The ILT uses data to make decisions about the school's instructional program and leads and monitors the implementation of the school's key priorities and strategies.

With the appointment of an experienced principal, Marie Morse, to become the principal of Union Hill, Dr. Boone signaled to the community that Mrs. Morse's experience in eliminating the

achievement gap and raising student achievement will be the key to accelerating the transformation of Union Hill.

Mrs. Morse has proven experience in using data to identify and address a school's needs, setting rigorous goals to improve student learning, helping staff use data in ways to create personal connections with students, developing plans for students to improve their learning, and holding teachers accountable for student improvement. Dr. Boone is confident Mrs. Morse will confront the brutal reality of current achievement status of Union Hill condition and bring the school to greatness (Collins, 2001).

Mrs. Morse was given autonomy to select her leadership team. Katzenbach & Smith (2003) define a team as "a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable" (p.45). Mrs. Morse selected a team of individuals whom she believes:

- demonstrate leadership and interpersonal abilities
- possess deep content and pedagogical knowledge and skills
- are committed to high achievement for all students
- have the ability to problem solve with others

In addition to selecting her leadership team, Mrs. Morse personally interviewed all prospective staff members and contacted references for all potential candidates. Current staff at our school who wished to continue employment at the school were required to attend an information meeting where Mrs. Morse shared her vision for the school and outlined specific expectations she had of all staff members. If they were still interested in being a part of Union Hill School after the information meeting, Mrs. Morse interviewed them individually. During the interview process, interviewees were asked specific questions to determine:

- commitment to high achievement for all students,
- effectiveness in enabling students to achieve high levels of academic growth,
- content and pedagogical knowledge, ability to build strong relationships with students, families, and the community and,
- ability to work collaboratively with colleagues to foster a positive learning culture.

It is the commitment of all district leaders to work actively toward the principal having complete hiring authority with all staff as Mrs. Morse has, through the Joint Resolution Committee agreement, with her leadership team.

Assistant principal leaders and Teacher-Leaders are hired annually at the discretion of Mrs. Morse. Teaching -leaders may be hired to fill vacancies thereby expanding her autonomy. The teacher-leader's work year has been expanded from 183 to 210 days.

The principal currently has complete hiring autonomy with her leadership team. This mirrors what is happening at the District level: It is the commitment of all district leaders to pursue means by which the principal will have complete hiring authority with all faculty. To this end the Worcester Public Schools will propose full principal hiring autonomy through amendments to the Turnaround Plan, using the Joint Resolution Committee. If the district is unsuccessful through the Joint Resolution Committee process it will employ a second option, converting all Level IV teachers to teacher-leaders. (The 2010 results of the Joint Resolution Agreement grant the principal hiring authority over teacher-leaders)

Financial incentives include approximately 450 additional work hours for teachers at \$30 per hour. Assistant principal and teacher-leaders also work an additional 27 days, earning a stipend of \$6,142.50 and \$5,625 respectively.

It is the expectation of the district that teachers become more qualified than their peers by receiving approximately 90 hours of targeted professional development per year. Additionally, Level IV school teachers will benefit from daily common planning, during which they will discuss best practices and strengthen their individual teaching practices.

Selected Level IV educators will have the opportunity to work flexible, staggered schedules, as necessary, to support student achievement and facilitate parental and community involvement. Additionally, assistant principal leaders and non-teaching Teacher-leaders have the flexibility to determine when it is most beneficial to work the additional 27 days, in consultation with Mrs. Morse.

Within the overall district's budget limitations, the school principal, in consultation with the site council, is provided full budget autonomy regarding the allocation of staff and all non-staff financial resources provided to the school through the budget process. This autonomy includes the allocation of teachers across grade levels, the manner in which classroom teachers are utilized within the school, and the full authority regarding the instructional supply and material budget provided to the school. The school's allocation of staff and non-staff resources are based on the overall district budget status, and differentiation of the allocation may vary by individual school based upon special populations served, programs offered or other needs of the school. In this case, the school is provided additional local, state and federal resources as described below in the Financial and Asset Management section located on page 25.

School level

At the school level, Union Hill's ILT is a study in shared leadership. The team meets on a weekly basis in order to plan initiatives, discuss strategies, and serve as a sounding board for the concerns of the greater school community. In order to ensure that all team members have an equal voice at the table, there is no assigned chairman of the ILT. Instead, that position rotates on a weekly basis which gives each team member the opportunity to lead the work. In addition, meetings are open to one guest member a week, in order to provide a forum for faculty to pose questions and address concerns. The instructional coaches are key members of the Union Hill ILT. They organize classroom visits so that teachers can share best practice; facilitate debriefings following observations; and publish a newsletter. The Union Hill model for the ILT helps to create a professional learning community of highly reflective teachers.

Leadership and governance as a team undertaking

Behind every successful school there is a great leader. We also know that good leaders become *great leaders* when they commit to becoming lifelong learners. To that end, we know that as partners in the school's improvement work we must be committed to providing rich and rigorous coaching support to the leaders at Union Hill School. What we have learned is that the best learning is accomplished when the coaching is connected to:

- the school's improvement work aligned to *high quality teaching and learning*
- the strengths and challenges of the *current leadership*
- what the data says are the *urgent needs* of the school
- prior coaching sessions
- things within our locus of control

We've also learned that school leaders are on the fast track often leaving them without the time to see things in a *connected manner* and *from a balcony's view*. Often times, and in particular at Union Hill we see that the leaders are running on all engines and with an overwhelming sense of urgency to "do it all now."

Our perspective on this has changed in response to the leadership provided to us by Focus on Results and district-level leadership. Our FOR transformational partners and the district's Quadrant Manager have partnered to provide systematic and strategic support to the leaders of Union Hill Elementary school.

Unlike many coaching situations, they have made a commitment to *align their coaching support* offering the school laser-like support that will keep the work moving at a rigorous, yet reasonable, pace. As opposed to offering separate support with separate agendas, they have decided that the best coaching

will come if we work in collaboration. This will ensure the supports offered will be *connected and continuous*. The protocol they find to be most helpful to the school leadership team is as follows:

- √ Step One: On-site coaching visit to school by FOR staff, Quadrant Manager or both. This visit includes executive coaching and technical support around the improvement work at Union Hill. The coaching support is offered to the building principal, instructional coaches, and, at times, the Instructional Leadership Team.
- √ Step Two: The school leadership works in collaboration with FOR and/or Quadrant Managers to set measurable next step action plans.
- √ Step Three: Follow up support is offered to the school to ensure that the action items are being executed as outlined.
- √ Step Four: FOR staff and Quadrant Managers meet to discuss current realities of the school including *strengths and challenges*. These rich discussions enable them to create an agenda for their next cycle of coaching.
- √ Step Five: Cycle continues as they work in collaboration to return to **Step One** and move forward.

In addition to coaching support and technical assistance, the FOR staff and Quadrant Managers help school leaders to *access resources* that will help the leaders of Union Hill to lead the improvement work at the school. Such resources may include programmatic resources, human/fiscal resources, research, and exemplary models. They know that without the necessary resources, leaders can only do so much to ensure that their *teachers are able to teach* and their *students are able to learn*.

Educational research validates the role of leadership in turning around schools. Low performing schools require effective instructional leaders who can create a vision, develop people, redesign the organization, and lead the instructional program so that schools turn around and sustain positive impact on student achievement (Leithwood & Strauss, 2009). Worcester Public Schools is committed to accelerating student achievement in all of its schools. For this improvement to take place, strong principal leadership and strong instructional improvement needs to occur (Camburn, Rowan & Taylor, 2003). With the support of our educational partners, Focus on Results (FOR), district leadership has begun to align resources and focus efforts on improving teaching and learning opportunities for all students, ultimately impacting achievement. Prior to this time there was no alignment across central office departments and little targeted district support to schools.

To further develop its leaders, over the last two years the Worcester Public Schools, with the support of FOR (Focus on Results) partners, has developed a variety of professional development opportunities. These include the National Institute for School Leadership (NISL) training, PLAN (Principal Leadership Accountability Network Meetings,) monthly principals' meetings, instructional leadership meetings, school learning visits, and monthly coaches' meetings.

In the spring of 2010, 60 district and school leaders completed a two year leadership development program through NISL. NISL delivered high-quality, research-based professional t designed to give individuals the critical knowledge and skills they need to be instructional leaders to improve student achievement in their schools. The cohort-based training enabled WPS leaders to learn from each other, share strategies, and build common approaches to address the challenges they face.

PLAN meetings provide an opportunity for principals to engage in professional learning and collegial support to enhance effective leadership focused on school and district improvement. This network channel provides principals the opportunity to discuss the district's focus and share strategies of best practices to support the focus. Principals are assigned to particular groups and have one day of uninterrupted time to meet monthly.

Monthly principals' meetings convened by the district provide a forum for principals and the district's educational leadership team members to build expertise and align practices across the district.

Instructional leadership meetings provide a monthly opportunity for school-level instructional leadership team members from all of the schools to participate together in professional learning to strengthen core instruction. Meetings are usually structured by grade level with opportunities during the year for vertical teaming.

The Worcester Public Schools organizes school learning visits four times a year as an opportunity for school leadership teams – ILT- (Instructional Leadership Teams) to visit other schools to learn about their school improvement journey. ILT members from the school visited share their successes, challenges, and next steps in accomplishing the district’s leadership expectations in a way that can help all teams reflect on the work back at their own schools. During the school learning visit, school teams complete a walkthrough.

FICs (Focused Instructional Coaches) meet monthly. These meetings are facilitated by our FOR partners, the Quadrant Managers, and the Director of Supplemental Support. The focus of these meetings is to build the coaches’ expertise in the delivery of the district’s tiered coaching model and to share best practices.

Human Resources

Teacher Development

Research shows that teacher quality has more impact on student achievement than any other single factor including family income and parent education. (Black & Williams, 1998). Worcester Public Schools is committed to ensuring that every effort is made to deliver on our promise that all students are afforded the opportunity to be in classrooms where teachers are committed and able to provide high quality teaching and learning opportunities to every student, every day.

Beginning in the Spring of 2009, the District Leadership Team recognized there was a missing link to the improvement work in Worcester Public Schools. While there were coaches in most buildings, there was not a plan linked to their role in the improvement work. Beginning in the Fall of 2009, coaches participated in rigorous, ongoing training and technical support, helping them better define their important role of ensuring that all teachers have the necessary tools and supports that they need to be successful in the classroom.

Union Hill coaches are committed to a *Tiered Approach* for delivery of services. Similar to students, teachers also need a solid foundation on which to build their practice. To fulfill this goal, the coaches, principals and the district leadership team have committed to providing all staff the opportunity to engage in professional development linked to their school-wide focus and evidence-based practices. This occurs at Tier One and comes through the execution of a targeted professional development plan. Tier One support from coaches can come in many forms (facilitation of professional development, participation on the school’s Instructional Leadership Team, facilitation of faculty meetings, book studies, newsletters, etc.). Coaches in WPS realize that this approach should result in at least 80 percent of all staff having the necessary tools to support the students they serve.

Equally as important is the commitment of the coaches to ensure that Tier Two and Tier Three support is in place for the teachers who may need the “and more”. The theory behind Tier Two is that some groups of teachers may need “and more” beyond “the core”. This type of support is seen as coaches facilitate grade level/department conversations, targeted book studies, or a grade level/department blitz. This type of support must be directly linked to Tier One.

Tier Three coaching is specific, laser like and unique to the individual who needs much more. This type of coaching is executed, in most cases, by the recommendation of the principal who, through learning visits, observations, and data analysis, determines that the needs of the teacher are prohibiting the individual from delivering on the promise of high quality teaching and learning opportunities.

Through a targeted, tiered approach, coaches are able to ensure that the supports afforded to teachers are linked to building on strengths and supporting needs. As we continue with this model in Year Two we are beginning to see momentum in the work and clear results in the improved practices of

the teachers served. Clearly, this has and will continue to support our promise to meet our goal of a 100 percent student success rate. Our instructional coaches are instrumental in our journey towards this goal.

At Union Hill, the Focused Instructional Coach has worked diligently with all teachers not only providing professional development to the staff but instituting classroom structures that support the change in non-negotiable instruction such as guided reading and learning centers.

In addition to coaches, a Teacher-Leader will be hired for Union Hill School. A Teacher-Leader is one who will work with teachers as mentor/partner in helping him or her to reach high standards of instructional practice. A Teacher-Leader will walk side-by-side with the teacher and principal and provide examples and model activities to help the teacher reach his or her fullest potential.

In the summer of 2010 the newly formed staff of Union Hill School in a summer institute targeted to address key priorities identified through careful analysis of the school's data. The institute focused on two areas of need: academic performance and school culture. In order to build teacher capacity, intensive training in Guided Reading conducted by the Fountas Group of Lesley University, focused on the need for teachers to differentiate their instruction to appropriately challenge and engage all students within a common classroom. It also highlighted the importance of adapting activities to address the specific strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles of each student. As an extension of this strategy, teachers are developing individualized learning plans for every student in order to effectively monitor their progress and continuously adjust their instruction based on student need.

In order to sustain these initiatives, extensive, targeted, and creative professional development must be provided on an ongoing basis. The practices and programs listed below have been provided to Union Hill staff.

- An instructional coach and a teacher-leader
- Daily common planning time of 30 minutes
- Faculty development of school-wide instructional focus
- Faculty development of instructional best practices
- Faculty development of core values
- Implementation of Instructional Leadership Team
- On-site Guided Reading Training
- Training in Interactive Read-Alouds
- Continuation of PBIS Training
- Being A Writer Training
- Completion of school-wide writing prompt
- Development of common writing rubric
- Development of grade level assessments in ELA and Math
- Instructional Rounds
- Re-alignment of Math curriculum to reflect core standards

Through the Joint Resolution process the district has solidified structures to ensure the ongoing professional development for the teachers of Union Hill. This includes provision for daily common planning and 90 hours of additional professional development time beyond the current teacher contract. The inclusion of regular and structured common planning time is extremely important to planning improvement in student performance. District leadership recognizes the importance of providing all teachers with time to collaborate together on teaching and learning. The current teacher's contract provides this provision for secondary school teachers but not for elementary school teachers. To acquire this provision for elementary school teachers, on May 4, 2009, the School Committee issued proposal #15, during successor collective bargaining for the teacher's contract that expired on August 31, 2008: *Article XXVII Work Year, Hours, Work Load – Increase the length of the elementary teachers' work day to be comparable to that of secondary teachers.*

This proposal would increase elementary teachers work days by 30 minutes/day. These 30 minutes/day would be used to provide elementary teachers with a 30-minute preparation period each day. If contract negotiations are not successful in this area, district leadership will still work to accomplish this provision for elementary teachers. Specialists, such as art, music and physical education teachers will be assigned to provide each class with additional instruction, no less than twice per month, 30 minutes prior to the end of the students' day. On common planning days, teachers' end of day duties will be substituted for common planning time in accordance with *Article XXVII (29)*, which would make provision for a total of 45 minutes of common planning time, 30 minutes preparation plus 15 minutes of duty.

The new Massachusetts Evaluation Model will be negotiated with the teachers' union. Teachers and the principals from Level IV schools will have the opportunity to determine which measures of student growth shall be used, refine the observation process (including the quantity and frequency); determine the professional evidence to be reviewed (i.e. lesson plans, teacher written comments on homework papers and examinations).

The principals and teachers of Level IV schools are re-evaluated by receiving significant discretionary funds based upon student growth. Subject to available funds, beginning in the 2010 – 2011 school year, each underperforming school may receive an aggregate award based upon students' performance measured by the Composite Performance Index established by DESE.

These awards may be used for school-use only. The allocation of the awards shall be determined by a majority vote of a committee made up of six staff members, elected by the staff, six community members, and the principal of the school. Each member shall have one vote. The Superintendent must approve all expenditures. The aggregate school reward shall be issued in the following manner: 11 to 15 point increase – CPI Mathematics or ELA - \$30,000 and a 16 + point increase – CPI Mathematics or ELA - \$50,000.

In order to ensure that common planning time is used effectively to positively impact student achievement, specific guidelines have been put in place regarding how this time should be utilized. Two days a week, teachers meet by grade level to discuss weekly lesson plans, identify common instructional tools and assessments, analyze data, create individualized learning plans and monitor student progress. One day is designated for reading and the other is designated for math. Teachers meet across grade levels two days a week to map curriculum, identify learning gaps that span grade levels, and share best practices through peer observation. As with grade level meetings, one day is dedicated to reading, while the other is dedicated to math. The remaining planning session is devoted to Redesign team meetings, PBIS team meetings, and other targeted planning groups, such as "Guided Reading" and "Being A Writer."

Student Support

Students' academic achievement is greater when students' academic learning time increases (Silva, 2007, *On the Clock: Rethinking the ways Schools use Time*). The Instructional Leadership Team examined the instructional schedule within and beyond the school day. They developed a schedule that protects core instruction by providing an uninterrupted block of instructional time for literacy and math and allows significant instructional time for science, social studies and enrichments. Teachers are building efficient, consistent procedures for transitions within the classroom and throughout the school day to maximize time-on-learning. Instruction in afterschool and Saturday school learning opportunities is directly aligned with students' intervention plans to support accelerated learning. Union Hill students attend afterschool programming five days per week for 90 minutes of instruction and also receive three hours of instruction in Saturday School focused on English Language Arts and Mathematics interventions and are supported with adaptive technology to accelerate learning. Intervention for students includes sessions in "Fast ForWord" and "Headsprout;" targeted math remediation; and additional opportunities for reading and writing. In addition students participate in a variety of enrichment programs to enhance their learning in the core areas. Enrichment opportunities include beginning Spanish; Science Exploration; Art; Drama and Community Awareness.

To support all students to achieve at high levels Union Hill School will design and implement a school-wide tiered system with three focus areas: attendance, social-emotional, and academics. The Union Hill Response to Intervention (RtI) process will use the scientific method for decision-making: 1) analyze data to clearly define the learning or social-emotional challenge - the team analyzes the gap between current performance and expected performance – this may call for more specific diagnostic assessments; 2) develop a plan – interventions are designed to specifically addresses the students strengths and weakness; 3) implement the plan – monitor fidelity of implementation concerning approach, time allotted, materials used; and 4) evaluate student progress to determine next steps – to increase support if necessary, maintain current level of supplemental support, or discontinue support because the student is demonstrating proficiency.

Student’s social and emotional health needs

The full time School Adjustment Counselor (SAC) will collaborate with teachers, administrators, the nurse, parents, and social-service and health agencies to ensure that students attend school daily, arrive on time and are ready to learn. Payton, J. et al, (2008) found that social-emotional learning programs improved students’ social-emotional skills, attitudes toward self and others, connection to school, positive behavior, and academic performance and that these programs were effective across Kindergarten through Grade 8 for racially and ethnically diverse students from urban and suburban settings. Union Hill has established a clear set of school-wide behavioral expectations as part of PBIS and teachers guide students to develop and demonstrate these behavioral competencies on a consistent basis. All students will participate in the Second Step social skills curriculum co-facilitated by classroom and health teachers. These universal expectations provide a proactive, preventive approach and will serve approximately 80 to 90 percent of students. Students who require additional support (approximately 5 to 10 percent) will receive targeted interventions such as check-and-connect, additional behavioral coaching from the SAC or participation in the Steps to Respect curriculum. For individual students who present with more chronic, severe social-emotional challenges, additional intensive supports will be provided through collaborative, strengths-based planning with family members, school personnel, and social-service agencies as appropriate. Union Hill staff will develop social-emotional supports that are clinically, linguistically, culturally and developmentally appropriate for each student.

Students of Union Hill School reside in one of the poorest sections of Worcester that possesses all the ancillary issues that poverty brings: unemployment, homelessness, crime, drug abuse, and lack of health care. In addition, the children of this neighborhood attend a school that has been designated as persistently underperforming.

It is our responsibility to restore a sense of possibility and achievement to them. Hiring a staff that shares the belief that all students can be successful is the first piece of the puzzle. At Union Hill, we have made a commitment to create a school culture where student opinions are valued and respected and where achievement becomes reality. We are striving not to reach proficiency, but to exceed it. The following programs and policies have been put in place to support student achievement and to focus on three specific areas, intervention, incentives and college-to-career readiness

Interventions

- Individualized Student Success Plans
- Review of Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
- Review of Accommodations for English Language Learners

Incentives

- Student Goal Setting for MAP Testing
- After School Program (Intervention)
- Student Development of Core Values

- Introduction to PBIS
- PROUD (Proficient Readers Obtain Ultimate Dreams) Assembly
- Student Participation in Morning Announcements
- Daily Award for Cafeteria Role Model
- Award for Student of the Month
- Award for Citizen of the Month
- Award for Perfect Attendance (Quarterly)

College and Career Readiness

- Mentoring Program
- Student Banking Program
- Library Card Program
- Career Fair
- Anti-Bullying Initiative

The Union Hill faculty, FIC (Focused Instructional Coach) Teacher-Leader, and administrators have started and will continue to develop and refine a three-tiered system of instruction to ensure academic success for all students.

- Tier One: Core Instructional Curriculum (all students)
- Tier Two: Core Instruction and Supplemental Resources (students who need additional support – group or individual)
- Tier Three: Core Instruction and Intensive Supports (students who need intensive intervention and specialized resources on an individual basis)

As we organize this coordinated system of instruction we will consider the demographics of our students: 97 percent are eligible for Free/Reduced lunch, 42.1 percent are from homes where English is not the first language, 38.9 percent have Limited English Proficiency (LEP), and 19.9 percent qualify for Special Education services. The full faculty will complete all of the SEI (Structured English Immersion) Category Trainings and receive training in differentiated instruction and techniques to support students with special needs. Currently LEP students receive instruction from an ESL licensed teacher and a certified ESL instruction assistant in an ESL Lab focused on building English proficiency through content area instruction. Students who present with an identified social-emotional disability receive instruction in one of three Structured Therapeutic Educational Program (STEP) classes with a certified teacher and instructional assistant. The school serves other students with special education needs through an inclusion model with pull-out targeted interventions such as Wilson reading instruction.

Family-school relationships

The leadership of Union Hill School is establishing relationships with families and community members to enhance the school culture, strategically align home, school, and community resources and actions, and build a collaborative commitment to rapid acceleration of the academic performance of every student in the school.

By consistently demonstrating competence, integrity, and respect the school administrators and faculty are developing mutually respectful relationships with all members of the school community. As Union Hill staff deliver honest messages and collaborate to develop solutions, they demonstrate competence. By consistently aligning their words and actions, Union Hill staff show integrity in their daily work. By taking time to have conversations, meet with small groups of parents, teachers, or community members to discuss an issue, or listen intently to their questions, concerns, and ideas, Union Hill staff conveys respect.

Building trusting, supportive coalitions is essential to any reform initiative. To create the conditions for change at Union Hill School there must be open and honest dialogue about the current conditions of the school and improvement needs. Communication about change begins with building credibility and trust. All school staff must clearly and consistently articulate their belief that all students can achieve at high levels and demonstrate their commitment to delivering on high expectations for all students in order for stakeholders to trust that the change being communicated will be positive and in their best interest.

Creating a shared context for enhancing Union Hill School's culture involves creating a common understanding of the improvement work. To create this shared context each component of the Union Hill improvement work will be regularly communicated to stakeholders. Frequent opportunities will be given for stakeholders to ask questions along the way to ensure an understanding of the work. Pearce (Leading Out Loud, 2003) states that the greater the change, the greater the need to break things down into steps people can picture themselves taking.

Transforming the culture of Union Hill School to focus on student achievement requires leadership to help people take ownership of the work and believe that what they do matters (Curtis and City, Strategy in Action, 2009). The leaders of Union Hill School are using Kotter's (1996) eight-stage process of creating transformational change as a framework for advancing change in their school. Union Hill leaders ensure that all stakeholders understand the school's improvement focus and strategically leverage family and community resources to support these goals.

Engaging Parents in the School Community

The role of family involvement cannot be understated. Hernandez, Kreider, Coffman, Lopez (Concepts and Models of Family Involvement, 2002) cite that family involvement makes an enormous difference in student achievement and healthy development. When schools provide information, encouragement and opportunities for partnership, parental involvement increases. School staff will engage in frequent, reciprocal and continuous communication. Teachers will be expected to reach out to families in a variety of ways including newsletters, parent-teacher meetings, school-family events, e-mails, and phone calls. Our plan is to build honest, trusting relationships where school and home work together to improve student outcomes.

By establishing strong and meaningful school-family partnerships Union Hill will become the vibrant learning hub of the community. The previous culture of the school did not encourage this type of alliance, so a level of trust needed to be built to effectively engage families as shareholders in their children's education. Since many of our families have had minimal positive school experiences, it is incumbent upon staff and administration to provide a warm and welcoming environment. The Union Hill staff will make every effort to involve families by putting the following strategies in place:

- Make expectations clear to families and regularly communicate student progress to them
- Develop opportunities for teachers and families to talk about how families can contribute to the education of their children
- Create a variety of family education programs
- Build relationships with families by having ongoing conversations with them about the role of teachers and families in student learning (Gordon, 2006)

To support active family engagement in the education of their children Union Hill has worked to establish the following:

- Parents as Partners
- Open door policy with the principal, assistant principal and staff – both Mrs. Morse and Mr. Tatum have established open, positive, supportive relationships with families.

- Regularly scheduled neighborhood meetings to inform parents of the progress of Level IV Redesign – four full meetings annually with sub-committee meetings more frequently
- A full time school adjustment counselor maintains a strengths-based stance to support families to improve attendance, navigate social services, build collaborative relationships with local agencies, and facilitate the Student Support Process. This was a recommendation from the local stakeholders.
- A full time school nurse coordinates health services within the school and supports families to secure health services as needed through local health centers. This was a recommendation from the local stakeholders.
- Community Health Links has offered to partner to support the mental health needs of families
- Ronald McDonald Dental Care Mobile provides oral health needs and works with families to secure an orally health home
- A renewed and strengthened Parent-Teacher Organization that is involved in decision-making and supporting improvement work
- Scheduled family academic and enrichment nights offered monthly
- Active involvement of parents in the school-wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Support program to increase on-task behavior and positive choices and reduce disciplinary issues
- Monthly Parent Newsletter and Wednesday Information packets – with translations and interpretation services as needed
- Active parent-to-parent recruitment of parent as volunteers
- A home-school reading program
- A winter clothing shop in coordination with Coats for Kids, United Way and Worcester Academy
- Adult Education classes such as English as a Second Language, GED, and Financial Literacy are planned for the spring.

It is important for the families of Union Hill School to know that the staff actively seek their partnership in educating their children and that family support is pivotal to the success of each child in the school. An Outreach Coordinator will be hired to develop and nurture partnerships with parents and community members. The Outreach Coordinator will also organize learning opportunities for students in and around the City that complement curriculum goals to augment student learning.

Engaging the Community

Union Hill leaders have started and will continue to take a proactive stance to establish meaningful partnerships with local business, community, and higher education institutions designed to add capacity to the Union Hill improvement work (Childress, Doyle & Thomas, *Leading for Equity*, 2009). Engaging the community in Union Hill School will provide an opportunity to tell the school's story to a wider audience and also provide an opportunity for the school to learn from the community.

Prior to designation as a Level IV school, Union Hill did not extend invitations to families or community members to partner with the school. The new leadership will make the school the hub of the community. Rather than being one of many separate entities within the neighborhood we envision Union Hill building bridges to other community sectors by welcoming the public into the school at every possible opportunity.

We envision Union Hill to be a school and community center in one, partnering with other agencies to provide programs and services to meet the community's need. While the leadership of Union Hill School is primarily focused on improving student achievement they recognize the need for after school and evening programming which combine educational, recreational and mentoring activities to ensure their students have the opportunity to develop to their full potential. Partnerships that are currently being cultivated include:

- *Oak Hill Community Development Council*- serves as a community improvement organization invested in the economic, educational, physical wellness of the school community
- *Worcester Academy* has offered tutorial support for afterschool and Saturday school linked with Student Intervention Plans, collaboration for professional development with Union Hill faculty, support with arts education, health services, and ESL adult classes, the use of their facility and playing fields, coordination of a Big Sister-Big Brother program, and summer camp scholarships
- *Girls Incorporated of Worcester* has offered the use of their facility for within and beyond the school day learning, recreational, and wellness programming for students and parents
- *Higher Education possibilities* include: Assumption College, Anna Maria and Holy Cross. These partnerships will provide professional development support for Union Hill faculty, field placement and student teachers, and college students as tutors.

The city of Worcester offers a wealth of educational and cultural opportunities for students, however if families are not aware of the resources that are available to them, they will not be able to fully take advantage of them.

Financial and Asset Management

As stated previously, within budget limitations, the school principal, in consultation with the site council, is provided full budget autonomy regarding the allocation of staff and all non-staff financial resources provided to the school through the budget process. This autonomy includes the allocation of teachers across grade levels, the manner in which classroom teachers are utilized within the school, and the full authority regarding the instructional supply and material budget provided to the school. The school's allocation of staff and non-staff resources are based on the overall district budget status, and differentiation of the allocation may vary by individual school based upon special populations served, programs offered or other needs of the school. In this case, the school is provided additional local, state and federal resources as described below.

Attached is a three-year financial plan for the school. (*See Attachment C: Three Year Financial Analysis*). As the financial plan illustrates, total spending at Union Hill School is proposed to increase by approximately \$1 million per year during the redesign period. Of this funding increase, \$787,045 is proposed through the redesign grant, while the remainder will be funded through operating, grant, and community support sources.

The school is currently staffed with 15 Kindergarten through Grade 6 classroom teachers with an average class size of 21 to 1. In addition, the school is supported by six special education, one ESL teacher, and one ESL tutor to support the student population. In addition, the school is staffed with 1 literacy tutor to provide additional intervention services for students. The school has a full time nurse on staff.

Using current grant funds, the school operated a half-day pre-school program that provides early academic experiences for three and four year old students, some that require services through an IEP. Using federal stimulus funds, the school has two instructional coaches who provide job embedded professional development to teachers at the school. This professional development is developed through the use of student test data and the school's Instructional Leadership Team.

Looking forward, the budget proposes an Outreach Coordinator position for the school. This individual will develop partnerships with community organizations, higher education institutions, and local businesses in order to provide supplemental resources and support to the school. This position will be funded through the district's operating budget.

In addition, the school will be eligible to implement a school vacation feeding program through the district's School Nutrition program to provide nutritious meals to students during non-school periods. The district's School Nutrition program is nationally recognized for innovative programs, including a successful local farm-to-school program. The district has identified city capital funds to be used to

improve technology supports at the school including the replacement of classroom computers and laptops, installation of interactive whiteboards, and the purchase of digital document projectors for instructional use to display student work.

Additional funds are being identified for staff development opportunities through Titles IIA and III to support high quality and teaching strategies for teachers, to include SEI category training for all teachers. Other training will include Wilson training for teachers as well as job-embedded coaching from Lesley University (Cambridge, MA).

The Redesign grant proposed budget includes funds to provide increased learning opportunities for students by 90 minutes per day for each day of the school year. In addition, the school has scheduled 30 minutes daily of common planning time for teachers. This time has been added to the school day for all teachers. In addition, the proposed budget includes 90 additional hours of professional development for teachers, to include work during non-school days, including during the summer. This time is in addition to the 20 hours of time required under the existing collective bargaining agreement with teachers.

The budget also reflects additional professional instructional and support positions for the school. First, a teacher-leader position has been proposed to support high quality teaching and learning at the school. Also, the budget reflects a full time librarian position for the school. Currently, because of previous district-wide budget reductions, the district provides librarian positions at secondary schools only. Also, the budget proposes to increase the level of student support positions (School Adjustment Counselor) by 0.5 FTE position. This position will provide the social-emotional and behavioral supports needs for the student population. In addition, the budget will increase the level of health education support by adding 0.5 FTE of additional teacher support.

The budget also reflects additional funding for instructional supplies and materials, such as leveled readers and additional library materials.

The district is prepared to allocate the necessary resources to sustain funding of this plan after the Redesign Plan period, although the district will look to reduce this initial funding based on a gradual release of capacity building strategies, such as spending on staff development and instructional coaching as the level of individual teacher capacity increases. The district will be prepared to continue the appropriate level of increased learning opportunities and/or supplemental services that may be needed at the end of the Plan period. In addition, the district is seeking permanent collective bargaining changes that allow for an expansion of the teacher work day across the system for elementary teachers for common planning time.

The district is prepared and has the capacity to provide direct instructional, financial, and human resources support during the Redesign Plan using existing resources available to the district. This includes a district level administrator position that has been assigned to provide direct support to the school. Again, as individual capacity is developed at the school level, the level of district support will be adjusted accordingly during the period.

Instructional Design and Delivery – Transformation model

Ryan and Patrick (2001) contend that teachers' practices around academic activities and students' perception of these strategies have an impact on student motivation and engagement. Instructional design and delivery spotlights the role of the teacher in fostering engagement. Stanford (1999) emphasizes that all children need to learn the same material but that they do not all learn it the same way. Instruction must be tailored to meet the individual needs of each student. Stronge (2007) asserts that the overall effectiveness of instructional delivery is centered on the teacher having a large range of teaching strategies that can be used to make learning meaningful for each student.

High quality instruction is a key to increasing student learning and achievement. The leadership and staff of Union Hill are committed to providing effective instruction in every classroom, every day, for every student. In order to move forward in a coherent, accelerated manner, Union Hill needs to establish curricular and instructional alignment.

In a standards-based instructional system the expectations of what students should know and be able to do are clear to all involved in the educational process. Teachers must develop deep knowledge of the content and performance standards for each grade level. The common core standards for English Language Arts and Math include rigorous content and application of knowledge through higher-order skills. These internationally benchmarked standards are essential for college and career readiness in a 21st century, globally competitive society.

All Union Hill students will have access to academically challenging standards-based instruction. In collaboration with district-wide curriculum liaisons the ILT will facilitate the development of curriculum maps (Kindergarten through Grade 6) aligned with the Massachusetts Frameworks and/or Common Core Standards in all content areas. These maps will identify the content and procedural knowledge and competencies that students must demonstrate and apply at each grade level as well as the assessments used to monitor students' progress. Through participation in vertical team curriculum mapping sessions, faculty will increase their understanding of the academic standards their students must achieve and use this information to guide instructional planning for whole class, small group and individual students as well as to guide instructional pacing throughout the year. Common grade level reading, writing and content area assessments will be developed, administered and collaboratively scored in order to develop shared understanding and expectations for high standards for student performance. The faculty started the curriculum mapping process in their summer professional development sessions and will continue this process in vertical team professional development meetings throughout the school year.

During common planning time the Focused Instructional Coach (FIC) will support teachers as they develop lesson plans based on these curricular maps. In weekly lesson plans teachers will outline instructional strategies to support core instruction, Tier 2 supports and Tier 3 interventions as needed based on each student's learning profile. The principal and assistant principal will review lesson plans to monitor alignment with curricular goals, grade level pacing, alignment with the school's identified best practices and details guiding differentiated instruction within the classroom. The administrative team will provide feedback regarding lessons plans to assure that instructional planning, strategies, and assessments facilitate active student engagement in learning linked to standards and objectives that reflect high expectations. The FIC and teacher-leaders will guide the instructional planning of their colleagues in daily common planning time to develop consistent school-wide practices and support teachers as they implement these best practices in daily classroom instruction. The Worcester Public Schools Framework for High Quality Teaching and Learning outlines shared expectations and indicators of effective instruction with three focus areas: 1) Organization of the Classroom; 2) Instructional Design and Delivery, and 3) Student Ownership of Learning. The Union Hill teachers, FIC, teacher-leader and school administrators will use this framework to guide improvement of teaching and learning across the school. Research indicates that when there is a supportive climate of high expectations, scaffolded instruction to support active student engagement in learning tasks, frequent standards-oriented assessment with many opportunities for improvement, thoughtful discourse, an emphasis on non-fiction writing, and a consistent set of school-wide instructional practices, students achieved at high levels (Brophy, 2000; Reeves, 2009). Through analysis of student outcome data and review of recommendations of the local stakeholder group, Union Hill developed a clearly articulated school-wide instructional focus and identified a small set of evidence based practices that will guide their improvement work. Ongoing professional development and job-embedded coaching will deepen teachers' knowledge and commitment to an effort-based theory of intelligence and strengthen their implementation of these best practices.

Professional development will focus on: balanced literacy instruction in the five areas of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension In addition, it will incorporate guided reading, interactive read-alouds, writing: 90-90-90 with an emphasis on non-fiction writing; differentiated instruction; adaptive technology – “Fast For Word” and “Head Sprout” and PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports).

Assessment that connects instructional delivery and human capital development

The leaders of the Worcester Public Schools and of Union Hill know that a human capital development strategy designed to increase instructional effectiveness is key to achieving accelerated academic growth and high achievement. A system of frequent, meaningful assessment of student progress in all content areas is central to this goal as is a teacher supervision, evaluation and professional development system that incorporates student achievement gains as one measure of teacher effectiveness.

Our leadership and faculty view assessment as a tool to promote learning for students and adults. Student data will be used to design and implement an instructional program that is research-based and vertically aligned from one grade level to the next as well as aligned with state academic standards. Union Hill faculty will develop a balanced assessment system to measure student growth in order to track student progress within and across grades, determine growth trajectories, and adjust teaching and learning opportunities appropriately. As Union Hill develops a comprehensive student assessment system they will include summative assessments *of* learning as well as formative assessments *for* learning (Stiggins, 2004).

Summative assessments such as the MCAS and MEPA will provide our faculty with important information regarding student mastery of standards and language development and of their current status toward achieving proficiency. The Instructional Leadership Team will analyze this data to determine individual student achievement, trends in sub-group, grade level, and school performance, areas of strength and weakness in curriculum design and delivery, effectiveness of intervention strategies, and individual and collective professional development needs.

Formative assessments *for* learning are designed to provide feedback to both the teacher and students about how the student is progressing so that timely adjustments can be made to ensure that students achieve targeted standards-based learning goals within a set time frame. Union Hill faculty will use results from DIBELS, DRA, MAP, word reading tests, school-wide writing prompts, anecdotal records, and quizzes to adjust teaching and learning, inform the development of Student Intervention Plans and monitor the effectiveness of core instruction and Tier Two and Tier Three interventions and supports. Student progress requires close monitoring that will be facilitated through a benchmarking system designed for core instruction (every five weeks) and Tier Two and Tier Three interventions (every 2 to 4 weeks).

Union Hill teachers will employ classroom assessment strategies to check for student understanding and application of knowledge and skill. These strategies will include: 1) questioning that is well-framed, provides adequate wait time, and provides rich follow-up discussion; 2) feedback with detailed comments that include next steps; 3) peer and self-assessments linked to rubrics, exemplars, and exit slips; and active student engagement in the assessment process to encourage student ownership as active agents in their own learning. Union Hill teachers will have students document and evaluate their own progress to increase self-monitoring, metacognition and confidence to maintain persistence and grit.

Our school has established classroom, grade level, and school-wide data displays that indicate students' current performance on MAP, DRA, or DIBELS. Students know their current status and use this information to complete goal-setting sheets with their teachers. These displays also serve as the foundation for collegial dialogue focused on next steps with instructional practice to facilitate each student's accelerated academic performance.

The combined mobility rate for Union Hill School is 24 percent. To develop a sense of the current performance level of each student who transfers into the school mid-year, the teachers and administrators will retrieve a student information snapshot from the district-wide data system, SAGE. Based on information from the SAGE snapshot, the entering student can be assigned to the appropriate supports immediately with minimal interruption in their instructional programming.

As we gather and analyze student assessment data, Union Hill faculty will participate in the student support process with an administrator, the FIC and Teacher-Leader to develop Student Intervention Plans that outline student strengths and challenges, current learning profiles, priority skills the student needs to meet or exceed grade level standards, and instructional strategies for teachers to use to scaffold the student to reach or exceed grade level standards. In 90-90-90 schools, teachers and administrators paid particular attention to students who presented with below grade level reading and writing, as lack of proficiency in these areas has significant influence on student success in other subjects. Therefore, these students spent significant time in literacy intervention based on their assessment results (Reeves, 2009). The Student Intervention Plans will guide student's instructional journey within and beyond the school day with a focus on literacy development across content areas.

In collaboration with district Focused Instructional Coaches, the Union Hill ILT will develop common assessments that are horizontally and vertically aligned. The school has completed and analyzed two school-wide writing prompts that teachers have collaboratively scored. In 90-90-90 schools writing assessments allowed students to demonstrate the thinking process they used to respond to an academic challenge and seemed to help teachers obtain better diagnostic information for future instructional planning (Reeves, 2009). The student work from additional common writing prompts and common benchmark assessments will be analyzed in common planning time or in data meetings facilitated by the FIC, teacher-leader and/or administrators. These assessments will provide faculty with immediate, formative feedback on how students are progressing toward proficiency and generate discussions about instructional practice and professional development needs.

To rapidly accelerate the academic achievement of all Union Hill students, the leadership team will work to develop the competencies of all adults in the school and continuously monitor instructional practice in tandem with close monitoring of student achievement. The focus will be on instructional and leadership capacity of teachers to reach and sustain significant gains in performance so that all students meet or exceed grade level standards. High frequency, individual progress monitoring for students and for adults will become the Union Hill way. The principal and assistant principal have developed a schedule for daily classroom visits or mini-observations that include observations of student engagement with learning tasks, elements of the organization of the classroom and PBIS expectations for student and adult behaviors, language-rich interactions, connection of the lesson to learning standards and objectives, evaluation of the rigor of learning tasks and other aspects of the Worcester Public Schools Framework for High Quality Teaching and Learning. The administrative team will continue these mini-observations and provide meaningful, timely feedback to teachers verbally or in writing. Based on these regular classroom visits, participation in common planning, curriculum mapping, data meetings, and professional development sessions, as well as through analysis of classroom based student assessment data summaries, the principal and assistant principal will identify individual and collective professional development needs. They will collaborate with the ILT, FIC, and teacher-leader to design and provide the professional development support through workshops, collegial observations, job-embedded coaching and modeling to guide teacher development.

School leadership contributes to student learning by setting direction, providing guidance and supporting staff with resources and professional development, using data to monitor progress and performance and redesigning the organization to fully support high quality teaching and learning (Leithwood et al, 2004). The Union Hill principal has and continues to clearly articulate school-wide expectations for performance for all staff. The Worcester Public Schools Framework for High Quality Teaching and Learning (HQT&L) is the district-wide standard for effective instruction. All Union Hill teachers will participate in full summative evaluations on an annual basis. The Union Hill principal used the HQT&L framework in professional goal setting with each teacher and noted that the summative evaluation will provide commentary regarding the Principles of Effective Teaching aligned with the HQT&L document as well as indicate one of four levels of performance: Not Meeting Standard, Progressing Toward Meeting the Standard, Effective at Meeting the Standard, and Highly Effective at

Meeting the Standard. The annual summative evaluations will inform the principal's staffing decisions for the next school year.

Conclusion

Today, when driving by Union Hill School, the school's sign reads "Dream, Believe, Achieve". This statement is representative of the renewal of hope that has been infused into the daily lives of all individuals who arrive at Union Hill School each day.

We believe that in three years, Union Hill will be a vibrant community of readers, writers and thinkers. Our teachers will be fully trained in guided reading protocols, allowing them to differentiate instruction for our students. Common planning time will afford teachers the opportunity to collaboratively examine and discuss their instructional practice and student results as they continually refine and tailor their instruction to guide all students to high achievement. Reading, writing, and thinking will be embedded in daily instruction, with teachers serving as facilitators who make it possible for students to take ownership of their learning. Mathematics instruction will reflect flexible grouping based on examination of data. Appropriate interventions and enrichments will be provided based on the RTI model. Teachers will use formal and informal assessments including MCAS, MEPA, MAP, DIBELS, DRA. Teachers will develop individualized student learning plans to clearly articulate students' strengths and challenges as well as action steps to accelerate their progress. We will continuously monitor progress through classroom assessments as well as through school-wide writing assignments. Consistently examining data and using the findings to inform changes in instructional practice will support all students as they work to achieve proficiency.

In order to ensure success, teachers will continue to receive meaningful professional development that reflects the needs of our school population. We encourage our students to take risks, and our teachers have become risk takers as well. Participating in embedded professional development such as rounds, allows them to learn and grow from observing one another. Although teachers have developed awareness that their teaching practice is directly linked to student achievement it is incumbent upon our school principal and her leadership team – to ensure all teachers continue to maintain high expectations for all students.

There is a discernible shift in school culture. Parents who have not attended school functions in the past, now attend on a regular basis. The PTO is thriving; parents are anxious to volunteer. There is a school-wide set of behavioral expectations which promotes a cultural of mutual respect. And although the work has just begun, there are celebrations around academic achievement every day.

Three years from now, Union Hill School will be the hub of the neighborhood. Students will engage in high-quality teaching and learning everyday in every classroom. Parents will participate in on-site learning opportunities. Community agencies will be our partners in promoting a safe and healthy school. Union Hill School will have its dream realized and be a "winning school".