

HIGH SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GRANT
FINAL REPORT AUGUST,2006
FUNDS RECEIVED \$12,000 (INCLUDES ROLLOVER FROM LAST YEAR)

The principles of consistency and communication developed by the “Good To Great” School Improvement Subcommittee (SIS) of 2004 – 2005 were adapted to encompass the district focus on learning for the 21st century, the introduction of ‘habits of mind”, and the adoption of a more standards-based curriculum. ASF funds allowed the High School to reconvene the School Improvement Subcommittee to allow a representative body of 24 teachers and administrators to integrate these new ideas into the original *Good To Great* vision. They met from March through June , including Saturday meetings.

The SIS reported back to the entire school community in June with a draft of the mission statement for the high school . The process they used was two presentations to staff to discuss the concepts of 21st century learning and core values/habits of mind, the development of a survey to all staff and students and the analysis and presentation of the results . The implications for ASF are not financial but reflect the fine tuning of the needs o f the High School as they strive to integrate the needs of students and staff in the model of a caring and accountable school. For the September school year 2006 – 2007 they have outlined a budget to support implement their vision. The principal presented the vision, mission and plan for future work to the staff at their opening meeting, September 2006. In summary, the HSIG grant produced a mission statement reflective of the collaborative efforts of an interdisciplinary, representative team which lays the groundwork for the HSIG proposal for 2006-2007.

Attached are the results of the survey produced and the mission statement.

D.Budget :

SIS members received a \$500.00 stipend for attending meetings, gathering feedback from their colleagues, leading discussion groups, and presenting a final report to the school community. A consultant line item was added to provide professional development on character education , the academic coach or any other relevant issue that arises within the context of High School Improvement Initiative, but not used. The school paid for the refreshments and supplies.

Original Breakdown of Costs

Stipends 20 teachers representing all departments @ \$500	\$10,000.00
Consultant Fee(s)	\$ 1,000.00
Refreshments	\$ 500.00
Supplies and Printing	\$ 500.00
Total	\$12,000.00

Actual expenses were \$500 for 24 members of SIS

School Improvement Committee

Core Values Survey Results

June 2006

Staff Survey Results

Who did we speak with?

What values are important to our community?

Integrity	52
Accountability & Responsibility	46
Communication	43
Cooperation & Teamwork	36
Fostering Respect For All Talents & Abilities	35
Persistence & Perseverance	33
Intellectual Curiosity, Inquiry & Courage	31
Tolerance	22
Taking Initiative	20
Kindness	19
Service	17
Active Listening With Empathy	12
Resourcefulness	7

Survey Respondents

■ We invited everyone in the high school community to respond to a brief online survey about core values and habits of mind for Arlington High School

■ 79 staff members answered the survey, including teachers, administrators, permanent substitutes, counselors, and others

■ We achieved representative samples of departments, experience, and seniority

Top Five Values

■ We asked staff to select their **top five** values from a list generated by the committee

■ The top selections were:

– Integrity

– Accountability & Responsibility

– Communication

■ Then we asked you to choose the **most important** value to you to write about

“I would teach specifics of leadership ... individual leadership as well as group leadership. For example, teaching students about democratic, autocratic, and [other] leadership styles, when each is appropriate and how each is used effectively.”

“Without integrity, the rest of one’s high school years can be a game – getting by with the least work possible.”

“I am worried that we are not holding kids to standards that will allow them to go out into the community and become successful, productive and responsible citizens. Coddling, allowing disrespectful behavior and caving in to excuses will not help, but rather hinder our youth as they enter the real world.”

“Students and staff are susceptible to the building climate and morale, yet we need to be reminded of our own contributions to that climate. I’d like to see students feel a sense of responsibility to the learning community and improve their attendance, pick up after themselves, follow the rules, etc. On the other hand, I think staff needs to be held more accountable for enforcing rules consistently – especially around attendance policies, cut slips, study hall behavior, cell phone use, and headphones.”

“Intellectual curiosity, inquiry and courage are at the core of my teaching, which, I believe promotes active engagement in learning along with a desire to share results.”

“I would feel more connected to the community of teachers. I currently don’t know what goes on in other parts of the building unless I receive the information informally. I would be able to build on what other teachers have accomplished and we would be able to share knowledge and information.”

“Through acceptance and recognition of individual talents and abilities I would hope the students would find the safety and security necessary to find their voice and to take on personal challenges they might not have tried otherwise. I would hope that doors of possibilities for their lives would open as they explore careers and what gives life meaning.”

“I would hope that everyone in the community would see themselves as partners with others in the community. We would be more likely to help however we can and we would be more likely to collaborate with others and work together. We would stop viewing problems as somebody else’s fault or problem, but instead seek out ways to be helpful.”

“I believe kindness is an active, consistent behavior that is the foundation for all other positive behaviors in life. A kind person listens and communicates. A person generous of spirit is tolerant and persistent in displaying the same trait over and over again. At times, kindness takes courage.”

Student Selected Values

■ Students in our initial sample (n=36) selected the following values most:

- Kindness
- Communication
- Cooperation & Teamwork
- Tolerance
- Intellectual Curiosity, Inquiry & Courage
- Accountability & Responsibility

Student Comments

■ Kindness

- “*Kindness in a community sets for a happy more productive environment.*”
- “*Kindness so that our school community will feel like another family.*”
- “*Kindness would be better for the kids who get bullied.*”

■ Tolerance

- “*Tolerance would make people more at ease and kind to each other.*”
- “*Tolerance will prevent war.*”
- “*The school community would become more peaceful and less discriminatory.*”
- “*We are still kids and learning and adults need to understand this.*”
- “*Tolerance would help people not make assumptions and criticize [others] and would help them not just listen to what one source believes but to get all sides of the story.*”

Student Comments

■ Accountability & Responsibility

- *“People need to be dependable and admit their mistakes.”*
- *“I think that when you do something wrong you should have the courage to be accountable for it. This will not only make you a better student but a better person.”*
- *“It could only make it better and more enjoyable to be around.”*

■ **Cooperation & Teamwork**

- *“If we don't have teamwork, we don't have anything.”*
- *“Because if we work together we can become a better community and cooperate a lot better as a school.”*
- *“Mostly because it would be nice if everyone in the school could get along and support each other.”*
- *“Because it is important that everyone is involved and helps each other out.”*

Student Comments

■ **Communication**

- *“Communication – because through that, the rest will fall into place.”*
- *“The school community would become unified, the educational experience would be more fun and filled with memories, and your relationships with other student would enhance greatly.”*
- *“Without communication nothing would get done.”*

Staff Survey Results

What did staff suggest to help make these values a reality?

Staff Suggestions

■ Staff made many concrete suggestions to the committee. Dominant themes included:

- Better communication
- Greater accountability
- Showing respect
- Having fun
- Improving resources

Better Communication

- *“Key to getting this done – facilitating exchanges of ideas and concerns like this one, providing for ongoing dialogue, and acting on what we hear.”*
- *“It would be nice to have a device [e.g., team email conference] for reaching concurrence and passing on a group comment to the student’s parents.”*
- *“Clarify rules! Provide consequences for students AND teachers if rules are broken. Run a tight ship.”*
- *“The school could communicate better with itself. It should begin between teachers and support staff, deans and department heads, department heads and teachers, admin and everyone. When we do this it will really help ...we’ll feel more unified, consistent and not so fractured.”*
- *“Leadership that is inclusive and respectful of all ... recognizes effort and invites all voices.”*
- *“There needs to be more meeting times available with the staff working with a particular student.”*

Better Communication

- “Listen to these concerns. Many have been voiced before by others on different occasions. Values need to be demonstrated from the top-down and demanded of all members of the community.”
- “People need to be willing to take the time to listen and speak out about things that they would like to see happen.”
- “Provide more frequent opportunities for students and staff to dialogue about what is working and what isn’t. Create constant dialogue (message board? various funded subcommittees?) about how this school can be safer/more fun/more pleasant/more challenging without using an overtly standards-based approach.”
- “Make these themes dominant – market them, popularize them, spread the word.”

Greater Accountability

- “Consistency and enforcement of standards among everyone, even if a teacher does not always agree with the rules.”
- “Hold students (and staff) accountable for breaking school rules.”
- “The consequences stated in the Student Handbook are not the ones meted out in reality. If we are expecting accountability from our students, then we should not be sending mixed messages ourselves. When deans are making certain decisions regarding students, it might be helpful if they included teachers in the discussion ... If we all faithfully failed kids who had seven absences, then I bet the following term, the rate of absence for that student would substantially drop ... A handbook that means something would help kids know, and stay within the boundaries.”
- “Push towards student responsibility – lack of tolerance of dishonesty or cheating of any kind, firmer grading guidelines, more student run activities/projects in classes where the students are in charge of grading or assessing.”

Showing Respect

- “Respect starts at the top. If the administration acknowledges that all areas of the school are valued for their unique talents this will trickle down.”
- “Time for faculty study and research. Honor faculty for their degrees and course work.”
- “... Everyone has something to offer and we need to value the many talents and interests we all have; knowledge that staff with years of experience have to offer, the innovative ideas that new staff bring to us, and the many different perspectives that we all bring to the table ... An environment of respect will have a ripple effect all the way to the classroom.”

Having Fun

- “By the time many pupils reach high school, the joy of learning has been completely removed. We need to reestablish this idea.”
- “More social get togethers and more workshops and trainings help teachers come together as a community.”
- “More all-school experiences such as *Hairspray* would contribute to a sense of community.”

Improving Resources

- “Encouragement, less paperwork/busywork, more accessible and available information and technology resources.”

- “Give a seminar for freshman and their parents on ‘What is expected from you now that you are in high school’ that addresses responsibility and accountability and also highlights all the benefits and positive aspects that come from being a responsible learner.”

- “I’d be more effective if I had fewer students to teach on a day-to-day basis. Regardless of pay, there are limited hours each day. I don’t think I can ever be an exemplary teacher until I can teach 50 to 60 students each year.”

- “Encourage parents to volunteer in the classroom.”

Students Had Suggestions Too!

- “Make school applicable to real life”

- “Treat all students the same”

- “Teach how manipulation and conformity happen”

- “Guest speakers”

- “Group activities”

- “Encourage teachers to communicate more”

- “Hold student/teacher meetings”

- “Talk to student and get their input on decisions and issues”

- “Having assemblies and meetings to help organize ideas for school projects throughout 9-12th grade”

- “Increase Ponder Pride with more school-wide activities”

- “Encourage more problem solving efforts by teachers”

- “More interesting class topics”

Action Plan

Where do we go from here?

Next Steps

- Faculty Support?

- Email full results

- Student survey released to entire student body in September

- Parent survey to garner wider community input and support

DRAFT

Arlington High School, connecting, caring, and learning as a community.

Mission Statement

Arlington High School provides a safe, supporting, nurturing environment in which students can acquire knowledge, values, and intellectual curiosity that will lead to life-long learning. As a community we have agreed upon the following values and habits of mind as foundational principles that will guide all teaching and learning and policy decisions at Arlington High School. We believe that these values and habits of mind will ensure all students a rigorous high school education that will prepare them for their future roles as students in post-secondary education institutions, as employers and employees in the world of work, and as citizens and leaders in a 21st century democracy.

Connecting Values and Habits of Mind

- Service
- Cooperation and teamwork
- Communication
- Fostering Respect
- Active Listening that gives voice to oneself and others

Caring Values and Habits of Mind

- Honoring and respecting all talents and abilities
- Responsibility
- Accountability
- Kindness
- Empathy and Tolerance

Learning Values and Habits of Mind

- Taking initiative
- Resourcefulness
- Persistence and Perseverance
- Inquiry
- Integrity
- Intellectual curiosity and courage