

**Heath Elementary School**  
18 Jacobs Road  
Heath, MA 01346  
Charlemont, MA 01339 (mailing)  
413 337-5307  
413 337-5507 (fax)  
[www.heath.k14.mass.edu/](http://www.heath.k14.mass.edu/)

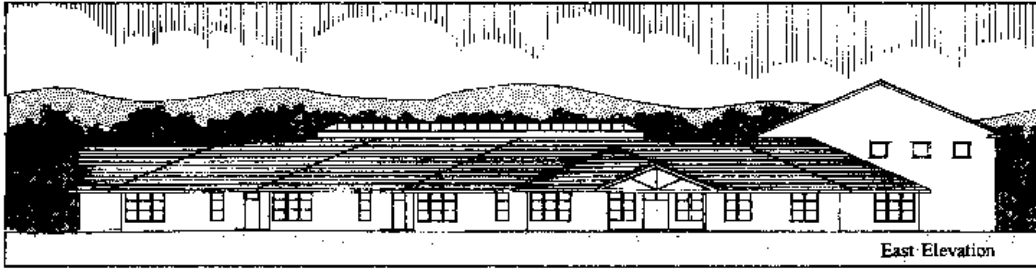
# Heath Elementary School Improvement Plan

**2006-2007**

**June 30, 2006**

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**Heath Elementary School Council  
Membership  
2005-2006**

**Susan Todd, Principal, Co-Chair  
Pam Porter, Community Member, Co-Chair+**

**Ned Wolf, Community Member**

**Suzanne Crawford, Teacher  
Julie McCarthy, Teacher**

**Dana Blackburn, Parent  
Karen Blom, Parent  
Phoebe Walker, Parent**

**Michael Chrisman, School Committee+  
Bob Gruen, School Committee**

+Michael resigned from the School Committee in the middle of this year, and Pam Porter has recently been elected to fill his position. Pam has, therefore, resigned her position on the LEC as per state guidelines.

**Heath Elementary School  
Improvement Plan  
2006-2007**

**Executive Summary**

On June 20, 2006 the Heath Elementary School completed its tenth year with just over 80 students, PreK through 6 in attendance. Despite severe budgetary challenges and considerable energy being directed toward discussions involving the future of the Mohawk District, this has been a vigorous and productive year for Heath children and their families. Teachers and parents must be commended for maintaining focus on the learning of the children, remembering that they are of school age for only six short years. For the first time in the history of the school there were no staffing losses or gains as we entered the fall of 2005, and, therefore, parents could be informed of the classroom configurations before the end of the 2004-2005 school year. Those configurations and class sizes\* were as follows:

PreK	Suzanne Crawford	14 students
Kindergarten	Deb Porter	15 students
First/Second Grade	Alexis Walendzik	18 students
Third/Fourth Grade	Virginia Gary	16 students
Fifth/Sixth Grade	Kare Marshall	17 students + 2 out of district

\* 24 choice students

Although the classes are small the realities of teaching multi-age groupings continue to be enormously demanding in the face of the rigorous standards required by the curriculum frameworks. As a staff we look for methods that will integrate the objectives in all aspects of our school day. This is an ongoing pursuit, meant to keep learning relevant and engaging.

Reflecting upon the year, it appears that a dominant focus was not only on examining student achievement in reading and math, but in truly understanding and nurturing the essential partnership between parents and teachers on behalf of children's learning. This process will continue next year, but the foundation has been laid for clarifying one

another's roles as we seek to support and nourish the integrity of the family, the school, and the classroom.

## **Historical Narrative**

### **a. Philosophy**

#### **The Heath School Philosophy Revised Statement April 2006**

The Heath School community believes that a well-balanced educational program, which promotes rigorous academics, creative endeavors, and social responsibility, will best prepare our children for a lifetime of learning as active and caring citizens in a democratic society.

#### **Core Values**

The following is a list of the Heath Elementary School's values that, when integrated into the daily life of our school, empower children to interact effectively and compassionately with local, national, and global communities. By demonstrating a commitment to these values as a community of learners, we recognize and honor our connection to those who have come before us and our responsibility to those who will follow.

**Note: The values in bold were added this year.**

- ∞ We value respect of others and ourselves.
- ∞ We value the development of and participation in community.
- ∞ We value open-mindedness and diversity of viewpoints.
- ∞ We value the courage to challenge oneself academically, intellectually, and socially.
- ∞ We value high expectations and standards of excellence, keeping in mind the uniqueness of each learner.
- ∞ We value an understanding and appreciation of our natural, cultural, and social environments.
- ∞ We value service learning and civic-mindedness.
- ∞ **We value parents as their children's first teachers and as essential to their education.**
- ∞ **We value the mutual partnership of families and teachers in support of children's learning.**
- ∞ We value the building of character to include a sense of justice, honesty, and integrity.
- ∞ We value that each teacher is a learner and a teacher to every student and to each other.

- ∞ We value that staff and students meet regularly to set goals, plan, share, learn, and reflect.
- ∞ We value the creation of a continuum of learning throughout the school and across disciplines.
- ∞ We value developing self-discipline, perseverance, and a strong work ethic.
- ∞ We value a welcoming, joyful, and hospitable environment in which all are included, invited, and have a place.
- ∞ We value a commitment to problem-solving and critical thinking.
- ∞ We value optimism, gratitude, kindness, forthrightness, and a sense of humor.
- ∞ We value the culture and character of our school and will help one another, especially the new, to grow in understanding and maintaining its traditions.
- ∞ We value greeting change proactively.

**b. The State of the School**

**Please Note: The progress pages will contain a more detailed account of the how the school has met its goals and what needs remain to be addressed.**

The Heath School has made AYP in all areas this past year as determined by the MCAS scores. An overview of the results is as follows:

**Heath School MCAS Scores (by numbers of students in performance categories)**

**2005**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Advanced</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Needs Improvement</b>	<b>Warning</b>
3	Reading	0	7	2	0
4	Math	0	1	3	0
4	ELA	2	2	2	0
5	Science	2	11	1	1
6	Math	4	5	4	0

Even though our numbers are small the staff works diligently to review the results to see where we might improve our instruction and professional development. This year the emphasis has been on test taking techniques, vocabulary development, and problem solving strategies in math. In addition, teachers have worked on student answers to open response questions. Next year the number one goal will be to foster children’s overall

writing skills in the essay and long composition form for this seems to be weak area. The new Houghton Mifflin reading series has been very successful in developing comprehension of text as we have reviewed the end of the year Gates and DIBELS reading assessments. Most children are at or above grade level, with only a very small percentage somewhat below grade level.

### **Highlights of the School Year – 2005-2006**

- ❑ Massachusetts Agriculture in the Classroom grant received to visit Berkshire Sweet Gold sugar house and Red Gate Farm
- ❑ Community Policing Funds awarded to support strings program with David Tasgal
- ❑ “James Madison” visited the school on Constitution Day
- ❑ Tutoring grant received from United Way
- ❑ All School study of Fort Shirley
- ❑ Yearlong partnership with B.J.’s
- ❑ Two Enchanted Circle Theatre productions
- ❑ Storytellers Tim Van Egmond and Davis Bates visit
- ❑ Community Service performed throughout year with Good Neighbors
- ❑ Megan Lambert provides Visual Literacy for Parents workshop
- ❑ Friends of Library sponsor Book Fair with World Eye
- ❑ Clark Johnson Astronomy Night organized by AmeriCorps members
- ❑ Drama Club performs at Double Edge Theatre
- ❑ “General Heath” visits his namesake
- ❑ Whole school trip to “Children of Uganda” at UMass
- ❑ Tuvan Throat Singers perform
- ❑ Heath Observer makes its debut
- ❑ Sixth Graders attend Nature’s Classroom
- ❑ Author Betty Birney visits
- ❑ First Annual Community Reading Day occurs
- ❑ Gardening Club initiated
- ❑ WINK literary magazine published
- ❑ PTP sponsors MANY, MANY great activities
- ❑ Principal’s Coffees well-attended
- ❑ LEC strengthens its understanding of how to develop and evaluate School Improvement Plan

# Progress Report for 2005-2006

## Curriculum and Instruction

### Goal One:

Improve student learning and achievement in literacy and math

**Achieved:** The Heath School concentrated on ways to involve parents in the learning of their children during this school year and on ways to use the common spaces for the integration of learning. As a Title I school Heath is participating in the development of a clear Parent Involvement Policy. More concentrated efforts are being made to send home activities for parents to use with their children. Principal's coffees were held monthly and were well attended. It was decided that the coffees worked better with free flowing conversation, not scheduled topics. Topics emerged nevertheless. The LEC and staff realized that the Heath School philosophy did not have a parent involvement statement and added two core values to the document. A Parent Information table was established. Teachers used Open Space for interactive activities. The overhead was used frequently in the dining room for teaching purposes. The dining room bulletin board was used for nutritional and math information. The Title I math teacher instituted a weekly puzzler whose solution was shared++ during Friday's All School. The Reading teacher instituted a word of the week, with a bulletin board display. "James Madison" visited the school on Constitution Day, while "General Heath" and came to visit the school around his birthday and described how the town was named. Hardcover spelling books have been purchased. Two storytellers visited the school and The Carroll Stowe Storytelling Chair has been purchased to honor Carroll and to encourage storytelling. Summer Reading program formalized and expanded. Began to develop rubric for All School presentation standards.

**Ongoing:** Although the Houghton Mifflin program is being used from grade 1 through grade 4, the staff has not yet reviewed and defined the scope and sequence for the reading curriculum. We still need to arrange for classroom visitations around best math teaching practices, although the Title I teacher modeled exemplary practices during All School.

### Goal Two:

Examine and determine varieties of data sources that will indicate student achievement

**Achieved:** The staff brainstormed a list of data sources that could be useful in fostering student achievement.

**Ongoing:** As this goal was only touched upon in 2005-2006 it will be carried over to 2006-2007.

### Goal Three:

Continue project-based EIC progress

**Achieved:** Fundraising efforts to bring Ted Watt to the Heath School were initiated. The Massachusetts Agriculture in the Classroom awarded the school a small grant to support student visits to the McCutchen sugarhouse and to Red Gate Farm as well as to support our gardening project. Members of the LEC established a community-based education

fund through the Mary Lyon Foundation to receive money that would support Ted Watt and EIC projects. The Primes continued their study of the vernal pool and expanded their community study to include visiting the select board offices in Town Hall and Sheila Litchfield's baby goats. The Upper Primes visited the McCutchens' sugarhouse and collected data from them concerning sap production on each day during the season. They correlated this data with the statistics they had gathered in their daily weather journals to determine the optimum conditions for sap flow. (20 degree nights and 50 degree days!) The third and fourth graders studied the Fort Shirley and the Fort Pelham Sites. And the fifth and sixth graders used the Heath cemetery to learn more about local history through the graphing of their data. The founding and naming of Heath was also studied.

**Ongoing:** The school would like to continue fundraising for support of Ted Watt. He is the cornerstone for facilitating classroom projects that involve the local environment. Next year's SIP goals include school-based review of EIC components.

### **School & Community Relations**

#### **Goal One:**

Continue to maintain focus on development of social curriculum, integrating Responsive Classroom and Second Step
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**Achieved:** At the beginning of the year the staff re-read and discussed the school's philosophy. A bulletin board was created to emphasize the elements of Heath's mission – focusing on respect. Staff brainstormed suggestions for all school language. Beginning of year staff meetings discussed behavioral expectations in different areas of the school building. Mediation program expanded with the production of a brochure and creation of meeting space. Importance of morning message and morning meeting was stressed. Planned to make these common elements of each classroom.

**Ongoing:** The only Parent Forum was on visual literacy with Megan Lambert. Parent Forum on Social Curriculum is scheduled for next year. With the introduction of Understanding by Design Second Steps did not receive the time it deserves. This will be a priority next year.

#### **Goal Two:**

Expand yearlong effectiveness of LEC to evaluate and prepare School Improvement Plan
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**Achieved:** LEC held a very productive retreat in August of 2005. The agenda for monthly meetings was restructured to focus on assessing the progress of the SIP goals on student learning and achievement. Meetings were held in each classroom space to allow opportunity to understand individual learning environments. Expectations for participation were established, and a meeting evaluation was built into each agenda. Another particularly helpful initiative was adding a progress column to the SIP action plans so that monthly updates could be recorded. The LEC has been able to develop an excellent working model.

**Ongoing:** The LEC looks forward to a productive collaboration with the new Leadership Team and to providing a smooth transition into the next school year. A retreat is being planned for August.

**Goal Three:**

Strengthen parent and community involvement

**Achieved:** LEC and staff articulated and voted to accept two new parent involvement core values for the school’s philosophy statement. Portions of a volunteer handbook were completed, and as a result after school activities are conducted much more smoothly. The website has been reorganized and is kept relatively up-to-date. A new school newspaper, The Heath Observer, was begun. Room parents were established early in the year. Community Reading Day has brought in more community members to the school. Technology has enabled special Needs families the ability to experience their children’s learning in the classroom.

**Ongoing:** Volunteer Handbook needs to be completed. We still haven’t reached 100% participation from classroom teachers on website.

**Extracurricular Activities**

**Goal One:**

Continue to expand After Hours enrichment and tutoring activities

**Achieved:** United Way provided funding for after school tutoring support. Double Edge Theatre partnered with the Heath School in offering a Drama Club and production of *The Ghost of El Castillo* at the Double Edge Theatre stage. Entered into exceptional partnership with B.J.’s as part of their Adopt-a-School program. PTP established volunteer coordinator for athletic programs. Community Policing and LCC funded strings program. Outstanding involvement of PTP in a variety of activities.

**Ongoing:** Need to sustain funding and involvement for all enrichments. Spanish program still a goal.

**Goal Two:**

Continue to promote learning through civic/community service and outreach, consistent with our role as a community-based school.

**Achieved:** The periodic food collection for Good Neighbors Food Pantry has been very successful, and the children’s help has proved vital. The drive would always revolve around a theme that would permit children to build shapes or provide a border for a map of Massachusetts with donated items. (See goal #3 under Curriculum and Instruction for further accomplishments.)

**Ongoing:** With the emphasis on Fort Shirley the focus on community sites has begun. Perhaps using Betty Birney’s book *The Seven Wonders of Sassafras Springs* could help children locate the riches within Heath’s local environment.

## **Heath Elementary School Improvement Goals 2006-2007**

### **Curriculum and Instruction:**

1. Improve student learning and achievement in literacy and math to ensure AYP
2. Focus professional development on Understanding by Design
3. Continue community-based integrative project learning

### **School & Community Relations:**

1. Support and nourish positive school culture during leadership transition
2. Continue to maintain focus on revisiting and solidifying social curriculum, integrating Second Step
3. Strengthen parent and community involvement

### **Extracurricular Activities:**

1. Continue to expand After Hours/in school enrichment and tutoring activities
2. Continue to promote learning through civic/community service and outreach, consistent with our role as a community-based school